

DARA NEWS



Mark Leslie Lefebvre— Find Success With Indie publishing

Indie Publishing offers authors freedom in how they choose to pursue their writing career, but with so many options at your disposal, how do you make the most of your author opportunities? Mark Leslie Lefebvre offers his career experience as a publishing industry insider to share some best practices for authors looking to find success through indie publishing.

About Mark: Mark Leslie Lefebvre has spent his career helping authors and continues this work as the Director of Business Development at Draft2Digital. He is the author of more than twenty books that include fiction and thrillers, and paranormal non-fiction explorations. He has also edited numerous anthologies, with three decades of experience in

bookselling and publishing, Mark is a seasoned and trusted book industry professional who embraces both traditional and indie publishing options.

Learn more about Draft2Digital at <https://draft2digital.com/>



January 2026 Meeting Information

DARA Meeting For Jan 24th. Social Time: 9am. Business Meeting: 9:30 am. Speaker: 10am.

DARA has changed the policy for guests to attend our meetings. Non-members are invited to attend our meetings for a \$5.00 attendance fee. The fee includes the speaker recording. You are required to register for the meeting. Go to [DARA's website](#) and click the button to register.

You'll receive an email with the Zoom link. The link and the recording will be sent to you with the email you register with.

President's Letter - *A New Year, A Renewed Page*

January always feels like a deep breath.

Not the shallow, rushed inhale we take when we're behind—but a full one. The kind that expands your chest, steadies your footing, and reminds you that you are allowed to begin again.

As romance writers, we spend our lives crafting beginnings. Meet-cutes. Inciting incidents. Moments where everything shifts and the story truly starts. And yet, when it comes to our own creative lives, we often forget that we're allowed the same grace we give our characters.

A new year is not a demand. It's an invitation.

An invitation to re-enter the story you're telling—not just on the page, but in your writing life.

Some of you are coming into January energized and clear. You have goals mapped out, projects queued up, maybe even a color-coded plan that makes your heart happy. Others are arriving here tired. Burned out. Carrying the weight of unfinished drafts, rejected submissions, missed deadlines, or simply the quiet ache of wondering if you're still “doing this right.”

Both of those places are valid.

This year, I want to encourage us—individually and as a chapter—to let go of the idea that January requires perfection. Or productivity. Or instant clarity.

Instead, let's focus on **intention**.

What do you want *this year* to feel like as a writer?

Not just what you want to publish. Not just what you want to sell. But how you want to show up at the page. How you want to feel when you sit down to write. How you want your creative life to support you rather than drain you.

For some, that may mean finishing a long-stalled manuscript. For others, it may mean giving yourself permission to start something new. It might look like submitting more bravely—or resting more intentionally. It might mean finally asking for help, joining a critique group, attending meetings more often, or simply reconnecting with why you fell in love with romance in the first place.

Romance, after all, is the genre of hope.

We believe in transformation. In second chances. In characters who grow, heal, and choose love—even when the odds are stacked against them. And that belief doesn't stop at the edge of the page. It's something we live.

RWA is at its best when it is a place of encouragement, education, and belonging. A place where you can say, “I'm struggling,” and be met with understanding instead of judgment. A place where success is celebrated in all its forms—finished chapters, first drafts, brave submissions, personal breakthroughs.

This year, my hope is that we lean into that.

That we show up for one another—not as competitors, but as colleagues and friends walking parallel paths.



That we remember there is no single right timeline, no single definition of success, no single way to be a “real” writer.

You are a real writer because you write. And even on the days you don’t, you are still a writer because the story lives in you.

If you’re setting goals this year, I invite you to make them humane. Flexible. Alive. Goals that can evolve as you do. And if you’re not setting goals at all, that’s okay too. Sometimes the bravest choice is simply to keep going.

As president this year, I’m deeply honored to serve a chapter filled with creativity, talent, generosity, and heart. I look forward to the conversations we’ll have, the craft we’ll deepen, the business knowledge we’ll share, and the many wins—large and small—we’ll celebrate together.

So here’s to the blank page. The next chapter. The story you haven’t written yet but will.

May this year bring you clarity where you need it, courage where you doubt, and joy in the act of creating love stories that matter.

—Michelle Miles



Congratulations!

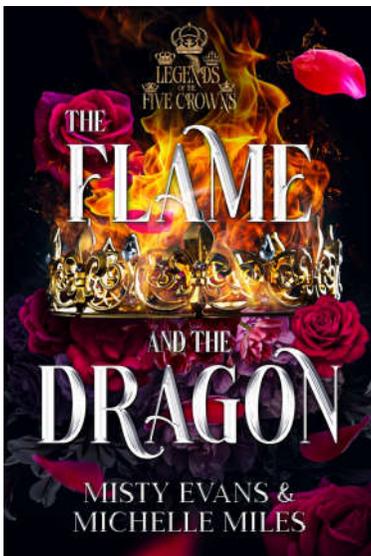
Congratulations to Sharon Giddings Davis on winning the Robin Teer Memorial Service Award. This award is given each year to recognize an active member of DARA in good standing who volunteered their time and service to the Chapter. Well done, Sharon!

The Award History

The Robin Teer Memorial Service Award is given in honor of an extremely active DARA member who died in May of 1992. Robin was one, if not the first, of DARA’s male members. Among other things, he chaired DARA’s contest in the early days and was active in a critique group. A shy man, Robin often worked behind the scenes and never sought recognition for his service. The Robin Teer Memorial Service Award is given to a DARA member who has contributed a body of service to the Chapter.

Member's Corner

A place to celebrate success, recognize our members, and welcome new members



Title: The Flame and the Dragon
Author: Michelle Miles & Misty Evans
Genre: Romantasy
Release Date: January 20, 2026
Available In: Kindle and Paperback
First/Subsequent Sale: Subsequent

I'm the only one who remembers him—and the only one who can save him.

In the realm of the Five Crowns, stories are power. Lose the story, and you lose the kingdom.

The Story Thief has already claimed Drakenholt, erasing its dragon prince, Renwick Ravelle, from every story in the land but mine. Now Ren is nothing but a ghost—desperate, dangerous, and determined to take back his crown.

I am Dessalyn Lorewyn, heir to a family of fae-born scriptographers who can shape fate with the ancient Lore Language. My duty is to guard the sentient book that records the realm's legends and gifts sacred quests to the worthy. I've waited years for mine...and now it has led me to ruins steeped in dragonfire—and to him.

Renwick claims I'm the only one who can restore his kingdom. But can I trust a man who might sacrifice me to save it? His touch is fire, his gaze burns, and the pull between us is a cursed magic neither of us understands.

Our journey will take us from enchanted ruins to the heart of Drakenholt's secrets. But when the magic we share comes at a deadly cost, I'll have to decide how much of my own story I'm willing to rewrite to save his.

Welcome To The Chapter



Welcome new members from January - December 2025

Mae Harless - 1/13/2025

Jennifer Tennison - 2/2/2025

Dora Hilburn - 2/20/2025

Erin Vollick - 7/23/2025

Sasha Summers Best - 7/23/2025

Julie Benson - 11/17/2025

Sharla Wylde - 12/15/2025



Miles Beyond The Page:

Each week, host Michelle Miles sits down with authors at every stage of their journey—whether they're just starting out, building their readership, or seasoned pros with stories to share. Listeners are invited to explore the creative process, uncover valuable tips and insights, and celebrate the highs and lows of the writing life.

<https://www.milesbeyondthepage.com/>

The Writer's Voice

—*Donna McGoldrick*

When I had the crazy idea I wanted to write a book, I studied all the elements of writing. Read the “how-to” books on plot, characters, setting, GMC, and revisions. I attended writing conferences where I heard the phrase *find your voice*. Agents and editors said they wanted manuscripts with *a fresh voice*.

Voice? What is voice? I set out in search of this elusive concept.

Over the years I learned the definition of voice is simple, though achieving it, not so simple. I can honestly say I haven't mastered it, yet.

A writer's voice is unique like a fingerprint. It's the combination of a writer's upbringing, belief system, education, and interests.

In order to find your voice on the page, you must first understand the elements that go into voice.

Vocabulary (A writer's choice of words)

This is the foundation of voice and contributes to all of its elements. Words are the writer's basic tools that create color and texture to the written work. Specific words bring the reader into the scene, enabling full participation in the writer's world and help shape the reader's perceptions. Effective voice is shaped by words that are clear, concrete, and exact. Words that invoke a specific effect.

Syntax (Sentence structure)

Syntax is all about structure; the way words are arranged within sentences. It ensures the coherence of your subject, verb and object, and the relationships that tie them together. It's a subtle element that most readers aren't aware of, but it's one to which writers must pay attention. How craftily the writer puts words together, shows their personality in the writing and a level of skill.

Details (Facts, observations and incidents)

The information chosen by the writer brings descriptions to life. It focuses the reader's attention and invites the reader into the scene.

Description is the most important role in a writer's voice. Not enough descriptions will leave the reader questioning where they are and too much drowns them in unimportant details. It's important writers find a balance between too little and too much.

Imagery (Verbal representation of the five senses)

Imagery depends on vocabulary and details, but it takes description to another level. It's a method writers use to paint pictures of scenes and characters in the mind of their readers. It contributes to voice by evoking a vivid experience and conveying specific emotions.

The emotions of the writer has everything to do with his/her voice. What the writer feels is telegraphed



onto the page. Writers with a strong voice allow emotions to drive the story, which impacts the choices the characters make. When you tap into your emotions, your voice engages the emotions of the reader.

Tone (Expression of attitude)

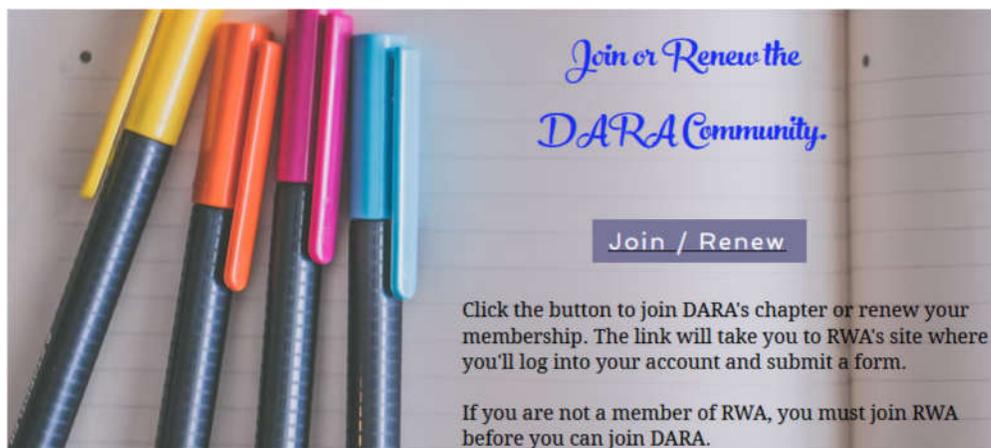
The combination of all the elements (vocabulary, syntax, details and imagery) come together to create the tone. Just as the pitch and volume of someone’s speaking voice carries a difference in tone, the choice of words in descriptive details and the way sentences are structured creates a vibrancy in our writing.

Voice is how a writer tells the story. Voice is the writer’s personality and style in the form of words on the paper. Voice is literally everything when an editor or agent is considering your manuscript.



Donna McGoldrick is a PRO member of RWA. She serves as the newsletter editor and treasurer for the DARA Chapter. She’s also a member of Sister’s in Crime, SinC North Dallas, and the Guppy Chapter.

Renew Your Chapter Dues on DARA’s Website



Your Chapter dues are due on the month you joined DARA. It’s up to you to remember your renewal date. If you were at the December party, you received a name badge with your expiration date. If you forget the date, you can email the membership chair person, Amanda Reid, at amandareidauthor@gmail.com.

Please go to DARA’s website to renew your chapter dues for 2026. Click the **Join/Renew** button. This will take you to RWA’s site first, then the chapter will be notified of your renewal. You’ll receive an email to pay chapter dues via PayPal. You can also write a check and send it to our post office box.

Website: <https://www.dallasarearomanceauthors.com/join>.

Writing Sprints 2026 ZOOM Link

Janet Leigh host Writing Sprints every Monday night at 7:30 CST. Look for the link in Circles and on DARA’s Facebook. Join the sprinting action on Zoom.

If you can’t click it, highlight the link and paste it in a browser.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86099936742?pwd=ApZiLtnB0J0PX30lcia4fHbHuXWeab.1>

DARA Newsletter

Our Mission: DARA is focused on providing education and marketing opportunities to the members. With monthly programs on writing craft, publishing business, and writing tools, we strive to improve our writing skills. We support and encourage our members no matter their writing level.

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 many other writing advise and tips. You don't need to be a published author to submit an article. Send your submissions in MS Word format to Donna McGoldrick at dsmcgold@donnamcgold.com

The DARA News is published monthly from January through November. DARA does not publish a newsletter in December. **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION is the 10th of each month.**

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.

If you have a new release, send your information to Michelle Miles at mlmiles21@gmail.com.

Please include your name, title, date of publication, publisher, format, and whether or not it's your first publication.



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DARA Board of Directors for 2026

- President—Michelle Miles
- President Elect—Janet Leigh
- Treasurer—Donna McGoldrick
- Secretary—Lisa Fenley

DARA Leaders

- Program Coordinator—Jennifer August
- Membership—Amanda Reid
- Member Awards (Roses) - Michelle Miles
- Communications (Newsletter / Website) - Donna McGoldrick
- Pan Liaison—Open
- Pro Liaison—Open