

Program: Write Now, Right Now!

Speaker: Alicia Rasley, Writing Advisor, University of Maryland

Introduced by: Jeff Rasley

Attendance: 118

Guests: Judy Keen, Paul Lewer, Dr. Farauk Khairy, Dan Onzechowski, Susan Fordyce, Janet Harris, Dick Woofsie, Sue Tempero, Lisa Murphy, Lorene Buskhart, Judy Keene

Scribe: Larry Hutchison

Editor: Bill Elliott

Our speaker today was Alicia Rasley, wife of Past President Jeff Rasley, a professional writer and oft published novelist. She got an early start in her trade by having a novel published at the young age of twenty-four. The theme of her talk was that we all have stories inside us, and there has never been a better time to write about them than right now. This broadened opportunity for all of us to write has been brought on by technology which has made audience access much easier than, say, twenty years ago. For background, Alicia described the publishing world as it existed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. At that time large publishers, primarily located in New York City or London, controlled access to the reader's market and the availability of books was primarily in brick and mortar bookstores. While this structure did limit the number of writers able to get their work to an audience, it did provide a supportive organization of experienced editors, professional promoters and people that could arrange mass production of books. While still in place, this traditional structure is much less dominating than it was fifteen or twenty years ago. An aspiring writer wanting to take this traditional approach to getting his/her work to a large market, should make sure that they work with a "standard" publisher that pays advances and royalties, doesn't charge for production costs and doesn't expect the author to pay for professional editing. Working with a traditional publisher will mean that the book, if accepted, will be distributed to brick and mortar bookstores, and the covers and marketing copies will look professional.

However, in this modern world, there is an "independent option" available to budding authors brought on by technology. Desktop publishing has arrived, and alternative mediums such as audiobooks, podcasts, YouTube videos, Face Watch, etc. are prolific. This "independent option" means that one can sell books/stories without first convincing a major publisher of their profitability, the author alone can own the book and all rights, and can control the retail aspect, i.e. the marketing, pricing and promo strategy. If successful using this approach, a writer can expect to earn up to 70% of sales compared to about 7% using the traditional method of publishing.

The "independent option" is not without its drawbacks, however. The author has to do all the work and everything is his responsibility. Marketing is a full time job and you need to stay informed and savvy about trends concerning your type of book(s). You will also need to be wary of scam "vanity publishers" and of course deal with Amazon, Kindle and print on demand operations. Bookcovers are also an item not often thought of until needed. Well designed covers can do much to sell a book, or of course, detract from sales.

Alicia had several success suggestions for those thinking of writing a book. Those included branding your name, company name, logo, covers, etc. Also, you should think long term about series, sequels, spinoffs and clever promotions. Structure is an essential as are powerful and coherent plots and, of course, you need to know and understand your audience.

The Q&A session was eye opening, revealing that there were many members of Sciencetech that were already authors (I won't mention names for fear of leaving someone off the list) and those with aspirations to write were numerous and apparent. This led the speaker back to her topic, WRITE NOW - RIGHT NOW.



Alicia Rasley