Member Spotlight: Ann Cunningham
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Putting Edelweiss to Work!
Bookstore Beat: Maria's Bookshop

artwork by Ann Cunningham
Letter from your Regional Team

By Susan Wroble

Ever wonder what your Regional Team members have been doing? There are so many parts to each of our positions, but we’ve each had a special extra focus in recent months.

Stan Yan’s priority has been to restructure our conference budget. He’s making sure that everything is better accounted for, to make our bottom line more predictable.

Fortunately, our webinar series, hosted by Megan E. Freeman, has proved so popular that it enabled us to offset nearly all of the rising costs that would otherwise
have impacted this year’s Letters & Lines conference registration.

Susan Wroble has been focused on community outreach, with the goal of increasing awareness of our chapter. We would love for schools and organizations to know about all of you—the incredibly talented kidlit authors and illustrators that live right here, in their communities. Longer-term, we hope that this will help create more income streams through speaking events and school visits for all our members, traditionally published and self-published.

Assistant Regional Advisor Amy Ellerman has been documenting and organizing job descriptions for RMC’s many volunteer positions. This has been the perfect job for helping her to understand the moving parts (and amazing people) of our very active chapter.

Illustrator Coordinator Hilary Hickman surveyed the illustrators (nearly a third of the chapter). Those basic demographics are helping her develop different kinds of activities, and she is varying the days of the week and the format to be fully inclusive. In addition, Hilary is taking the lead on managing the website for the conference. In the coming months, she’ll be assisting the rest of the team as we learn to navigate and produce RMC’s page on SCBWI’s new website.

The new website has launched, but development will be ongoing. We are thrilled to be moving away from the antiquated website, and are excited about the increased functionality that the new site will eventually offer. But as with any new system, we are expecting challenges, hiccups, and a steep learning curve. We ask for your patience and understanding throughout the summer until our page on the site is fully operational!

The first of our community outreach programs this year was in February, with the Arvada Literacy Festival. Hosted by Arvada High School, the event brought in families from all their feeder schools. Some members gave school-visit type presentations or read from their books, while others staffed a RMC booth and answered questions about anything and everything related to children’s books.

Also in February, PAL Liaison Rondi Sokoloff Frieder coordinated the RMC Booth at CCIRA (Colorado Council of the International Reading Association). This two-day event brings in teachers and literacy experts from Colorado and surrounding states. At CCIRA, The Bookies Bookstore brings in many books by the members who are staffing the RMC booth. This allows attendees to buy books—and have them autographed by our incredible authors and illustrators. Then, in June, The Bookies hosted our PAL authors and illustrators for a phenomenal summer reading program kickoff!

Our mini-workshop on writing nonfiction this past March was a huge success. Beth Anderson focused on finding the heart of the book, Laura Perdew helped attendees find just the right structure for their book, and Julie Danneberg provided details on adding layers to give depth and marketability. The biggest feedback was to do it again—just make it a full day, with longer presentations! We were fortunate to have the event hosted by the El Pomar Foundation at the carriage house of the
historic Penrose House in Colorado Springs. The El Pomar Foundation provides free event space for non-profit organizations, and it was such a welcoming and gorgeous space that we hope to return for other events.

Coming up, we are super excited to announce that RMC will be at FanExpo! This convention (formerly known as Denver Comic Con) is billed as “the ultimate playground for Comics, Sci-Fi, Horror, Anime and Gaming.” It’s three days of “world-renowned celebrities and family-friendly events”—and we are some of those events! To promote our members, we submitted proposals for panels and booth space in the KidsLab, and all were accepted. The panel “Children’s Book Editors Don’t Look at your Diploma” will focus on the process of navigating the children’s book industry. “Conversations with Colorado KitLit Creators” will include an exploration of ways in which authors and illustrators engage with the larger community through school visits, library programming, and other community engagements. We will also have a booth for kid’s book-related activities running through the entire event. FanExpo is at the Colorado Convention Center June 30 through July 2.

And looking ahead, we are starting to develop a calendar of yearly opportunities. If your community has a literacy festival or other event that seems like it would be a good fit for RMC members to attend, please let us know at rmc-ra@scbwi.org.

Get Connected
✉️ rmc-ra@scbwi.org
Ann Cunningham, RMC-SCBWI’s new Self-Published Connect Coordinator, started sculpting stone when she was 15 years old. In 1992, she wondered if the low-relief slate pictures she was making could be understood by someone who was blind. She learned through creating and exhibiting artwork nationally and teaching art at the Colorado Center for the Blind that the answer is a definite and resounding, "Yes!" Ann is co-owner of Sensational Books! which is dedicated to making information about the world more accessible for people who are blind or visually impaired.
Stan Yan: I’m thrilled to interview our new Self-Published Connect Coordinator, Ann Cunningham! How long have you been a member of the SCBWI?


SY: Tell us about your unique and circuitous educational and career background and how it led you to children’s books.

AC: This is a good story about the influence a book can have on a child. I was about 14 and my dad brought home a box of books that he picked up at a yard sale. I found one that was titled something like 101 Art Projects. I flipped by topics like origami, collage, drawing and watercolor, but was stopped in my tracks when I hit the page titled: Stone Carving. I showed it to my dad and said this is what I want to do. With one and a half pages of instruction and a nice black and white image, I set off on my career path as a stone sculptor.

With some success and many failures, I continued to work on different types of stone through high school and some college, until one day, I picked up a piece of slate and found I could work it in ways that just seemed to flow naturally for me.

Because I was working in slate, I was creating bas- or low-relief sculptures. One day a question flew into my head asking, "Could someone who is blind understand these pictures?" My career took a course correction, and I started pursuing the answer to that question.

I began sculpting accessible artwork for public places and exhibiting tactile stories in galleries and museums. These sculptures were expensive to make and hard to move and install. That is when I became interested in publishing books. I realized books can reach far more people than my exhibitions ever could. The idea of making picture books for children who are blind was exciting and challenging.
SY: Tell us a little bit about some of the very interesting projects you’ve self-published so far and some of the legwork and craft that went into making them.

AC: My partner and I started Sensational Books! to publish our first book, *Sadie Can Count*. Since this was our first project as self-publishers, we made a long list of the steps it would take and the skills we would need to make it happen. We found information in books on the publishing industry and books about self-publishing and attended meetings of the Colorado Independent Publishers Association and SCBWI.

In addition to learning how to write and illustrate a book we had to learn how to digitize pictures, lay out the book files, create the embossed images and make sure the print images matched up with the embossing dies. We had to connect with printers with the equipment capable of printing our book and be on location for press checks.

Once we had figured out the process, we were asked by a number of organizations for help with their publications. We have worked with large organizations like National Braille Press and Colorado Center for the Blind. We have also collaborated with individual teachers to create instructional materials for their students. We worked as illustrator and printer on a picture book published by the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults titled *Pedro and the Octopus*.

SY: Who do you find inspires and informs your work?

AC: Eric Gill, Amy Kann, Virgil Ortiz, Alexandra Day, Leonid Gore, Tomie dePaola, Shaun Tan, Maurice Sendak and many more writers, illustrators and sculptors. I like to find the good parts in any work.

SY: What are some of the challenges you’ve found in marketing and promoting your work?

AC: Picture books for children who are blind is a relatively new concept. The first challenge is educating the market about what tactile picture books are and how they work. In-person connections allow people to interact directly with the pictures to actually experience how learning through a tactile image feels.

Since it is a small and scattered niche market, I get to travel a great deal, both inside and outside the United States to meet up with groups who also focus on accessible literacy. I have given
presentations and taught workshops to all sorts of audiences including children, parents, and educators.

Teaching art at the Colorado Center for the Blind has allowed me to discover with staff and students what works, what doesn’t and how we can change it so it does. I have also participated in research projects conducted through the National Science Foundation to further explore the possibilities of tactile images.

**SY:** What can you tell us about your next project?

**AC:** I am at the beginning of my five-year plan to publish a small library of tactile stories for children 0-5 years old. I will be working with Colorado parents who are welcoming an infant who is blind into their family. I want to offer them the opportunity to read, with their child, age-appropriate tactually illustrated books. This year I am working on five concept books that are appropriate for babies. Next year I’ll work on books for toddlers. I think you can see where this is going.

I am taking Anastasia Suen’s Intensive Picture Book Workshop, learning how to layer emergent literacy concepts into seemingly simple board books to create a valuable experience for a child and their caregivers. Each year I will build on those concepts to create books that introduce the logical next steps for these readers.

I cannot adequately express how excited I am to watch these youngsters as they learn new skills. I believe that by providing the means to learn how to read tactile images and text (Braille) from age-appropriate materials introduced at the same time their sighted peers are getting this information in print pictures and text, just might be a game changer.

I know that this kind of timeline will mean that I have to self-publish. Traditional publishers do not move quickly, and I want to move this plan along. Self-publishing also allows me to catch and correct problems in a test market before I have thousands of books printed for broader distribution.

I will be happy to share what I’ve learned in 2028!
SY: What are your hopes going forward for your future projects and how do you hope the Self-Published Connect will dovetail into this?

AC: Even though I have been a member of RMC-SCBWI for a long time, I haven’t really connected with too many members. But I know this group is knowledgeable and generous, so I offered to help out in any way I could.

I don’t think I will ever give up self-publishing. I hate to wait. But I would also like to create books that can reach a crossover market by appealing to readers who are blind and sighted through a traditional publisher.

After years of scrambling from one project to the next it feels like a real luxury to focus only on this one project that is nearest to my heart. I am very thankful that RMC-SCBWI is so dynamic and I am excited to be an active participant!

Get Connected

Websites: www.SensationalBooks.com
          www.acunningham.com

Instagram: @artacunningham
Born to Pakistani immigrants in Sri Lanka, Saba Sulaiman found comfort in reading about other culturally displaced people unable to communicate in their native tongues, and hesitant to assert themselves in environments where there were few examples of people like them. She moved to Pakistan, then the United States to study Economics and Middle Eastern Studies at Wellesley College. Sulaiman then studied modern Persian Literature at the University of Chicago. After a stint at Sourcebooks as an editorial intern, she joined the team at Talcott Notch Literary.

Sulaiman is committed to highlighting marginalized voices with bright careers ahead of them and compelling stories to tell; stories that demonstrate the true range of perspectives that exist in this world, and address urgent and often underexplored issues with veracity and heart. She’s proud to be on the steering committee for People of Color in Publishing, a grassroots organization working to serve the interests of publishing professionals of color.
David Deen: What's the most satisfying part of your job as an agent?

Saba Sulaiman: Helping my clients make their writing dreams come true, and watching them grow as they improve their craft and better understand the impact they want to make with their careers. People also send me free books, and that never gets old, either.

DD: What really makes one query stand out above the rest?

SS: Honestly, when I read a query, I'm looking for a reason *not* to read the pages, because otherwise, I almost always read the pages anyway. Some agents put a lot of weight on the query, but I'm just looking for a glimpse into the project being submitted, and as long as the glimpse doesn't convince me not to read the pages at all (either because it's clear this project is in a genre I don't represent, or the project is 600,000 words (yes, this happens!)) I will take a peek at the pages anyway to get a sense of the writing, regardless of how I feel about the quality of the query. So my honest advice is to make sure those opening pages, especially that first page, are really, really strong, because that's how I can get sucked into a story, even if the query isn't as polished

DD: Are there any major mistakes you see often that will kill a query's chances?

SS: Contrary to popular lore, I don't place too much importance on things like spelling and grammatical errors (even for my own name, which is something I see at least a few times a week, unfortunately)—anyone can make a mistake, and I like to give authors the benefit of the doubt. I will say, however, that being unprofessional when it comes to work/life boundaries and talking down other published books you think your book is better than in your query are both big no-nos for me.

DD: Is there anything you want querying illustrators/authors to know about agents and/or the agenting process?

SS: Just that I acknowledge how frustratingly (and needlessly) arcane this whole process tends to be, and that you can find all the answers you need without having to pay anyone for it. Please seek out other querying authors/illustrators for support, pool in your resources, and keep each other’s spirits up—there are plenty of other people who’ve been in your position and have found success. Don’t shortchange yourself or your dreams, and good luck!

DD: Are there any upcoming book releases you want to give a shout-out for?

SS: Yes, and thanks for the opportunity! I have two upcoming picture books I’d love to share:
1) Awake, Asleep, written by Kyle Lukoff, illustrated by Nadia Alam:
I kid you not, Kyle sent me this manuscript and I asked for one word to change, and then proclaimed it ready for submission. It’s just such a lovely, rhyming text (my first rhyming PB release!) about the everyday joys of a toddler’s life, and Nadia’s illustrations are absolutely gorgeous.

2) Always Sisters, written by Saira Mir, illustrated by Shahrzad Maydani:
This one’s a really special one, about how a child comes to terms with pregnancy loss, and how her family comes together to mourn and celebrate her always sister. There’s very little out there for families struggling with this, and I hope Saira’s story and Shahrzad’s exquisite illustrations will bring comfort and hope to many.

Get Connected

📢 MSWL: mswishlist.com/agent/agentsaba
🌐 Website: sabasulaiman.com
🐦 Twitter: @agentsaba
Some volunteers make programs better. Some make them good. Others, like Rondi Sokoloff Frieder, take them to a whole new, exceptional level. Frieder grew the RMC-SCBWI Published And Listed (PAL) program from the ground up—cultivating it into one of the most enviable and productive in SCBWI.

Susan Wroble, Co-Regional Advisor for RMC-SCBWI, said, “When I started in my leadership position, I was shocked to learn that most other chapters have very few PAL members, and for many, SCBWI is regarded as being an organization to get you published, not to stay in once you are published. However, Rondi has made being a part of our chapter worthwhile—and fun—for so many of our PAL members. In turn, they have been our mentors and Connect speakers and guides, and have brought up the skill level of the entire chapter. Without her work over these past 9-10 years, we wouldn't be nearly as strong a chapter.”

I had the privilege of interviewing Frieder before she steps down to focus on her own writing career.
Shelly Steig: How long have you been a member of SCBWI?

Rondi Sokoloff Frieder: A very long time! This is actually a great story. Back in 2000, my school principal said I needed to do something with my writing. I had been teaching kindergarten and first grade for over 20 years and loved writing plays, raps and short stories with my students. When I told my brother I was thinking about writing for children, he told me his son (my nephew) had a friend at school whose mother did something with children’s books. He suggested I email her. And guess what? It was Lin Oliver, the co-founder of SCBWI!!! I immediately joined and went to the LA conference that summer. I’ve been a member ever since.

SS: What has being a member of SCBWI meant to you?

RSF: So many things. First and foremost, I love the people! There is nothing like spending time with kindred spirits who totally get what you are trying to do. Writing for children is a challenging, and often discouraging, endeavor. I probably would have given up long ago had it not been for the support and encouragement of this writing community. It’s also where I met my critique partners, the brilliant and talented Story Spinners. We’ve been going strong for over twenty years and even have a blog: www.inthewritersweb.com.

SS: When did you become the PAL Liaison, and how did that come about?

RSF: Great question! I have been the PAL (traditionally published and listed authors and illustrators) Coordinator/Liaison for nine years. After I retired from the classroom, one of my critique partners challenged me to get more involved in the RMC-SCBWI. I looked at the volunteer positions available and noticed there was an opening for the CCIRA (Colorado Chapter of the International Reading Association) Coordinator. CCIRA hosts an annual literacy conference for teachers and librarians and the RMC-SCBWI usually purchases a table in their Exhibits Hall. This immediately resonated with me. I had been attending this conference for years as a teacher and always loved it. Plus, it was held at a hotel five minutes from my house in the Denver Tech Center. I emailed Todd Tuell and Lindsay Eland (the Co-Regional Advisors at the time) to say I was
interested. They were thrilled and also asked me to host a table at the annual Colorado Teen Literacy Conference.

After Kim Tomsic came on as an RA for our chapter, she asked if I’d be willing to expand my job. I was intrigued. Kim envisioned four PAL events a year and changed the position title to PAL Liaison. Together, we developed the new model. Now, along with CCIRA, I coordinate the annual Book Birthday Bash, webinars tailored specifically to the needs of PALs, meet-and-greets at local bookstores and social/support gatherings. We even hosted the YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association) group at a reception when the American Library Association Conference was in Denver!

SS: What was your favorite part of being the liaison?

RSF: I absolutely love all the PAL events. Our authors and illustrators are a delight to work with and our programs are inspirational and informative. But if I had to pick my most favorite thing of all, it would be moderating a panel at CCIRA. I’ve used a variety of formats from Speed Dating with authors, illustrators and teachers to opening for keynote speaker, John Schu, librarian extraordinaire and former Ambassador of School Libraries for Scholastic Book Fairs. For the past two years, I’ve led an actual session at the conference and this year’s was over-the-top incredible! We had sixteen authors and illustrators present to a packed room of teachers and librarians. Their anecdotes took us from laughter to tears as we learned about the “stories behind the books.” I was so proud of our literary rockstars!

SS: How many years did you serve in this volunteer capacity?

RSF: I’ve been coordinating PAL events for nine years and will use my tenth volunteer year to train my successor.

SS: What are you working on with your own projects?

RSF: I am smitten with middle grade! I recently submitted my time-travel, baseball, comic book, golem romp to a slew of agents. While I wait for their responses, I will dive into my next project, a contemporary mystery set in a summer camp.
SS: What do you plan to do with your "spare" time?

RSF: Ha ha! I’m one of those people who is always over-scheduled. It must be from all my years in the classroom while raising two very busy kids. Although I have thoroughly enjoyed being the PAL Liaison, I’m also extremely anxious to focus more on my own writing. I love taking classes (especially at the Highlights Foundation), making outlines, doing character studies and reworking plots. I’ve been at this a long time and want to do everything possible to get traditionally published (and join the PAL club!). Along with that, my husband and I enjoy traveling the world, skiing, and hiking, and seem to be constantly visiting our out-of-town family, including our two sons! I’m also an obsessive digital scrapbooker and sing in a choir. Oh, and I need to organize my office.

SS: Anything else you'd like our members to know?

RSF: I’m very proud of the fact that our PALs have stayed super involved in the RMC-SCBWI. Apparently, this is not typical. In most chapters, after people get traditionally published, they disappear. By providing dynamic programming for our PAL authors and illustrators, we have been able to keep them engaged. Along with attending PAL events, they have become mentors, webinar presenters, and speakers at our annual conference. Also, being the PAL Liaison has enabled me to work directly with many of our outstanding local bookstores. We have held PAL events at Second Star to the Right, Book Bar, The Bookies, The Wandering Jellyfish and The Tattered Cover. Getting to know these booksellers has given me tremendous insight into the publishing world. Children’s book people are the best!
EVENTS WRAP-UP

CCIRA
Mentorship Party
Arvada Community Love of Reading Event
PAL: Meet The Bookies
Putting Edelweiss to Work!

By Susan Wroble

Have you ever noticed the disclaimers on some book reviews posted to book blogs or Goodreads?

“I received this book from the publisher via Edelweiss so I could provide an honest review. No compensation was given and all opinions are my own.”

Edelweiss (aka Edel) is an online platform where publishers make advance reader copies (ARCs) available in digital formats to select readers before the books are published. They do this to encourage early reviews and generate buzz before a book comes out.

In our RMC Publishing Path webinar this past February, developmental editor Susan Chang recommended that everyone should have an Edel account, but for surprising reasons unrelated to reviewing e-ARCs (electronic ARCs). And when someone like Susan Chang says, “everyone should,” I pay attention.

Susan explained that for authors, having an Edel account is an efficient way to read new books in your category, find comparable titles (comps) for your own work, explore marketing plans (though these are often skeletal and preliminary), and study a publisher’s catalog before submitting to them.

Regardless of where you are in your publishing journey, you will eventually want to have access to upcoming releases as you study the market for your work-in-progress. And we all know that finding good comp titles can be tricky, so I am very excited about this platform. Edelweiss can make parts of querying so much easier, and setting up an account is free.
CREATING YOUR PROFILE AND REQUESTING ADVANCE READER COPIES:

Start on Edelweiss by navigating to www.edelweiss.plus to create your profile. To get approved to read those digital reader copies (DRCs, Edel’s version of the e-ARC), your profile strength needs to show as “excellent.” Profile strength (with levels like incomplete, good and excellent) is based on how much of the profile you have completed. The question mark beside your strength will show you what is missing. Keep tweaking until you get to excellent.

When you request DRCs, you are most likely to get approved if you show that you write reviews. Here’s a version of my profile, which shows who I review and why:

Note that when you request a specific DRC, you will also need to write a few sentences about why you’ve requested that book. Once you’re granted access, you’ll be provided with a link to download the manuscript in a variety of ways. You can even connect your e-reader and receive the e-ARCs on your personal devices. Remember, though, you’re being provided the sneak peek with the expectation that you’ll write and post a review after reading, so if you love the book, try to be a good author citizen, and follow through. Goodreads, Amazon and Barnes & Noble are all great places to leave reviews. Your fellow authors will thank you!

USING EDEL TO FIND COMPS:

While the ability to search for comparable titles, or comps, is one of the huge benefits of Edelweiss, there is one caveat. In query letters, comps are designed to give the agents or editors a feel for the subject or tone or theme of your story. In Edelweiss, comps are intended for marketing. Keeping that nuance in mind, they are incredibly valuable.

Here’s how to find them: under the “Search for titles” box, type in a title. Here’s Kaz Windness’s Bitsy Bat, School Star:
At the bottom are a series of carrots next to “Content, Comps, Related, Refs.” Clicking on comps and refs gives us three books that are considered comp titles, and others that are related in some way (in this case, because Kaz wrote them!).

If you have a book that might make a good comp, a great next step is to check Edelweiss. You’ll get what the professionals consider to be the comps for that book.

**USING EDEL TO REVIEW MARKETING PLANS:**

Authors are increasingly being asked to submit marketing plans. Again, Edelweiss can be a huge help. The marketing plans posted here are often a mix of author and publisher activities, but be aware that not all books will have them. To find the marketing plan, go back to those “Content, Comps, Related, Refs” carrots. Clicking the carrot by “Content” for Carmela Coyle’s *Something Spectacular* gives the summary, bio, marketing plan and selling points.

In the marketing plans, you can see the specific blogs that will be targeted for this picture book, and that Carmela intends to make school visits.

**USING EDEL TO STUDY CATALOGS:**

Finding a publisher’s catalog can be tricky, and it helps to have a basic understanding of the publishing industry. “The Big Five” publishers are Penguin Random House, Harper Collins, Macmillan, Simon & Schuster, and Hachette. Between them, there are hundreds of imprints. The easiest way to understand this system, and to find which imprint belongs to which company, is through a really detailed graphic.

Anyone who is considering traditional publishing should bookmark or file the page with this graphic: almossawi.com/big-five-publishers/ It is created and maintained by Ali Almossawi, an author, artist, and
engineering and design team lead at Apple. Of course, there are also other, small, independent publishers outside of the Big Five. Many of their books can be found in the National Book Network catalog.

To illustrate the catalog challenge, let’s say you heard that RMC member ZB Asterplume’s (Amber Owens) book *Sometimes, A Tiger* is being published this summer by Feiwel & Friends. On Edelweiss, a search under catalogs for “Feiwel” gets you nowhere. However, a search for “Feiwel” on that Big Five graphic shows that Feiwel is an imprint of Macmillan.

Instead of the catalog feature, an easy way to find books of a specific imprint is by using the filter function—that’s the funnel icon on the menu bar. Selecting it brings up a side menu where you can select “Add New Filter.” Then you get this:

To create a “Feiwel” filter, the Attributes must be set to “Imprint.” Searching on “F,” and scrolling to find Feiwel, you can then select it (that plus sign), name it (in that “save new filter” box) and save it (the hard disk icon). And that brings up a list of Feiwel & Friends books, including Amber’s fabulous debut! Those filters are saved for you to return to at any time.

As for me, Edelweiss has provided such great data that I am now revamping the comp titles and marketing plans for my works-in-progress. The time spent learning how to navigate this site truly pays off.

*(Tech note for Apple users: Chrome seems to be a better browser than Safari for Edelweiss. Once in, Apple’s “Command F” search function is far more powerful than the internal search.)*
Maria’s Bookshop, located in downtown Durango, has been a family affair for nearly three decades. Andrea Avantaggio and Peter Schertz stocked the bookshelves for 22 years before they put it on the market in 2019—and got a lovely surprise when their son Evan Schertz bought it not long before he graduated from the Colorado School of Mines. Evan kept the store afloat through Covid, thanks to the intentional support of local customers. He’s now planning for the future and looking forward to many more decades serving his community.

Raymond Cober: When was the bookshop founded?

Evan Schertz: Maria’s Bookshop was founded by Dusty Teal in 1984.

RC: Why did you choose your current location (or past locations if applicable)?

ES: We moved down the block into our current location in 1994, so we’ve been here for nearly 30 years. They moved the inventory down the block with a big wheelbarrow brigade!

We are located in a beautiful brick building in Downtown Durango with hardwood floors and custom wood shelving lining the walls.
RC: How can authors request to have retail space available at the bookshop?

ES: As a community bookstore, we see supporting local authors as an important part of our job. We know that without meaningful support for authors, we would never have the opportunity to discover so many of the wonderful books that have enriched our lives.

We strive to make it possible for all local authors to get their new books on our shelves.

RC: How is your store laid out? Do you have special spaces for serving the community, i.e. special endcap displays, arrangement of bookshelves, areas for specific genres or needs (differently abled children, etc) or play spaces?

ES: In our 2,100 square feet, we have a large main room which feeds into a handful of smaller spaces dedicated to children’s books, games, toys and more.

Shelly Steig: Please tell us about your children's book section.

ES: Our children’s book section features books and activities for readers of every age. From board books and interactive books through chapter books, we have something for everyone. The children’s section is spread through several rooms in the shop, so young readers are encouraged to explore all the hidden nooks at Maria’s.

SS: Do you highlight authors or illustrators on your website (interviews, blogs, spotlights, etc.)?

ES: We strive to highlight local authors in as many ways as possible.
**SS:** Do you host in-store events such as book launches, signings, etc.?

**ES:** We host a wide variety of events throughout the year. Many book signings take place in the store, and others take place in various community spaces around town.

**RC:** Do you do any community outreach? Holding events or outreach to schools, for example? What kind of outreach challenges have you encountered? What kind of outreach would you like to do in the future?

**ES:** Whether we're creating an eye-catching display in the shop to raise awareness for a worthwhile cause, donating for a silent auction, serving as an outlet for ticket sales, hosting a blood drive, or, of course, providing necessary books, no request is too offbeat.

**RC:** Do you have any future plans for the bookshop?

**ES:** We intend to continue to focus on delivering excellent customer service and building community connection through books.

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Letters & Lines
Fall Conference
September 9th and 10th, 2023!

With sessions aimed from beginners to well-published professionals, the conference offers something for all of our members, and we look forward to seeing you there. For more information, go to:

https://scbwi-rmc.org/

THANK YOU
For reading KiteTales

Our communications team would love to hear from you. Feel free to email Shelly Steig at the address below with any suggestions, comments, or just to say hi.

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Email announcements.rmc.scbwi@gmail.com

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