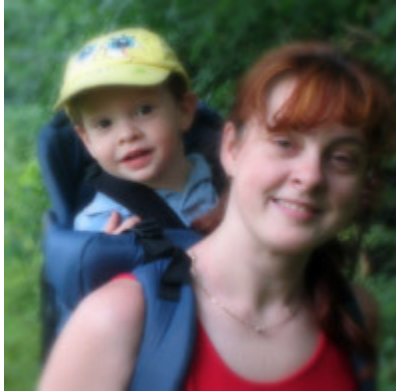


## A DIVA'S CHRONICLES...



### **FIRST TIMERS**

**by Dayna Hart**

August 2009 :: Issue 13

I thought this article would be really easy to write. A first timer's perspective of the RWA Nationals conference. I went to my first RWA Nationals this month. So, write about it. Easy. Right?

Not so much.

I went with the expectation of returning home having 'seen and been seen'. The red-carpet of authorhood.

And yes, I saw. OMG the sheer number of people made it insane NOT to see people. I shook hands with Suzanne Brockmann. (inner fangirl says SQUEE!)

I said hello to fabulous authors we've had at RD for workshops like Maria V. Snyder, Rosemary Clement Moore, and Gena Showalter (and I did not faint or throw up on any of them!)

... ones I want to rope in like Eve Kenin/Silver (who forgave me for saying KEENin instead of KENin, though she said it the right way about four times. \*wince\*), Kate Douglas, who was just fun to listen to...

I sold a book to Looseld while I was there, which was very cool, and allowed me to attend the Looseld lunch with other authors, and the fantabulous Anne Cain. (whose cover art makes me weak in the knees and pocketbook.)

I attended the Rogue Digital Workshop which featured Angie James of Samhain Publishing, Kassia Krosier of Quartet Press, Jane Litte of Dear Author, and Sarah Wendell of Smart Bitches, Trashy Books. They spoke brilliantly about epubublishing, digital rights from traditional publishers, contracts, the Google settlement.... It was amazing to have four such brilliant and well-spoken women in one room at once.

I roomed with the brilliant Sarah Frantz, and learned about IASPR, who are trying to bring legitimacy to the academic study of romance in popular culture. I'd never heard of such a thing (color me naïve!) Her energy and commitment were absolutely contagious. Her intelligence...unfortunately not contagious, but definitely inspiring.

I attended a few of the RWA-presented workshops. Anne Stuart and Pam Rosenthal are two women who will live in my head as 'simply brilliant' for all time. Eloisa James gave the most beautiful, eloquent speech, which lives on in my mind as inspiration when I truly need it. My CP, Crystal Jordan, gave a workshop, which I hope she'll get to present again – it was that important, that good.

Those are the stories I can tell to friends and family when they ask about conference. I can tell them about the massive room where the Literacy Signing was held, and how impossible it would be for me to convey how many people were in that room. I can tell them about the people I met – formerly just login names at Divas for the most part – people who were, in 'real life' just the same as their online personas.

And yet...when I got home—my head reeling, napping every day to catch up on the sleep I did not get while I was in DC...the things which stuck with me were the things I learned about myself because I went to that conference.  
I learned that:

I'm not that much different online than I am "in person" either.

For the past three years, I've wanted to "make it" on my own merits, and not because I "know someone." And yet, my personality type is a Networker.

There are still authors who can make me absolutely flummoxed. (Suzanne. Brockmann. Shook. My. Hand.)

No matter how awkward and uncomfortable I feel, there will always be someone who feels just the same. Or worse.

Standing in line for 20 minutes with no other customers in sight in order to get a pre-made sandwich will make me cranky.

Being in a hotel with thousands (? That number still astounds me) of creative people creates an energy all its own, and if we could harness it, we could likely light an entire city.



I learned that I'm part of something big. I'm part of a group of smart, savvy, intelligent, courageous, talented women who are making a difference in the lives of millions of women worldwide. That feeling of connection is the most amazing thing I have taken from conference.

I'm still uncovering a lot of the things I learned, and I think I will be for a very long time. Going to that conference changed me. And I never expected that.

#### **About DAYNA**

*Born and raised in a small town in Canada, I have always written stories. I'm trying to pass on my love for words and story to my children. I also hope they'll search for fairies in our garden, like I did many years ago. When not writing, I enjoy reading, quilting, crocheting, and the occasional home renovation. You'll more likely find me doing laundry, dishes, or gardening.*

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