



# Falling in Love with Your Romance Section

Maximizing Profits with Passionate  
Prose

---

Monday, February 24 | Governor's Square 15 | 9:30 AM -  
10:30 AM

Many thanks to our lead sponsor:

**INGRAM**  
CONTENT GROUP

# Housekeeping

---



Slides & handouts are in the [app](#) and [Wi2025 program](#).



Fill out the session survey!



Recordings will be on [Bookweb](#) and [BookED](#).



Silence your cell phones & devices.



Questions? Wait for the mic.

# Antitrust Guidelines

---

Booksellers are encouraged to share ideas and support during the conference. But the Sherman Antitrust Act prohibits them from discussing:

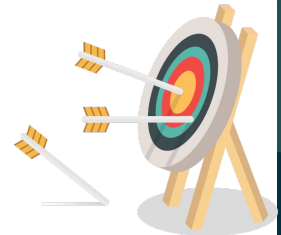
- Price or pricing policies
- Boycotts
- Dividing up the market

For more information, see ABA's full antitrust guidelines on BookWeb.

# Session Description

---

We're in our romance era! Romance readers are some of the most loyal and devoted customers. Bolstering and marketing your romance section isn't just a way to form long-lasting and meaningful customer relationships; given the popularity and growth of the genre, it's a good business decision. This session will explore strategies like how to curate a diverse and appealing selection, create engaging displays, feature the various sub-genres, and host events that attract romance readers. Whether you're new to the romance genre or intimately familiar with the various levels of spice, you'll learn marketing strategies and merchandising tips to turn your romance section into a profit powerhouse and capture the hearts of your customers.



# Agenda

---

- Introductions
- Key Romance Genre Terms
- Curating a Romance Section
- The Role of Indie Authors
- Romance Bookstores as Safe Community Spaces
- Conclusion
- Q&As





# Meet the Panelists



**Rebecca Title**

Meet Cute Romance  
Bookshop – San  
Diego, CA



**Melissa Saavedra**

Steamy Lit –  
Deerfield Beach  
and Tampa, FL



**Katherine Morgan**

Grand Gesture  
Books – Portland,  
OR



**Lauren Richards**

Tropes & Trifles –  
Minneapolis, MN

# Key Romance Genre Terms

What makes a book a romance?

It has *romance as the central plot* and a *happily ever after* or a *happily for now*.





# Key Terms

---

**HEA:** Happily ever after

**HFN:** Happy for now

**MC:** Main character

**MMC:** Male main character

**FMC:** Female main character

**Sapphic or F/F:** Main characters are both women

**M/M:** Main characters are both men

**Bi4Bi:** Main characters are bisexual

**T4T:** Main characters are transgender

**Ace:** At least one main character is asexual

**Aro:** At least one main character is aromantic

# Key Terms

---

**Sub-Genre:** Romance is a genre, but it is broken up into various categories and sub-genres

**Trope:** A plot, theme, character, or writing device used often enough that it's become a convention within the genre (ex. Only One Bed or Fake Dating)

**Romantasy:** Romantic Fantasy

**HistRom:** Historical Romance

**Dark Romance:** Books that contain darker themes including dub-con (dubious consent), non-con (non-consent), sexual assault, bullying, stalking, and kidnapping often done by one main character to another

# sub-genres

- Contemporary
- Historical
  - Regency
  - Western
- Otherworldly
  - Fantasy
  - Paranormal
  - Monster Romance
  - Sci-Fi
- Romantic Comedy
- Erotica
- Young Adult
- New Adult/ College
- Dark Romance
- Romantic Suspense
- Cozy Mystery
- Later in Life Romance
- Billionaire Romance
- Sports Romance
- Celebrity Romance
- Holiday Romance
- Dark Academia
- Gothic Romance

# *Trapes*

- Friends to Lovers
- Enemies to Lovers
- Rivals to Lovers
- The "Bet"
- Forced Proximity/  
Only one Bed
- Arranged Marriage
- Marriage of  
Convenience
- Fake Dating
- Secret/Surprise Baby
- Chef/Baker
- Best Friend's Sibling
- Sibling's best friend
- Single-Parent
- Nanny
- Morally Grey
- Grumpy/Sunshine
- Slow Burn
- Why Choose/Reverse  
Harem
- Second Chance
- Golden  
Retriever/Black Cat
- Road Trip
- Forbidden Love
- Academic Rivals
- Small Town Romance
- Cowboy Romance
- Fish Out of Water
- Opposites Attract
- Epistolary
- Instalove
- Instalust

# Determining Spice Level 🌶️🌶️🌶️🌶️🌶️

---

**Spice:** The level of sexual activity in a book, measured on a 0-5 chili pepper scale

**Open Door:** Includes (often detailed) descriptions of sexual activity on page

**Closed Door:** Any sexual activity other than kissing happen off page (a scene may fade to black or contain language implying sexual activity has occurred)

Your grandma reads *smut*.



# Curating a Romance Section

---





# Getting Started

---

- You probably already have romance in your store! It's just being labeled as something else
- Respect the genre and be educated in the genre
  - You need to be able to recommend more than one title and offer titles other than the bestsellers
- Make sure someone on your staff reads romance
- There must be intentionality behind selling romance. You can't stock it passively and expect it to sell

# Where to Find Romance Titles

- Ask customers for suggestions
- Instagram
- Reddit
- TikTok
- Goodreads/Storygraph
- Fellow booksellers!



# **The Role of Indie Authors**

# Indie vs. Trad Pub

---

**Indie/Self Pub:** Independent publishers and self-published authors; not published by any of the "mainstream" or "Big 5" publishers

**Trad Pub/The "Big 5":** Authors and novels published traditionally, often under an imprint of a big publisher. The "Big 5" include Penguin Random House, Simon & Schuster, Harper Collins, Hachette, and Macmillan

# The Value of Indie Authors

---

- If you ignore books just because they were originally published by/on Amazon, you miss out on a tremendous amount of talent
  - Many BIPOC and queer authors have different entries to publishing
  - Romance readers love shelf trophies!
- Indie authors are not just uploading their books to Amazon. This is a business for them
- Indie authors are cool (similar to indie music)
- Start small with buying indie books and then eventually buy directly from the author
- Remember that indie authors do not put the price on their books. You can mark them up!
- Many indie authors are extremely present on social media. Partnering with them could lead to new customers!

# Encourage Indie Authors to Submit Their Books to Your Store

## Hello, authors!

Hi there! And thanks for your interest in having your titles stocked at Tropes & Trifles. In order to make things as easy as possible for all involved, please fill out the form below with all of the requested information, keeping a couple of things in mind:

1. For your book to be stocked, it must be available through Ingram. We are currently unable to stock any books not available through Ingram.
2. Your title is less likely to be stocked if it is available for free online.
3. If we do stock your book, we will reach out to let you know to expect to see it! If you don't hear from us, that indicates that we are not stocking your book at this time, though this may change in the future. The shelves of a bookstore are an ever-shifting landscape.

Unfortunately, we cannot stock every book that crosses our path—would that we had endless shelf space to make that possible!

Please do not send unsolicited ARCs or contact via other means. This form truly is the best way for us to learn about your work, and bonus: no postage fees!

# Romance Bookstores as Safe Community Spaces

---





# Supporting and Encouraging Romance Readers

- Romance readers don't want to go someplace that makes them feel ashamed
- They often are looking for an in-person way to shout about the books they've been talking about on the internet



# Resources for Further Exploration

## A Guide to Your Romance Section

Presented at Wi2025: Falling In Love with Your Romance Section:  
Maximizing Profits with Passionate Prose



Reproduced with permission from Steamy Lit; content provided by Paola Parreno

### Romance Vocab

#### SUB-GENRE

Romance is a genre and is broken up into various categories & sub-genres.

#### SPICE/SMUT

Terms used to describe on-screen depictions of sex in romance books. The "spicier" or "smuttier," the more graphic the sex is. The true spectrum of "spice" is fairly subjective and depends on readers' preferences.

#### HEA/HFN

"Happy Ever After" or "Happy For Now." If there is no HEA/HFN, it is NOT a Romance.

#### TROPES

A plot, theme, character, or writing device used frequently enough that it's become a convention within the genre.

#### OPEN DOOR

"Open Door" romances include mild to spicy sex scenes between the characters. This includes clear and literal descriptions of actual sexual activity. Often you'll find words like "cock" and "pussy" in open door romances.

#### CLOSED DOOR/ FADE TO BLACK

"Closed Door" romances can have tension and intimacy but often will "fade to black" and skip the actual act of sex. Think of it like PG-13 movies, There's allusion and innuendo but no full frontal.



American Booksellers Association | BookWeb.org | Last Revised 2/24/2025



Romance Genre Guide (Modified from the Original Guide Created By Paola Parreno of Steamy Lit)

Ci2024 Session: Social Emotional Learning With Romance



ABA CHILDREN'S INSTITUTE  
**Ci2024**  
NEW ORLEANS, LA  
JUNE 10-12

## Social Emotional Learning With Romance

Wednesday, June 12 | Bayside A/B/C | 11:20 AM - 12:10 PM

Many thanks to our lead sponsor:

**INGRAM**  
CONTENT GROUP

# Call to Action

---

- Reach out to your sales reps and find out their list of romance books by BIPOC authors
- Do some research and find one romance you think you might like. If you're more experienced in the genre, read a romance by a new-to-you author of color or queer author
- Find a popular romance and find an indie author or BIPOC author who would be a good comp for that
- Create a policy for indie author submissions. Include how you want to order them, what discounts you will consider, and who on your staff will review them. Also make sure to have a website form where authors can submit their work for consideration. And ensure you have a way for everyone on your staff to recommend indie books they have read and loved





# Q&A

---

Please raise your hand and  
speak directly into the mic.



# Thank you!

Please **rate this session** in  
the Wi2025 app.

## Contact

---

**Katherine Morgan**  
**Grand Gesture Books**  
[grandgesturebooks@gmail.com](mailto:grandgesturebooks@gmail.com)

**Lauren Richards**  
**Tropes & Trifles**  
[lauren@tropesandtrifles.com](mailto:lauren@tropesandtrifles.com)

**Melissa Saavedra**  
**Steamy Lit**  
[melissa@steamyvit.com](mailto:melissa@steamyvit.com)

**Rebecca Title**  
**Meet Cute Romance Bookshop**  
[becca@meetcutebookshop.com](mailto:becca@meetcutebookshop.com)

