

Romance Writers of America
Board Meeting Agenda
February 6, 2025
Virtual Meeting

Thursday, February 6, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – J. RENÉE

The second quarter has been a productive time for our organization. In December, we finalized the contract with the Crowne Plaza Niagara Falls - Fallsview Hotel to host the RWA 2025 Annual Conference from July 16-19. To build momentum, the Board introduced a Cyber Sale for conference registration. This one-week sale was open to members, nonmembers, and industry professionals. Following the sale, Early Bird registration commenced. This special registration rate is good until February 14. RWA2025 is shaping up to be an exciting conference. We are bringing back beloved events from past conferences with a fresh take. These include talks with featured speakers, publisher talks, and an awards ceremony to honor those who have volunteered their time to serve the organization and those whose contributions have made a lasting impact on the romance writing community and RWA. We are thrilled to announce that Jane Porter is our recipient of this year's Lifetime Achievement Award.

The first event of the new year was the contests award ceremony where we proudly announced the winners of the inaugural Diamond Heart Awards and the relaunched Golden Heart Awards. These awards celebrated the incredible talent and dedication within our membership and the romance community.

I had the honor of being invited by the president of Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers Association (SFWA) to participate in a discussion alongside presidents from Mystery Writers of America (MWA) and Horror Writers of America (HWA). This meeting opened opportunities to share resources and discuss cross-genre initiatives. We have agreed to meet on the third Friday of each month to continue this dialogue.

In response to the Policy Advisory Committee's request to get more information out to our members about Artificial Intelligence, the Board and national office developed a four-part series title: Author's Digital Toolkit: Protecting Your Work and Information in an AI-Driven World. This series aims to educate members on AI and cybersecurity, equipping them with relevant information to make informed decisions for their author businesses. The first webinar was held in December. The speaker was Umair Kazi Directory of Policy & Advocacy at the Author's Guild. He spoke about the legislative side of AI. In January, we announced the next three webinars in the series: What is AI? Scheduled for January 29; Cyber Security is scheduled for February 26, and Protecting Your Intellectual Property is scheduled for April 2. The series has

gained significant traction among our members.

The last weekend of January was dedicated to indie authors. The Conference Committee worked hard to educate, motivate, and entertain everyone in attendance.

Looking ahead, we are relaunching RWA University with a workshop title Writing Romantasy scheduled for February 22. The speaker is Lisa Green, Acquiring Editor for City Owl Press. The Board is planning to launch an "Ask an Author" series in the third quarter. This members-only initiative has already garnered interest from the PAN community, promising to be a valuable addition to our offerings.

In an effort to expand member benefits, the national office and the Board are actively working on adding new "2-Minute Tips" videos on our YouTube channel and bringing back "Author Survival Guides" and "Writers on Writing" guides. Tech support is also facilitating a transition from Groups.io to Circles on MemberClicks. Watch your email, eNotes, and the RWR for updates on this transition.

As we move forward, the Board remains committed to enhancing communication and fostering engagement. We encourage all members to stay informed by regularly checking emails, weekly eNotes, and the monthly RWR.

Exciting things are happening within our organization. Let's continue building on this momentum and working together to advance the professional and business interests of career-focused romance writers. Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication.

SECRETARY’S REPORT – A LEARNED

MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES FROM THE NOVEMBER 2024 QUARTERLY BOARD MEETING

Renée moved to approve the minutes for the November 2024 quarterly board meeting.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on November 14, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE OPENING AN CCOIUNT WITH FINDAWAY VOICES

Roark moved to approve opening an account with Findaway Voices.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on November 14, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE ELECTION SCHEDULE, INCLUDING DEADLINES

Griffin moved to approve the election schedule, including deadlines.

- May 3, 2025 Call for candidates
- June 2, 2025 Open for candidates to declare
- June 23, 2025 Deadline to declare
- July 7, 2025 Post candidates
- August 4, 2025 Open Voting
- August 18, 2025 Close Voting
- August 20, 2025 Announce new board, along with posting in enotes.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on November 15, 2024, with 9 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE REGISTRATION RATES FOR INDIE AUTHOR WEEKEND AND TRADITIONAL AUTHOR WEEKEND

Renée moved to approve the registration rates for the Indie Author Weekend and Traditional Author Weekend

- Indie Author Weekend:**
 - Member - \$279
 - Non-Member - \$399

- Traditional Author Weekend:**
 - Member - \$279
 - Non-Member - \$399

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on November 22, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE REGISTRATION RATE FOR THE 2025 RWA ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Renée moved to approve the registration rates as for the 2025 Annual Conference

2025 Annual Conference:

Black Friday thru Cyber Monday 11/29/24 – 12/2/24

Member - \$399

Non-Member - \$499

Industry Professional - \$299

Early Bird 12/3/24 – 2/14/25

Member - \$450

Non-Member - \$550

Industry Professional - \$350

Regular – 2/15/25 – 4/2/25

Member - \$499

Non-Member - \$599

Industry Professional - \$399

After 4/3/25 – conference starts

Member - \$549

Non-Member - \$649

Industry Professional - \$449

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on November 22, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

MOTION TO APPROVE PRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER

Hillyer-Miles moved to approve Maria Levato to serve on the PRO Advisory Committee.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on November 22, 2024, with 7 votes in the affirmative and 2 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE UPDATED REGISTRATION RATES FOR INDIE AUTHOR WEEKEND AND TRADITIONAL AUTHOR WEEKEND

Wills moved to approve the updated registration rates for the Indie Author Weekend and Traditional Author Weekend virtual mine conferences

Indie Author Weekend:

Member - \$149

Non-Member - \$199

Traditional Author Weekend:

Member - \$149

Non-Member - \$199

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on December 6, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE PEN TO PAPER BUDGET

Wills moved to approve the Pen to Paper Budget as presented.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on December 6, 2024, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE A \$500 GRANT FROM THE CHAPTER GRANT FUND

Wills moved to approve a \$500 grant from the Chapter Grant Fund to the SOCO Chapter.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on December 6, 2024, with 7 votes in the affirmative and 2 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE PRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBER

Hillyer-Miles moved to approve Emily Sewell to serve on the Pro Advisory Committee.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on December 12, 2024, with 9 votes in the affirmative and 0 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE UPDATES TO THE RWA POLICY MANUAL

Renée moved to approve the following updates to the RWA Policy Manual.

Section 12.3. Emma Meritt Service Award. 12.3.3. ~~Only~~ RWA General, ~~or~~ Honorary, or Associate members are eligible.

Section 12.4. Service Award. 12.4.1. Formerly the Regional Service Award and the Silver Rose, this award may be presented annually to no more than a total of seven RWA General, ~~or~~ Honorary, or Associate members.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on January 14, 2025, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

MOTION TO VOTE ON THE NOMINEES OF THE RWA SERVICE AWARD

Renée moved to vote on the nominees for the RWA Service Award.

Scott Eagan
Sinclair Jayne
Tara Taylor Quinn
Erin Vollick
Nancy Weeks

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on January 14, 2025, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

MOTION TO APPROVE RECEIPIENTS OF THE VIVIAN STEPHENS INDUSTRY PROFESSIONAL AWARD

Renée moved to approve the following Industry Professionals to receive the Vivian Stephens Industry Professionals Award.

- Shay Bohannan (Agent and Brown Book Series Founder)
- Lisa Green (Editor)
- Leticia Gomez (Editor)
- Michelle Grajkowski (Agent)
- LaSheera Lee (Agent)
- Marcy Posner (Agent)
- Brad West (Vellum Founder)

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on January 14, 2025, with 7 votes in the affirmative and 2 abstentions.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE FORMATION OF THE RWA GRANT FEASIBILITY TASK FORCE AD HOC COMMITTEE

Wills moved to approve the formation of the RWA Grant Feasibility Grant Task Force Ad Hoc Committee. The purpose of the RWA Grant Feasibility Task Force is to investigate and research potential grant options for which RWA could potentially be awarded. The Board Treasurer will oversee the committee.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on January 14, 2025, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE CHARGE OF THE RWA GRANT FEASIBILITY TASK FORCE AD HOC COMMITTEE

Wills moved to approve the charge of the RWA Grant Feasibility Task Force Ad Hoc Committee.

Grant Task Force Charge:

RWA Grant Feasibility Task Force

The purpose of the RWA Grant Feasibility Task Force is to investigate and research potential grant options for which RWA could potentially be awarded. The committee chair will automatically be the RWA board treasurer.

The task force shall:

- Research and investigate possible grant avenues including registering and signing up for government grant opportunities
- Compile a listing of potential grant opportunities including thoroughly vetting any grant makers past funding history, etc.
- Upon board approval, apply for any grant opportunities including the gathering of any required RWA documents as part of the grant application process
- Follow-up on the application process during the grant period

Preliminary steps required of the task force are:

Identify RWA's needs and goals to assure alignment with any grant possibilities

Explore potential funding sources

Review grant guidelines and compile any required RWA documentation necessary for the application process

Create a compelling proposal for the application process which includes standard application requirements of an executive summary, general description, budget, letters of support and evaluation

Task force qualifications:

Any RWA member with grant-writing experience or the strong desire to become involved in the grant application process.

Task force duration:

The task force shall be formed and begin work as soon as the appropriate board approvals are received. Upon completion of the first round of grant applications, the task force shall prepare and submit a report to the RWA Board of Directors to determine if the force should be established as an ongoing committee.

This motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on January 14, 2025, with 8 votes in the affirmative and 1 abstention.

In an executive session meeting, the board voted on the nomination for the 2025 Lifetime time Achievement Award Recipient.

TREASURER'S REPORT -- B. WILLS

No report submitted

**PRESIDENT EMERITUS REPORT
CLAIR BRETT**

No report submitted.

OFFICE REPORT – J. Stokesberry

AMC Source Staff:

Jordan Stokesberry- Executive Director & Membership Services & Virtual Events

Greg Foreman- IT

Rachel Sheffer- Marketing Communications

Samuel Pierrot- Finance

Membership Report:

As of January 17, 2025: Total: 1,744 members

Member Type:	Affiliate	Associate	Charter Honorary	Charter Member	General Honorary	General Member	Honorary Member	Student Member
Active:	16	481		13	3	1081	72	11
Graced:	1	13	2	2		48		1
Lapsed:		30			1	29		1

General Updates:

Membership Committee Updates and Efforts:

The membership committee and I are committed to enhancing the overall member experience with RWA. We are focusing on initiatives aimed at increasing engagement and providing value.

- Drafting a member retention plan
- Membership Drive Planning
- Website Updates
- And more!

Indie Author Weekend:

I will be providing technical support during the event to ensure our speakers, members and guests have an enjoyable experience.

ALTERNATIVE REVENUE IMPLEMENTATION AD HOC COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: A. ROARK

Committee 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.

Committee Report: No report submitted.

Successes/Action items Completed:

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending:

Current Challenges:

Recognition:

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report:

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?:

Does This Report Require Board Action?:

AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: B. WILLS

Committee Charge: The Audit & Finance Committee, chaired by the Treasurer, shall be responsible for selecting an independent CPA firm to conduct the annual audit, for reviewing the annual audited financial statements and any associated management letter detailing deficiencies, and for reviewing the related tax returns before all materials are presented to the Board, and shall assist the Treasurer as requested on financial and budgetary matters.

Committee Report: The committee was dark during the last quarter.

Successes/Action items Completed: There is no activity to report for this last quarter.

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending: As inactive as the committee was during the last quarter, it anticipates on being doubly busy this upcoming quarter with the financial reporting sign-off and confirming the audit firm for the 2023-2024 audit review.

Current Challenges: N/A

Recognition: As treasurer, I very much appreciate how responsive the committee always is.

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Brooke Wills, Treasurer

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q2 (December - February)

Does This Report Require Board Action?: No

AWARDS CEREMONY COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: T. GARNER

Committee 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.

Committee Report: The Awards Ceremony Committee pulled together a virtual event to celebrate the 2024 Golden Heart and Diamond Heart finalists and winners. With the short time and limited resources available, the event was held on Saturday, January 11, 2025 and was liked by the attendees who were present.

Success/Action items Completed: Put the notes from the acting chair in a folder that the new board for the 2025-2026 term can access.

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending: Edit awards ceremony/video and post on the RWA YouTube channel or other platform to be shared with attendees and the rest of the RWA membership. Mail out certificates for finalist and physical award to winners.

Current Challenges:

Recognition: N/A

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Tracee Garner, Director At Large, Acting Committee Chair

What Quarter Does This Report Cover? Q2 (December – February)

Does This Report Require Board action? Unknown.

CHAPTER TASK FORCE AD HOC COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: J. RENÉE

Committee Charge: The charge of the Chapter Task Force is to test the features available through MemberClicks and establish the new RWA national chapter portal. Create a comprehensive training program to assist all chapters in transitioning to self-managed dues collection. Create a comprehensive training program to assist all chapters in transitioning to self-managed collection of workshop, contests, and event funds.

Committee Report: In accordance with the Chapter Affiliation Agreement, RWA collects its annual dues from members and chapters collect their own dues from members through the RWA portal. The migration from iMIS to MemberClicks did not allow for chapters to be assigned special roles in the member management system to manage their chapter rosters and dues collections. RWA's initial solution was to collect chapter dues for chapters when it invoiced members their national dues. However, this was a challenge for chapters due to their varying dues collection cycle.

Success/Action items Completed: With feedback from the chapter leaders serving on the task force an RWA portal has been established.

Summary of Action Items in-Progress/Pending; After successfully testing the portal functions with two chapters, President Jacki Renée is ready to schedule individual chapter training sessions for chapter leaders to learn the portal.

Current Challenges:

Recognition: Thank you to the chapter leaders who served on the Chapter Task Force Ad Hoc Committee. You have completed the charge

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Jacki Renée, Board Liaison

What Quarter Does this Report Cover? Q2 (December – February)

Does this Report Require Board Action: No

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: J. RENÉE

Committee Charge: The Conference Workshop Committee shall coordinate, plan, and oversee the selection and scheduling for workshops for the RWA Annual Conference, Indie Author Weekend (2-day virtual mini conference), and Traditional Author Weekend (2-day virtual mini conference). The Conference Workshop Committee shall ensure that the conferences' programs reflect RWA's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access—including, but not limited to, the speakers chosen, and the topics covered in the workshops.

Committee Report: The Conference Committee meets monthly for two hours to review and discuss, in detail, plans for Indie Author Weekend, Traditional Author Weekend, and RWA 2025 Annual Conference. The goal for Indie Author Weekend and Traditional Author Weekend is to bring new presents and topics of interest for the weekend events. The committee is also looking to bring back a few annual conference events that are synonymous with RWA in person conferences but with a fresh take..

Success/Action items Completed: The committee has selected workshop presenters for Indie Author Weekend. The committee has also submitted to its Board liaison the names of three romance authors they would like to be featured as speakers at the annual conference.

Summary of Action Items in-Progress/Pending; The committee will begin reviewing and selecting workshop presenters for Traditional Author Weekend and RWA 2025 Annual Conference.

Current Challenges: Simultaneously planning three conferences is a challenge for the committee.

Recognition: Thank you to everyone on the committee for putting in the work to plan Indie Author Weekend, Traditional Author Weekend, and RWA 2025 Annual Conference

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Jacki Renée, Board Liaison

What Quarter Does this Report Cover? Q2 (December – February)

Does this Report Require Board Action: No

CONTEST COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: J. RENÉE

Committee Charge: The Contest Committee shall assist the Executive Director with the establishment and overall planning and operation of all RWA national contests; and under the direction of the Executive Director, shall handle any contest result challenges pursuant to the Contest Policy outlined in Section 17. Each Contest's period, the Contest Committee shall establish actionable goals that measure the progress of RWA national contests in accordance with the intended benefit of the Contest. A Board liaison shall be assigned to this committee.

Committee Report: Over the past two years, the Contest Committee has documented each step in its implementation and execution of the 2024 inaugural Diamond Heart Awards and the relaunch of the Golden Heart Awards. There were many roadblocks along the way that included rescheduling the start of the contest period three times between October 2023 and April 2024. The committee used that documentation to write its final report which is attached to this board report.

Success/Action items Completed: The Contest Committee successfully implemented and executed the Diamond Heart Awards and Golden Heart Awards with three rounds of judging that concluded with 7 winners being announced during the awards ceremony on January 11, 2025..

Summary of Action Items in-Progress/Pending; As of January 8, 2025, the Contest Committee members have successfully completed their two-year terms of service, with the chair serving as long as three years. They are no longer serving on the committee. .

Current Challenges: None.

Recognition: A special recognition goes to the committee chair Jason Wrench and committee members Carla-Elaine Johnson, Taralee Morgan, AK Nevermore, and Diane Peterson for their hard work and dedication to executing a successful contest period, and for always finding humor in the face of many setbacks and obstacles.

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Board Liaison Jacki Renée in collaboration with former committee chair Jason Wrench

What Quarter Does this Report Cover? Q2 (December – February)

Does this Report Require Board Action: No

Final Report from the Golden Heart and Diamond Heart Contest Committee

The Contest Committee is pleased to present this report outlining our recommendations and reflections following this year's Golden Heart and Diamond Heart contests. Over the past two years, the committee has worked diligently to rebuild the infrastructure of these contests from the ground up, incorporating elements of the original contests while reimagining the processes to create a more efficient and cost-effective framework.

As with any large-scale initiative, challenges and opportunities for improvement emerged along the way. This report is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of those insights and offer actionable recommendations to enhance future contests. By addressing both the foundational preparation required before the contest and the operational considerations during the contest, we aim to support the next committee in delivering a seamless and rewarding experience for all participants.

From technological infrastructure to judge recruitment, entrant registration, and administrative support, this report details specific areas where refinements can be made. The overarching goal is to ensure that these prestigious contests continue to uphold their high standards of excellence while adapting to the evolving needs of the romance writing community.

The report is organized into eight sections: **Preparing for the Contest, Running the Contest, Training, Judges, Trigger Warnings, Association and Office Support, Marketing,** and **General Thoughts on the Contest.** We hope these recommendations will serve as a roadmap for the continued success and growth of the Golden Heart and Diamond Heart contests.

Preparing for the Contest

There is a lot of work that the Contest Committee must complete prior to the contest itself. Over the past two years, we have rebuilt the infrastructure of the contest from scratch. There are definitely elements of the old contests embedded in the new Golden Heart and Diamond Heart awards, but every element of the new contests was rebuilt. As such, there were definitely issues along the way that we found and hope these recommendations will ensure a smoother contest next time.

Website

Over the course of this contest cycle, we worked to build a brand new contest website. There are two components of the contest website. The first component is the training site. The training site was built to ensure timely training of all judges in the contest. The site itself is housed in an open-source learning management system called Moodle. It allows for the contest committee to both train and track training in one places. The second site was the site where the contest itself was administered from. The previous contest site was functional, but cost RWA a considerable amount of money to run. We've been able to reduce the cost of contest administration considerably by switching to the new sites. However, this was our first time with the new contest site and there are areas for improvement.

Basic Website Functions

We've broken down the website issues into two different categories: before the contest starts and during the contest itself.

Before the Contest

1. Be able to work with systems on both “show” and “edit” (Submission / Score Sheet / Locked) – from the judges' view. The “Work with Entries View” needs to be different than the “Work with Score Sheets” view.
2. The site should reject any uploads except for a PDF or EPUB.
3. The next committee may want to consider the submission of audiobooks and figure out how these would work on the site.
4. Color code the rounds for the scores sheets on the back end for the contest committee. Also, the different round score sheets should be on separate tabs to keep it easier.
5. Double-check all hyperlinks before it goes live for judging to ensure judges can easily download the books. Also, it could be nice to have the hyperlinks colored (PDF one color, EPUB a different color) to ensure it's clear. Also, don't allow for non-appropriate file types.
6. Automatic assignment of entries to judges (should account for both genre, heat level, and trigger warnings).
7. The site needs to be fully functional before registration opens.

During the Contest

1. Access to the back end of the website in general.
2. Ability to export all fields into Excel.
3. A "not completed" option was proposed for both contests to address situations where a judge is unable to finish reviewing an entry. This feature would include a dedicated box on the judge's form to provide a clear explanation for their decision, supported by well-defined guidelines.
4. We need a feature to show which judges have logged in and when.
5. Organizers should be able to see if a judge has opened an entry (and downloaded the books).

Entrant/Judge Registration

1. Use the same name and email across all platforms (contest website, training website, sign-up website).
2. Ask for legal name and pen name(s) (required) – contestants.
3. Email addresses and member numbers to prove people are members.
4. Phone numbers need to be mandatory.
5. Entry issues with date/copyright were found, make this VERY apparent on entry forms.
6. Golden Heart, make a checkbox where they must attest that they are unpublished (with a definition of unpublished).
7. Have all Diamond entrants include the ISBNs for both eBook and print editions of books.
8. Remind entrants what is romance (HEA/HFN) definition at the top of the form.
9. Add checkboxes for heat level (for both entrants and judges).
10. Ensure that the score sheet cannot be saved if the objectionable content field is checked and they have not provided an explanation for why the box was checked.
11. For Round 3, there needs to be a clear distinction for their ability to judge Round 3. Judges must be prompted to submit proof on the website. This information should be captured and housed on the website to ensure all Round 3 judges can be vetted.

Training

1. Reading the rules for judges each round was an issue, make a checkbox asking them to verify for each round as part of the training.
2. Possibly set a standard for completing full DEI training every three years. And then have a shorter refresher course that highlights DEI updates for those who have completed training in the previous three years.
3. Record videos explaining the purpose of each round for both contests. This should be part of the judges training, but could also be on the general contest website. We've learned a lot of entrants and judges do not familiarize themselves with the contest guidelines.
4. When it comes to training, there should be an overview on how to reliably fill out the rubric. Although we did not find any systemic problems with judging (see appendix A), we do believe walking judges through the expectations for judging and using the rubric would be helpful going forward.

Judges

The next section of recommendations going forward involves the recruitment and onboarding of judges.

1. Request both legal and all pen names.
2. Judges should use the same email addresses on the contest site and the training site.
3. Judge recruitment is time-consuming. Many who signed up to judge never completed the training. Many of those who completed the training never actually completed their judging assignments. As such, it's important to have a pool of judges the committee can rely on toward the end of each round of judging in case emergency judging becomes necessary.
4. The next committee may want to consider making it mandatory that Diamond heart entrants judge round 1 of the Golden Heart as part of their entrance.

Trigger Warnings

As the romance genre allows for a wide range of fictional scenarios, we believe that trigger warnings about the types of content a reader may encounter is becoming increasingly important. As such, we propose the following suggestions for enhancing this as the contest moves further.

1. Establish clear guidance, definitions, and criteria for trigger warnings to ensure consistency.

2. Create a comprehensive list of common trigger warnings to standardize usage across the contest.
3. Ensure that trigger warnings are clearly stated on author registration forms, especially for the Diamond Heart contest. These warnings should match or be more detailed than those listed on published manuscript websites such as author websites, publisher websites, Amazon, Apple, and Barnes & Noble.
4. Develop rules regarding the disclosure or nondisclosure of trigger warnings to guide authors and participants.
5. Decide whether there should be a penalty for failing to disclose trigger warnings.
6. Establish a policy for cases where trigger warnings are not disclosed.

Association and Office Support

The contest historically relied heavily on the administrative support of the RWA main office. With our new administrative processes, much of this work previously completed by administrative staff was given to the committee members. As this is likely the path the contest will continue in the future, there are definitely some considerations for administrative support going forward.

Office Support

1. Access to the Contest email. Someone on the contest committee needs access to the contest email account to ensure answers are responded to quickly. It may also be helpful to have forums for both contest entrants and judges on the RWA site where questions can be easily answered. The committee should also establish a policy for who will respond to different types of questions to ensure a consistent message is sent from the committee.
2. Further integrate the administrative parts of the content to “the office.” A clear delineation of what the RWA “office” can and cannot do to support the contest should be discussed to ensure everyone is on the same page going forward.
3. Follow up on the trademark of the new Golden and Diamond Heart logos and names.

Marketing

1. A more consistent marketing plan needs to be in place across the various platforms.
2. Mentions need to be more frequent in RWA Notes, and dedicated, targeted emails sent out and social media posts made.
3. Links to the contest site need to be prominently displayed on the main RWA website.

4. The contest committee could involve the chapters more with the recruiting of judges and soliciting entries. A graphic or other marketing tool emailed directly to chapter leadership asking for their input / help would probably be well received.

General Thoughts on the Contest

Overall, we are very happy with how this year's contest turned out. However, there are definitely some areas where the next committee should consider.

With the Golden Heart, only two categories (Contemporary and Historical Romance) had enough entrants to proceed with the contest. The contest committee, in conjunction with the board, created the "Love Across Genres" category to enable a broader range of participants in the contest. Entrants were given the opportunity to either enter the new category or withdraw their submission.

In the Diamond Hearts contest, the Erotic Romance, Romance with Religious or Spiritual Elements, and Young Adult Romance categories did not have enough entrants to proceed with judging. The entrants were given the option to transfer to a different category or withdraw their submission.

As you can see, in both contests, Erotic, Religious and Spiritual Elements, and Young Adult failed to meet the necessary numbers for judging. As such, we think it's important for the next committee to explore this phenomenon. For historic purposes, Erotic and Young Adult also had low numbers under previous iteration of the contest.

1. The committee may want consider a new category that combines Young Adult and New Adult.
2. The committee may want to consider adding a new audiobook category. Audiobooks are a huge part of the romance genre today and involve different skills sets (especially by the human narrator).

Appendix A

Analysis of Round Two Judging

Mixed-Effects Model:

Model Setup: Treat both the **book effect** and the **judge effect** as random effects in a mixed-effects model. The observed score y_{ij} for book i rated by judge j can be modeled as:

$$y_{ij} = \mu + \alpha_i + \beta_j + \varepsilon_{ij}$$

where:

- μ is the overall mean score,
- α_i is the random effect due to book i ,
- β_j is the random effect due to judge j ,
- ε_{ij} is the residual error term.

Variance Components: Estimate the variance components associated with judges (σ^2_{judge}), books (σ^2_{books}), and residual error (σ^2_{error}).

Interpretation: A smaller σ^2_{judge} relative to σ^2_{books} indicates higher consistency among judges.

Mixed Model Analysis

Notes

Output Created	06-NOV-2024 18:48:11	
Comments		
Input	Active Dataset	DataSet1
	Filter	<none>
	Weight	<none>
	Split File	<none>
	N of Rows in Working Data File	363
Missing Value Handling	Definition of Missing	User-defined missing values are treated as missing.

Cases Used		Statistics are based on all cases with valid data for all variables in the model.
Syntax		<pre> MIXED Score BY Book_ID Judge_ID /FIXED=Intercept /RANDOM Intercept SUBJECT(Judge_ID) COVTYPE(VC) /RANDOM Intercept SUBJECT(Book_ID) COVTYPE(VC) /METHOD=REML. </pre>
Resources	Processor Time	00:00:00.09
	Elapsed Time	00:00:00.38

Model Dimension^a

		Number of Levels	Covariance Structure	Number of Parameters	Subject Variables
Fixed Effects	Intercept	1		1	
Random Effects	Intercept ^b	1	Variance Components	1	Judge_ID
	Intercept ^b	1	Variance Components	1	Book_ID
Residual				1	
Total		3		4	

a. Dependent Variable: Score.

b. As of version 11.5, the syntax rules for the RANDOM subcommand have changed. Your command syntax may yield results that differ from those produced by prior versions. If you are using version 11 syntax, please consult the current syntax reference guide for more information.

Information Criteria^a

-2 Restricted Log Likelihood	3237.446
Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC)	3243.446
Hurvich and Tsai's Criterion (AICC)	3243.513
Bozdogan's Criterion (CAIC)	3258.121
Schwarz's Bayesian Criterion (BIC)	3255.121

The information criteria are displayed in smaller-is-better form.

a. Dependent Variable: Score.

Interpretation:

- **-2 Restricted Log Likelihood:** This is the negative twice the restricted log-likelihood of the model. It's a measure of model fit used internally by SPSS.
- **AIC (Akaike's Information Criterion):** A measure of the relative quality of a statistical model for a given set of data. It balances model fit and complexity.
- **AICC (Corrected AIC):** A version of AIC adjusted for small sample sizes.
- **CAIC (Bozdogan's Criterion):** A variation of the AIC that imposes a higher penalty for model complexity.
- **BIC (Schwarz's Bayesian Criterion):** Similar to AIC but with a higher penalty for models with more parameters.

Usage:

- These criteria are primarily used for **model comparison**.
- **Lower values** indicate a better balance between model fit and complexity.
- They are most informative when comparing multiple models (e.g., with different random effects or fixed effects).

In Your Context:

- Since you have only one model, these values don't provide direct insight into judge consistency.
- However, if you were comparing different models (e.g., with or without certain random effects), these criteria would help determine which model is preferred.

Fixed Effects

Type III Tests of Fixed Effects^a

Source	Numerator df	Denominator df	F	Sig.
Intercept	1	82.966	1257.654	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Score.

Interpreting the Type III Tests of Fixed Effects

The **Type III Tests of Fixed Effects** table provides information about the statistical significance of the fixed effects in your model. In your case, the only fixed effect is the **Intercept**.

What Does This Table Tell Us?

- **Intercept:**
 - **Numerator df:** 1
 - **Denominator df:** 82.966
 - **F-statistic:** 1257.654
 - **Sig. (p-value):** .000

Interpretation:

- The **Intercept** is highly significant ($p < .001$), indicating that the grand mean of the scores is significantly different from zero.
- The large **F-statistic** (1257.654) reinforces the significance of the intercept.

Relation to Judge Consistency

- **However**, the significance of the intercept does **not** provide information about the consistency among judges.
- It simply tells us that the average score is significantly different from zero, which is generally expected.

Covariance Parameters

Estimates of Covariance Parameters^a

Parameter		Estimate	Std. Error
Residual		264.667617	29.273906
Intercept [subject = Judge_ID]	Variance	209.816640	51.205396
Intercept [subject = Book_ID]	Variance	76.512993	26.796703

a. Dependent Variable: Score.

Estimates of Covariance Parameters

Here is the data you've provided, organized in a table for clarity:

Parameter	Estimate	Std. Error
Residual Variance	264.667617	29.273906
Judge Variance (Intercept [subject = Judge_ID])	209.816640	51.205396
Book Variance (Intercept [subject = Book_ID])	76.512993	26.796703

Interpretation of Variance Components

1. Variance Estimates

- **Judge Variance: 209.816640**
 - Represents variability in scores attributable to differences among judges.
- **Book Variance: 76.512993**
 - Represents variability due to differences among books.
- **Residual Variance: 264.667617**
 - Captures unexplained variability (random error).

2. Total Variance

The total variance is the sum of all variance components:

$$\text{Total Variance} = \text{Judge Variance} + \text{Book Variance} + \text{Residual Variance}$$

$$\text{Total Variance} = 209.816640 + 76.512993 + 264.667617 = 550.99725$$

Calculating Intraclass Correlation Coefficients (ICCs)

ICCs help quantify the proportion of total variance attributable to each source.

Calculating Intraclass Correlation Coefficients (ICCs)

ICCs help quantify the proportion of total variance attributable to each source.

1. ICC for Judges

$$\text{ICC}_{\text{Judge}} = \frac{\sigma_{\text{Judge}}^2}{\sigma_{\text{Judge}}^2 + \sigma_{\text{Book}}^2 + \sigma_{\text{Residual}}^2}$$

$$\text{ICC}_{\text{Judge}} = \frac{209.816640}{550.99725} \approx 0.3808 \quad (\text{or } 38.08\%)$$

2. ICC for Books

$$\text{ICC}_{\text{Book}} = \frac{\sigma_{\text{Book}}^2}{\sigma_{\text{Judge}}^2 + \sigma_{\text{Book}}^2 + \sigma_{\text{Residual}}^2}$$

$$\text{ICC}_{\text{Book}} = \frac{76.512993}{550.99725} \approx 0.1389 \quad (\text{or } 13.89\%)$$

3. Proportion of Residual Variance

$$\text{Residual Proportion} = \frac{\sigma_{\text{Residual}}^2}{\sigma_{\text{Judge}}^2 + \sigma_{\text{Book}}^2 + \sigma_{\text{Residual}}^2}$$

$$\text{Residual Proportion} = \frac{264.667617}{550.99725} \approx 0.4802 \quad (\text{or } 48.02\%)$$

4. Verification

$$\text{Total Proportion} = \text{ICC}_{\text{Judge}} + \text{ICC}_{\text{Book}} + \text{Residual Proportion} \approx 0.3808 + 0.1389 + 0.4802 \approx 1.0$$

Interpretation of ICCs

- **ICC for Judges (~38.08%):**
 - Approximately 38% of the total variance in scores is attributable to differences among judges.
 - This is a substantial proportion, indicating significant variability due to judges.
- **ICC for Books (~13.89%):**
 - About 14% of the variance is due to differences among books.

- This suggests that books contribute less to score variability than judges.
- **Residual Variance (~48.02%):**
 - Nearly half of the total variance is unexplained by the model.
 - This could be due to measurement error or other unaccounted factors.

Assessing Judge Consistency

Based on the variance components and ICCs:

- **High Judge Variance:**
 - The judge variance (209.816640) is significantly higher than the book variance (76.512993).
 - **Interpretation:** There is considerable variability in scores attributable to differences among judges.
- **Low Book Variance:**
 - The book variance accounts for a smaller proportion of the total variance.
 - **Interpretation:** Differences among books contribute less to the variability in scores.
- **Conclusion on Judge Consistency:**
 - **Judges are inconsistent** in their scoring.
 - The substantial judge variance indicates that the scoring differences are more due to who the judge is rather than the quality of the books.
- **Implications:**
 - The high variability among judges suggests that the evaluation process lacks consistency.
 - This could impact the fairness and reliability of the scoring system.

Statistical Significance of Variance Components

While the standard errors are provided, the SPSS output typically includes significance tests for variance components (Wald Z-tests). However, these tests can be unreliable for variance components.

Given the relatively large standard errors compared to the estimates, but given the size of the estimates, it's likely that the variance components are statistically significant. However, it's important to verify this:

Standard Errors and Estimates

- **Judge Variance Estimate:** 209.816640
 - **Std. Error:** 51.205396
- **Book Variance Estimate:** 76.512993
 - **Std. Error:** 26.796703

- **Residual Variance Estimate:** 264.667617
 - **Std. Error:** 29.273906

Calculating Wald Z-statistics (Optional)

$$\text{Wald Z} = \text{Estimate} / \text{Std. Error}$$

Judge Variance Wald Z:

$$209.816640 / 51.205396 \approx 4.096$$

Book Variance Wald Z:

$$76.512993 / 26.796703 \approx 2.856$$

Residual Variance Wald Z:

$$264.667617 / 29.273906 \approx 9.043$$

Interpreting Wald Z-statistics

- A Wald Z greater than approximately 1.96 indicates statistical significance at the 0.05 level.
- **Judge Variance Wald Z (~4.096):** Significant
- **Book Variance Wald Z (~2.856):** Significant
- **Residual Variance Wald Z (~9.043):** Significant

Conclusion: All variance components are statistically significant, confirming that the variability due to judges and books is meaningful and not due to random chance.

Final Interpretation and Recommendations

1. Judge Inconsistency

- **High Variability Among Judges:**
 - The judges are not scoring consistently.
 - This inconsistency accounts for a significant portion (38%) of the total variance in scores.
- **Potential Reasons for Inconsistency:**
 - Lack of standardized scoring criteria.
 - Differences in judge training or experience.
 - Subjectivity in evaluating the books.

2. Book Variability

- **Lower Variability Among Books:**
 - Only about 14% of the variance is due to differences among books.

- Suggests that the books are more similar in quality, or that judge differences overshadow book differences.

3. High Residual Variance

- **Unexplained Variability:**
 - Nearly half of the variance is unexplained, which could be due to:
 - Measurement errors.
 - Other unmeasured factors affecting scores.
 - Random fluctuations.

4. Recommendations

- **Standardize Scoring Criteria:**
 - Develop clear, detailed guidelines for judges to follow.
 - Ensure all judges understand and apply the criteria consistently.
- **Judge Training:**
 - Provide training sessions to calibrate judges' scoring.
 - Use exemplar books to illustrate scoring standards.
- **Monitoring and Feedback:**
 - Monitor judges' scoring patterns over time.
 - Provide feedback to judges who deviate significantly from the norm.
- **Additional Analysis:**
 - Investigate whether certain judges are outliers.
 - Consider the impact of judge experience, background, or other characteristics.
- **Reducing Residual Variance:**
 - Examine other factors that might explain variability in scores.
 - Collect additional data on books or judges to include in the model.

Summary

- **Key Findings:**
 - **Judge Variance (38%)** is substantial and greater than **Book Variance (14%)**.
 - **Judges are inconsistent** in their scoring.
 - **Residual Variance (48%)** suggests other unaccounted factors contribute to score variability.
- **Implications:**
 - The current scoring system may not reliably reflect the true quality of the books.
 - Steps need to be taken to improve judge consistency to enhance the fairness and credibility of the evaluations.

Objective: To assess the consistency among judges in scoring books.

Method: A linear mixed-effects model was conducted with `Score` as the dependent variable. Random intercepts were included for both `Judge_ID` and `Book_ID` to account for variability due to judges and books.

Results:

- **Judge Variance:** 209.82 (SE = 51.21, Wald Z = 4.10, $p < 0.001$)
- **Book Variance:** 76.51 (SE = 26.80, Wald Z = 2.86, $p = 0.004$)
- **Residual Variance:** 264.67 (SE = 29.27, Wald Z = 9.04, $p < 0.001$)
- **ICC for Judges:** 38.08%
- **ICC for Books:** 13.89%

Interpretation:

- The variance attributable to judges is significantly higher than that attributable to books, indicating considerable inconsistency among judges.
- The high judge variance suggests that scoring differences are more influenced by which judge is evaluating rather than the actual quality of the books.
- The residual variance indicates that nearly half of the variability in scores is unexplained by the model.

Conclusion:

- There is a need to improve judge consistency to ensure fair and reliable evaluations.
- Implementing standardized scoring criteria and providing judge training are recommended steps.
- Further analysis is suggested to identify additional factors contributing to score variability.

Alternative Syntax Method used in SPSS

You can also specify the model using SPSS syntax for more control:

```
spss
Copy code
MIXED Score BY Book_ID Judge_ID
  /FIXED=Intercept
  /RANDOM Intercept | SUBJECT(Judge_ID) COVTYPE(VC)
  /RANDOM Intercept | SUBJECT(Book_ID) COVTYPE(VC)
  /METHOD=REML.
```

- **Explanation:**
 - **BY:** Specifies the grouping variables.
 - **FIXED:** Indicates fixed effects (only intercept in this case).
 - **RANDOM:** Specifies random effects for both judges and books.
 - **SUBJECT:** Defines the grouping variable for each random effect.
 - **COVTYPE(VC):** Sets the covariance structure to variance components.
 - **METHOD=REML:** Specifies the estimation method.

DIVERSITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: J. Renee

Committee Charge: The Diversity Advisory Committee shall make recommendations and provide information and materials to the Board on diversity, inclusion, and access issues that impact RWA and its members.

Committee Report: No meetings have been held for this quarter.

Successes/Action items Completed: The Committee participated in interviews of Pen to Paper Guides; Assigned to assisted RWR Content committee with reviewing and selecting articles for the monthly publications.

Summary of Action Items in-Progress/Pending: Committee will continue to review RWR articles for the monthly publications

Current Challenges: Replacement Committee Members

Recognition: None

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Toni Jackson, Committee Chair

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q2 (December – February)

Does This Report Require a Board Vote?: No

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: J. RENÉE

Committee Charge: The Leadership Development Committee shall create a process to identify potential future RWA leaders within membership, get those people involved at the chapter level and at the national committee level, and help them to grow in their leadership skills. In addition, the committee shall solicit the general membership for at least two candidates for each open board position, assist the President-Elect in making choices for assistant chairs per section.

Committee Report: The committee met on January 22, 2025 and discussed the following: Ways to recruit new members to both the national board and national committees. The Leadership Retreat at Nationals. Review of trainings available on RWA website.

Success/Action/Items Completed: The committee chair, Jennifer Bokal, will speak at the Indie Author weekend about ways to get involved in RWA at the national level. The committee discussed the Leadership retreat in 2024 and what can be done differently in 2025. A report with recommendations and a blurb that can be shared will be sent to Jacki Rene by 1/31

Summary of Action Items in-Progress/Pending: The committee will try to reach members in 3 ways. 1. Antonia Cyn will write an article about running for a board position to shine a light on how easy it is to apply and how fulfilling serving on the board can be. This will be submitted to board liaison, Jacki Rene, for possible publication in the RWR 2. Claudia Severino will create 2 ads (one for the National Board and one for National Committees) that will be submitted to Jacki Rene for publication in the RWR and e-Notes. 3. Jennifer Bokal will speak at the Indie Author and Trad Author weekends to make members aware of committees and how they can get involved. The committee members will review all RWA trainings. Recommendations will be sent to Jennifer Bokal. She will compile a list of comments. She will also reach out to Erin Novotny to partner on this endeavor.

Current Challenges: When the Submit a Volunteer Form is clicked, it does nothing. Claudia Severino and Antonia Cyn need access to RWA trainings so they can view them and make recommendations

Recognition: Antonia and Claudia are amazing to work with! They made themselves available for a meeting within days of me reaching out.

Name and Title of Person Filing the Report: Jennifer D. Bokal, Chairperson LDC

Time Covered: Q2 (December – February)

Board Action Required: None

**LIBRARY OUTREACH AD HOC COMMITTEE
BOARD LIAISON: M. GRIFFIN**

Committee 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.

Committee Report: No report submitted

Successes/Action items Completed:

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending:

Current Challenges:

Recognition:

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report:

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?:

Does This Report Require Board Action?:

MEMBERSHIP OUTREACH COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: U. RENEE

Committee Charge: Membership Outreach Committee. The Membership Outreach Committee shall be tasked with membership outreach and member support by creating initiatives and materials to help retain current membership and to increase membership.

- Plan, bring to the Board for approval, and execute a bi-yearly membership drive.
- Create a yearly membership survey based on current topics and industry norms, to gauge the direction the membership would like to see the organization and what member benefits are most desired.
- Maintain and update the onboarding and off boarding email sequences to make sure they are the most effective in either helping members feel welcome and give them the most important information or to help make members choose to remain members.
- Study and research current membership retention and acquisition practices within the non-profit sector and similar groups to RWA and report back to the Board on any information that may prove helpful.
- Assist with creation of promotional materials/ads/copy/images/Social media posts/ etc. and work with staff and any RWA consultants in charge of marketing to regularly post about becoming a member or RWA points of interest for our current members.
- Assist staff with emails and marketing to go out to all non-member attendees of all events no more than 7 days after any given event to attempt to convert them to membership.
- Work with staff to create an easy path to national conference non-member attendees to register for membership on site at the conference.

Committee Report: Due to difficulties with the scheduling, the February 1st Membership drive has been postponed until further notice. The committee is researching membership retention and new member recruitment.

Successes/Action items Completed:

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending: We are working on a focus plan for membership retention and recruitment activities for RWA's National Conference. A survey will be sent to members to get feedback on the organization.

Current Challenges: We need more members and improved communications.

Recognition: Thank you to Jordan Stokesberry for her help with the Membership Outreach Committee.

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Ursula Renee, Director-at-Large

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q2 (December – February)

Does this report require Board action? No

PAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: D. WINTERS

Committee Charge: The PAN Advisory Committee shall make recommendations and provide information to the Board regarding ways to protect the interests of published romance writers, enhance the channels of communication between romance authors and publishing industry professionals, and coordinate activities by and for PAN members.

Committee Report: No report submitted

Successes/Action items Completed:

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending:

Current Challenges:

Recognition:

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report:

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?:

Does This Report Require Board Action?:

PEN TO PAPER COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: M. GRIFFIN

Committee Charge: The Pen to Paper Committee shall coordinate, plan, and along with the Executive Director and Board of Directors, oversee the annual program. The Pen to Paper Committee shall ensure that the program reflects RWA’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.

Committee Report: No report submitted

Successes/Action Items Completed:

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending:

Current Challenges:

Name and title of Committee member completed the report:

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?:

Does this report require Board action?:

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: M. KARLIK

Committee 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 Report: While we have not met during this quarter, the committee chair, Tara Taylor Quinn, has attended meetings with the Author's Guild and Author's Coalition as representatives of RWA. Tara has also continued to stay up to date on issues concerning AI and copyright for authors.

Successes/Action Items Completed: The Author's Coalition Distribution Committee met on January 10 and approved a distribution to members. RWA will receive \$7254.83. According to the ACA: "These funds must be used in a manner to benefit all creators who fall under your organization's stated purpose, and not just your members. I am preparing the distribution for payment today but the celebration of Martin Luther King Day means the funds will not arrive in your organization's designated account until Wednesday."

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending:

Current Challenges:

Name and title of Committee member completed the report: Mary Karlik Board Liaison

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q2 (December - February)

Does this report require Board action?: No

PRO ADVISORY COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: R. HILLYER-MILES

Committee Charge: The PRO Advisory Committee shall make recommendations and provide information to the Board regarding ways to support and promote unpublished writers in the areas between manuscript completion and publication, enhance the channels of communication between those romance writers and publishing industry professionals, and coordinate activities by and for PRO members.

Committee Report: The PRO Committee met on Jan. 23 to plan out the first two quarters of 2025

Success/Action items Completed: PRO Group had a speaker on Jan. 21 with 12 attendees.

Current Challenges: Need PRO members to help create the PRO committee.

Name and title of committee member completing the report: Robin Hillyer Miles, PRO Liaison

What quarter does this report cover? Q2 (December - February)

Does this report require Board action? No

ROMANCE AUTHOR MENTORSHIP PROGRAM (RAMP) COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: C. BRETT

BOARD LIAISON: J. RENÉE

Committee Charge: The Romance Author Mentorship Program (RAMP) Committee shall coordinate, plan, and along with the Executive Director and Staff, oversee the annual program. The Romance Author Mentorship (RAMP) Committee shall ensure that the program reflects RWA's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access.

Committee Report: The 16-week period for mentors and mentees to polish the mentee's manuscript is coming to a close in February. RAMP mentors and mentee were given a code for free registration to Indie Author Weekend and will receive a code for free registration to Traditional Author Weekend. Mentees will get to pitch their manuscripts to agents and editors at Traditional Author Weekend.

Successes/Action items Completed: The collaboration between mentors and mentees is going well. Mentees are on track for successfully completing the program.

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending: Board liaison Renée will begin surveying mentors and mentees for feedback for future offerings of the Romance Author Mentorship Program.

Current Challenges: The committee is in need of more committee members and a committee chair for the 2025/2026 offering of RAMP

Recognition:

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Jacki Renée, Board Liaison acting chair

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q2 (December – February)

Does This Report Require Board Action? No

RWA GRANT FEASIBILITY TASK FORCE AD HOC COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: B. WILLS

Committee Charge: The RWA Grant Feasibility Task Force Ad Hoc Committee shall research and investigate possible grant avenues including registering and signing up for government grant opportunities. The committee shall compile a list of potential grant opportunities including thoroughly vetting any grant makers past funding history, etc.

Committee Report: In January 2025, the board of directors voted to establish a task force to investigate potential grants that RWA might be able to apply for.

Successes/Action items Completed:

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending:

Current Challenges:

Recognition:

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Brooke Wills, Treasurer

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q2 (December - February)

Does This Report Require Board Action?: No

RWA UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: J. RENEE

Committee Charge: The RWA University Committee provides 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.

Committee Report: Varying members of the Board of Directors are acting as committee members for RWA U.

Successes/Action items Completed: A workshop is scheduled for February 22. Acquiring Editor for City Owl Press, Lisa Green, will present Writing Romantasy. The committee has started a list of PAN members interested in participating in Ask an Author.

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending: The committee is planning to publish new Author Survival Guides, Writing for Writers Guides, and 2-minute tips.

Current Challenges:

Name and title of committee member completing the report: Jacki Renée, President

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q2 (December – February)

Does This Report Require Board Action? No

RWR CONTENT COMMITTEE

BOARD LIAISON: A. LEARNED

Committee Charge: The *RWR* Content Committee will work with RWA staff to develop content for the *RWR*, solicit authors for article, review articles upon submission and prior to publication, and help to ensure the *RWR* reflects RWA's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access—including, but not limited to, the authors whose work is featured and the sources who are quoted within the articles.

Committee Report: The *RWR* Content Committee continues to meet on a monthly basis to discuss the acquisition of articles for the magazine. The committee has identified monthly themes and are having great success with this. The committee remains open to feedback from its membership, as well as the members of RWA and the board, for directions on the future of the magazine. We have updated our system for approving articles.

Successes/Action items Completed: We have transitioned over to a new drive for keeping up with articles and for voting on them. We are accepting advertising for the *RWR* and if successful, we can publish more articles. We welcome the assistance of the DAC and Directors-at-Large for selecting articles.

Summary of Action Items In-Progress/Pending: We are working to increase advertising in the *RWR*.

Current Challenges: None

Name and Title of Committee Member Completing the Report: Anita Learned, Secretary, *RWR* Committee Board Liaison, Acting Chair

What Quarter Does This Report Cover?: Q2 (December - February)

Does This Report Require Board Action?: No

NEW BUSINESS

ADJOURN