



[« Romance writers conference this weekend | Main | Guest blogger wraps up conference for us »](#) Sept. 19-21, 2009

Romance conference gets underway

I had some technical difficulties last night - no Internet service, and then I fell asleep while awaiting it! - but here is a blog post contributed by Marcia James, to tell us all about last night's opening of the Central Ohio Fiction Writers' conference:

The conference kicked off with a 22-author booksigning at the Worthington Holiday Inn. Close to 100 readers and writers attended the gathering, which included conference keynote speaker, bestselling romantic suspense author, Roxanne St. Clair, and a host of Ohio-based romance authors.

Bibliophiles with an affection for happily-ever-afters chatted up authors in every category of the popular romance genre.

Paranormal and fantasy romances were represented, as well as western historicals and Regency romances. On one end of the sensuality scale, there were G-rated inspirational, young adult, and sweet romances; on the other end, there were racy erotic romances. Something for everyone.

The crowd was a mix of readers and aspiring authors, and the discussions ranged from "How do you come up with your plots?" to "Who's your agent?" *New York Times* mystery/suspense bestseller [Karen Harper](#) sat shoulder-to-shoulder with debut romance authors [Louisa Edwards](#) and [Leanna Renee Hieber](#). Bantam author [Linnea Sinclair](#), who writes "Interstellar Adventures Infused with Romance", answered questions about her Dock Five Universe books. And next to her, Kensington author [Patricia Sargeant](#) signed copies of her latest release, *Sweet Deception*.

After the booksigning, the conference continued in the ballroom, with a short speech by [Ohioana Library](#) Executive Director, Linda Hengst. Her library is

home to many of the books by the Ohio writers who were present, and she offers several events each year that feature authors from all over the state.

Berkley historical romance author, [Donna MacMeans](#), capped the Friday night events by presenting a workshop titled, "Analyzing Your Way to a Bestseller". Using her background in accounting, Donna has developed a process for pinpointing market trends--allowing authors to determine the elements of a book that will catch an editor's eye and wow readers. Her own award-winning Regencies are proof that her system works.

Of note: [Marcia James](#) writes hot, humorous romances, and her short story, "Rescue Me", appeared in *Tails of Love*, a Berkley romance anthology, along with stories by nine other authors. All the author proceeds benefit the Animal Adoption Foundation, a no-kill animal shelter in Hamilton, OH. Since it's June release, *Tails of Love* has raised \$10,000 for the shelter



Guest blogger wraps up conference for us

Columbus author Marcia James, our guest on-the-scene blogger, fills us all in on what we missed at COFW's conference:

"It isn't easy to write a book that's easy to read."

The quote from commercial fiction dynamo, Judith Krantz, resonated with the 90 aspiring and published authors who participated in the Central Ohio Fiction Writers (COFW) conference Saturday at the Worthington Holiday Inn.

Keynote speaker, bestselling romantic suspense author [Roxanne St. Claire](#), quoted the truism as part of her often-humorous motivational presentation. So if it's so difficult, why would anyone want to do it?

According to several surveys, more than 80% of Americans want to write a book, and only a small number of those will ever finish their novel. Out of that group, only a fraction will ever sell their manuscript. So what's the appeal?

"The odds do seem to be against us, don't they?" Kensington author [Patricia Sargeant](#) said. "But I continue to write because I have stories to tell, and it's such a satisfying feeling to get the stories from my head onto the paper - or into the computer."

Most in attendance write romance fiction, currently the only genre seeing an increase in sales during this tough economy.

From historical and contemporary romances to paranormals and inspirational, romance accounts for \$1.37 billion in annual sales. More than a quarter of all books sold are romance - the largest share of the consumer-book market. And COFW, a chapter of 10,000-member Romance Writers of America, provides the type of insider information to help aspiring authors make that first sale and published authors climb the bestseller lists.

In addition to St. Claire, the conference's special guests included agents Stephany Evans ([FinePrint Literary Agency](#)) and Elaine Spencer ([The Knight Agency](#)), and editors Lori Graham ([The Wild Rose Press](#)) and Lindsey McGurk (Samhain Publishing). All four listened to short manuscripts pitches from conference attendees, requesting manuscripts from many. The agents and editors also answered questions on publishing trends, book submission guidelines, and personal likes and dislikes.

The conference offered two workshops: "Direct Your Book: Using Theatre Techniques to Write the Next Blockbuster" by Dorchester author [Leanna Renee Hieber](#), and "Build a Hero" by Samhain author [J.C. Wilder](#). And the Awards Luncheon included the presentation of the COFW Bookseller of the Year honor to Annette Fitzgerald of [The Book Exchange](#) stores in northern Ohio.

For Central Ohioans with their own stories to tell, there will be two COFW events next year: a plotting workshop by author [Laura Schnebly Campbell](#) on January 23rd and the October 1-2, 2010 conference, featuring NY Times bestseller, [Suzanne Brockmann](#). COFW information can be found at www.COFW.org.

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