

Romance Writers of America
Board Meeting Minutes
August 14, 2021
Virtual Meeting

Saturday, August 14, 2021

CALL TO ORDER: President LaQuette called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m. CT on Saturday, August 14, 2021.

ROLL CALL/CERTIFICATION OF QUORUM: President LaQuette directed RWA staff member Erin Fry to call the roll. Nine board members were present: Officers LaQuette and Laura Alford; Directors-at-Large Elf Ahearn, Clair Brett, Antonia Cyn, Seressia Glass, Jacki Renée, and Elizabeth Schechter; PAN Advisor Nancy C. Weeks. RWA staff member Erin Fry was present. Secretary C. Chilove, Directors-at-Large Veronica Forand and Siera London, and PRO Advisor Catherine Stuart were absent. With a majority of the Board members needed to establish a quorum, there were 8 voting members present and the Chair declared a quorum.

The following RWA member guests were in attendance: Gail Chianese, Marian Griffin, Joy Held, Tamara Hogan, Cathay Matuszak, Julie McMullen, Nikki Sloane, Kim Smallwood, Christiana Tegethoff, and Anne Turner.

The RWA Mission Statement and the Anti-Trust Statement were read into the record.

London joined the meeting at 12:04 p.m. CT.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - LaQuette

Since the installation of this Board, our focus has been to provide value for RWA's membership and help restore our relationships with our publishing partners. To help accomplish the first goal, we've created ongoing master classes, developed three writing programs: RAMP, Pen to Paper, and Own Voices Pathways. RAMP has completed its first cohort and Pen to Paper has just begun its inaugural run. Our OVP is still in the development phase with an information launch scheduled at conference in November.

To accomplish the second goal of restoring our relationship with our publishing partners, we've done regular outreach with publishers and industry professionals, some of whom will be

participating in our virtual conference this November, while others will partner with us on certain educational programs.

Looking forward, our goal is to continue the positive foundational work we've established during this term. We are exploring ways to connect with new writers by doing outreach to various academic writing programs to bring new members into the organization and the industry.

Thank you,

President LaQuette

SECRETARY'S REPORT - C. Chilove

Motion to Approve the May 2021 Board Meeting Minutes

LaQuette moved to approve the May 2021 Board Meeting Minutes.

The motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on June 14 with 9 votes in the affirmative, 0 against, and 2 abstentions.

Motion to Approve Pen to Paper Scholarship Fund Policy

Schechter moved to approve the following Pen to Paper Scholarship fund policy. The motion was adopted in an Action Without Meeting on July 1 with 7 votes in the affirmative, 0 against, and 4 abstentions.

TREASURER'S REPORT - Laura Alford

CASH POSITION

July	June	Difference
\$738,085.06	\$761,095.56	\$(23,010.50)

NET INCOME (LOSS)

Monthly Net income for July is **\$(29,616.10)**.

Fiscal Year-to-Date Net Income is **\$(120,809.17)**.

MEMBERSHIP

Total General and Associate members as of 8-3-21 was 4,642, a decrease of 2.54% from July to August.

June Membership Data			
New	Reinstated	Lapsed	Renewed
37	21	194	245

Last year, at this time, our membership attrition rate was 2.71%.

As a result of the VIVIAN Awards, 54 people requested to cancel their memberships (as of 8-12-21). Four of the cancellations qualified for a dues refund per policy.

NOTES

- On 8-4-21, the SBA approved forgiveness for the PPP Loan in the amount of \$147,226.51; this is inclusive of any interest paid by the SBA. This will be reflected in the August financials.

- Update: The IRS sent another notice dated 7-15-21 informing us they need an additional 60 days to decide what action they are going to take regarding the \$30,000 from the Employee Retention Credit.

BUDGET VS. ACTUALS

for Month of July

Revenue

- Dues income brought in \$2,774 more than budgeted (GL 3020). However, this amount continues to decline.
- Conference revenue did not meet the budgeted amount.
- Interest from the building payment went into GL 3320.
- Rent is N/A since RWA sold the building.
- Advertising income is down with no options to advertise in the *RWR*. We did not have any new Writers Services Listings in July.

Expenses

- The invoices from the Summer Retreat will be reflected in the August financials.
 - The Gaylord Opryland agreed to waive all attrition; a savings of about \$25,000.
- The 2021 Academic Grant recipient amounts have been accrued for this fiscal year. The recipients have one year from the date they are notified to submit receipts for grant reimbursement, which is why the amounts needed to be accrued in this fiscal year.

BALANCE SHEET

**Romance Writers Of America
Balance Sheet
As of July 31, 2021**

	<u>Total</u>
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
1000 Cash	492,983.85
1100 Investment Accounts	245,101.21
Total Bank Accounts	\$ 738,085.06
Other Current Assets	
1300 Other Current Assets	938.00
1400 Prepaid Expenses	64,682.29
1500 Inventory Asset	5,310.00
Total Other Current Assets	\$ 70,930.29
Total Current Assets	\$ 809,015.35
Fixed Assets	
1600 Land	0.00
1610 Building	0.00
1620 Building Improvements	0.00
1630 Furniture & Fixtures	0.00
1640 Computer Equipment	1,169.41
1650 Office Machines	0.00
1660 Software	94,285.98
Total Fixed Assets	\$ 95,455.39
Other Assets	
1700 Long-term Assets	481,834.66
Total Other Assets	\$ 481,834.66
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,386,305.40
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
2200 Other Current Liabilities	57,275.99
2700 Deferred Revenues	192,136.30
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$ 249,412.29
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 249,412.29
Long-Term Liabilities	
2300 Long Term Liabilities	296,424.00
Total Long-Term Liabilities	\$ 296,424.00
Total Liabilities	\$ 545,836.29
Equity	
2800 Designated Funds	431,295.39
Opening Balance Equity	1,190,601.56
Retained Earnings	(660,618.67)
Net Income	(120,809.17)
Total Equity	\$ 840,469.11
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$1,386,305.40

BUDGET VS. ACTUALS
September 2020 - July 2021

Romance Writers Of America
Budget vs. Actuals
September 2020 - July 2021

	Total	
	Actual	Budget
Income		
3000 Dues	474,823.05	469,796.00
3100 Conferences / Meetings / Events	66,458.00	204,015.00
3200 Contest Revenues	50,100.00	35,000.00
3300 Other Regular Revenues	281,068.76	66,565.27
3400 UBI Revenues	16,208.00	10,000.00
3500 Donations	9,749.98	1,720.00
Total Income	\$ 898,407.79	\$ 787,096.27
Gross Profit	\$ 898,407.79	\$ 787,096.27
Expenses		
5000 Salary Expenses	407,630.31	481,871.82
5100 Payroll Tax & Benefits	109,323.37	91,342.88
5200 Depreciation & Amortization	46,595.70	52,595.00
5300 Insurance Expenses	18,517.31	22,171.78
5400 Property Expenses	23,926.44	27,986.08
5500 Information Technology	122,955.57	122,854.20
5600 Office Expenses & Supplies	65,217.09	67,340.00
5700 Telephone & Internet	5,581.01	5,800.00
6000 Advertising & Marketing PR	50.00	700.00
6100 Audio Visual		0.00
6200 Awards	59,005.93	22,011.40
6300 Bank & Credit Cards Fees	18,114.81	20,640.00
6400 Catering		0.00
6500 Other Exhibit & Meeting Costs	9,595.50	23,260.00
6600 Professional Fees	132,403.15	177,655.00
6700 Shipping		0.00
6800 Travel	281.72	18,029.00
6900 Federal Income Tax	19.05	
Total Expenses	\$1,019,216.96	\$1,134,257.16
Net Operating Income	\$ (120,809.17)	\$ (347,160.89)
Net Income	\$ (120,809.17)	\$ (347,160.89)

OFFICE REPORT - Leslie Scantlebury

Staff

Leslie Scantlebury, Executive Director

Erin Fry, Senior Project Manager

Jackie Padilla, Accountant

Membership Report

Member Type	05/07/21	07/29/21	Change
Affiliate	40	40	0
Associate	1271	1232	-39
Charter	24	24	0
Charter/Honorary	2	2	0
General	3577	3451	-126
General/Honorary	12	11	1
Honorary	62	62	0
	4988	4822	-164

PRO ADVISOR/PRO STEERING REPORT - Catherine Stuart

The PRO Power Up Sessions now meet on the second week of each month, alternating between midday and evening Zoom sessions. The fourth week of the month will continue to host the PRO Book Club.

In August and September, the PRO Power Up Sessions will provide our unpublished members with panels of PAN authors. The topic of both sessions is, “What I Wish I Knew Before I Published,” but members are free to ask the panel questions about their experiences in publishing.

PRO members have expressed a desire for more programming, specifically chapter-like workshops to help them on their publishing journey.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Stuart
RWA PRO Advisor

PAN ADVISOR/PAN ADVISORY/PAN STEERING REPORT - Nancy C. Weeks

PAN Power Up Zoom Sessions

Goal: Facilitate professional growth, education, and group cohesion.

Zoom Session Format

- A quarterly calendar of planned events lead by a facilitator
- 1 hour Zoom sessions
 - 25-minute discussion
 - 25-minute break-out session
 - 10-minute-follow-up questions/suggestions

- PAN activities scheduled for 1st & 3rd weeks / month
- PRO activities scheduled for 2nd week / month
- Zoom Sessions are open for all membership levels

The PAN Community Zoom Sessions continue to go well. The zoom session's registration is up to 210 members with a first-come-first-served policy. Registration will remain open. Zoom unfortunately has a 100-attendee cap so we will only have room for 100 attendees on the call. We will start promptly at 2 minutes past the hour, so please consider joining the call a few minutes early to ensure you get a spot. Zoom sessions are recorded. However, if the session uses the breakout rooms feature, Zoom can't record during breakout. Members should feel free to remain off camera during the recorded sessions if they prefer. Recordings of the sessions are emailed to all registered members. PAN and PRO Power Up schedules are posted in *RWA eNotes*.

Future PAN Power UP Zoom Session Schedule

August 3, 2021, Tuesday

7:00 PM CT

August 21, 2021, Saturday

11:00 AM CST

September 7, 2021, Tuesday

7:00 PM CST

September 25, 2021, Saturday

11:00 AM CST

October 5, 2021, Tuesday
7:00 PM CT

October 23, 2021, Saturday
11:00 AM CST

Future Discussion Topics/Break-out Sessions:

- National Book Festivals/Live and Zoom
- National Salon Readings Live/Zoom
- RWA support our Indie/Hybrid authors
- Author's rights conversion
- PAN community Bar Night: What publishers won't tell you.
- Audio Books
- Foreign Translations
- Marketing Outside the USA
- More About
- Facebook Ads
- BookBub Ads
- Amazon Ads
- Barnes & Noble Ads
- Agents
- Editors
- Virtual / Personal Assistants
- Cover Design
- Graphic Design
- (Social Media)
- (Screenwriting / Playwriting)
- (Writer Education)
- (Feature articles)
- (News & Trends)

Submitted by Nancy C. Weeks, RWA PAN Advisor

CONFERENCE WORKSHOP COMMITTEE REPORT – Clair Brett

RWA2021 Virtual Conference: November 18–20

Zoom call with committee last held on 7/28.

Where we stand:

Speakers/Workshop Presenters:

At the RWA Retreat, LaQuette, BOM Veronica Forand, and I sat down and started making a speaker/workshop wish list. We came up with 76 names. Between us, we reached out to all of them and asked if they would be willing to present a workshop at the conference. These are regular workshops and not master classes.

13 people have said no (all valid reasons) and I'm waiting to hear back from the others.

Workshops:

The portal is open until 8/31.

The goal is to have the workshops selected and notified by the end of Sept. at the very latest (sooner if we can).

We do have 38 that were previously submitted for the virtual conference.

Last year, we had 40 workshops. The 2021 goal is to at least double that to give attendees a good bang for their buck. When the conference is in-person, we generally have 80–100 workshops. The committee threw out some topic ideas such as a panel on TikTok (preferably users who have a large following), Clubhouse, Marketing, Audio, Translations, etc. We'll be looking for these in the submissions, but if none are proposed, we'll look to see who might be willing to present on these topics. We also discussed the importance of DEIA.

Librarians' Day:

Christine Ashworth is taking point and will reach out to Amy Alessio, who ran point and created the Librarians' Day programming last year.

Keynote Speakers:

The Board is handling this.

Master Class:

Most likely, we'll only have one this year. It was suggested by some committee members that the Master Class start the day before and this be an add on option. It's been done at other conferences, but this year might not be the year for RWA to do that.

Open Roundtables:

Like last year, we talked about having nightly roundtables. Our biggest concern is having the bandwidth from our platform provider to do this. We discussed we'd have a few preselected topics and set those up to start. If we have the ability, we'll add more later.

Submitted by Gail Chianese, Workshop Committee Chair

UNPUBLISHED MEMBER BENEFITS TASK FORCE REPORT (PEN TO PAPER PROGRAM) – Elizabeth Schechter

Applications for Guides opened on May 3rd, and closed on June 21st.

We received 21 applications, and had one person subsequently remove their application.

Of the 20 remaining, we had 16 volunteers for all three levels, one for the first level only, and three for the second two levels. We received one more volunteer after the application period closed, and that applicant has been added to the Guide waiting list.

This gives Pen to Paper 16 confirmed Guides, with five Guides on the waiting list. We will be offering all Guides (confirmed and waitlisted) the same orientation on August 8th, so that in case one of the waitlist Guides is asked to step up, they have the same grounding .

Participant Applications

The applications for Participants opened on June 28th, with a projected cap of 40 participants in the inaugural class. Because the scholarship application did not go live on the same day as the main application, five seats were reserved for scholarship students. We met our maximum capacity of 35 paid applications by July 5th, when the scholarship application launched. Staff will be making the determination of which scholarship applications will be accepted to fill the five scholarship seats.

Pen to Paper Retreat Presentation

The Pen to Paper presentation at the RWA retreat in Nashville was well received, and interest was raised among published authors who expressed interest in participating as future Guides. Several of them indicated that they had no idea the application period was open until after it had closed, because they missed the information in the eNotes and on the Forums. Notes have been made to enhance future marketing efforts.

Pen to Paper Forums

Separate forums have been set up for the Guides and the Participants, and the materials for the first Units will be made available to the Guides prior to the orientation.

Guide and Participant DEIA Training

Guides will also be assigned DEIA training modules to complete prior to their orientation on August 8.

Participants will be given access to DEIA training and encouraged to take it before reaching Unit 3 when we cover writing diverse characters.

Beta testing of the initial four units led to enhancements to the program materials and adjustments to resources provided. The syllabi for units One through Four are in their final edits, as are the introduction to the subgenres videos and PowerPoints.

At the time of this writing, we are projected to launch on time, the week of August 16th.

RWA U COMMITTEE REPORT – Elf Ahearn

The RWA U committee met in June and mainly discussed the work we did for the 2020–2021 year and the plans for 2021–2022 year.

Work in 2020–2021:

- Restarted programs: webinars, two-minute tips, forum classes, and author survival guides.
- Created a draft for a new RWA U landing page to more clearly show members the RWA U resources we offer.
- Started to catalog and organize the webinars to circumvent the search engine problems.
- Drafted an onboarding sequence to introduce new members to RWA’s resources.

Plans for 2021–2022:

- Continue to plan webinars, two-minute tips, and author survival guides.
- Build the RWA U landing page and make it live.
- Finalize and implement onboarding sequence.
- Finish cataloging webinars to organize offerings and create an index page by category.

Most committee members plan to continue working on the committee for the next year. Our next meeting is in August.

ARI TASK FORCE REPORT – Elf Ahearn

Writer Services List

With the help of Nancy Weeks, Nina Bocci, and Daphne Ford, we collected the names and email addresses of 127 businesses that provide writer services. On Aug. 3, I emailed Erin Fry the copy for a solicitation letter to these businesses that included quotes from satisfied customers. I also asked that she send a similar notice to our membership, and that she include the quotes in eNotes.

As of this week, the WSL has 20 listings and raised \$6,071 since it launched in January.

Silent Auction

1. Had a 4-panel comic strip created to introduce the Silent Auction in an eye-catching format that people will read.
2. Created 2 additional ads using images from the comic strip to induce both donations and stir excitement about bidding.
3. Established a relationship with Matt Mansfield, Senior Account Executive at GiveSmart, our chosen online auction provider.
4. Passed a motion for \$2,400 to pay GiveSmart \$2,395. Someone needs to contact Matt and request the contract begin Oct. 1, 2021. GiveSmart's agreement allows chapters of RWA to hold an auction up until midnight Sept. 30th.
5. Created a form for donators to complete.
6. Written a letter soliciting romance-themed crafts from RWA members who are crafters.
7. Collected names, emails, and addresses of agents, managers, publicists etc. handling actors in Bridgerton series.
8. Composed a letter to go out to representatives of those Bridgerton series actors to see if they're willing to donate.
9. Requested that when LaQuette speak with Shondaland representatives, she ask for items that could be included in the silent auction.

Online/Conference Gift Shop

Siera designed a gorgeous array of T-shirts, mugs, and other items. On 8-13, Siera noted that Jackie created the account after the retreat. Siera needs to populate the store.

Donation Button

The button is on the landing page of our website, but it's not very prominently displayed. We should consider moving it lower, making it bigger, and consistently asking for donations via eNotes and RWR.

MOTION #1: APPROVE CONFERENCE WORKSHOP COMMITTEE ASSISTANT CHAIR

Clair moves that Alexis Morgan-Roark be approved as assistant chair for the Workshop Committee.

Motion adopted by general consent.

MOTION #2: APPROVE SELECTION OF CPA FIRM FOR ANNUAL FINANCIAL AUDIT

Alford moves that the CPA firm of Blazek & Vetterling be retained to conduct RWA's annual financial audit as recommended by the Audit Committee.

Motion adopted by general consent.

MOTION #3: APPROVE RWA2021 CONFERENCE BUDGET

Alford moves that the budget for RWA2021 Virtual Conference be approved as presented.

GL Code	Item	RWA2021 Virtual Conference Budget
6100 - Audio Visual	Pathable	\$25,000.00
6610 - ADA Compliance	ADA - Captioning	\$7,000.00
	ADA - Live Transcription	
6645 - Graphic Design & Layout	Graphics	\$1,000.00
6010 - Advertising	Advertising	\$1,000.00
6300 - Bank & CC Fees	Credit card fees	\$9,000.00
6540 - Miscellaneous Exhibit & Meeting Costs	Speaker Gifts	\$300.00
6680 - Speaker Fees	Speaker Fees	\$2,500.00
5650 - Miscellaneous Office Expenses & Supplies	Miscellaneous	\$300.00
6290 - Scholarships	Scholarships from ACA Funds	\$10,000.00
		\$56,100.00

The motion was adopted on a roll call vote with 9 ayes, 0 nays.

MOTION #4: APPROVE RWA2021 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION FEES

Alford moves to approve the following registration fees for RWA2021.

RWA Member: September 1 - September 30: \$249.00

RWA Member: October 1 - October 31: \$269.00

RWA Member: November 1 - November 20: \$299.00

RWA Nonmember: September 1 - September 30: \$269.00

RWA Nonmember: October 1 - October 31: \$299.00

RWA Nonmember: November 1 - November 30: \$319

Industry Professionals: \$0

The motion was adopted on a roll call vote with 9 ayes, 0 nays.

ADJOURN: President LaQuette adjourned the meeting at 12:37 p.m. CT.