

# The SF/Fantasy Community Gets It Right

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Alison Kent talks about RWA conferences and mentions a \$2000 price tag, and all I can think of is how amazing the SF/Fantasy community is by comparison. Where are the romance fans putting together romance conventions and inviting their favorite writers to attend? Why would anyone go to one of these RWA things?

If you're a published SF or fantasy writer going to an SF/F convention, odds are you're going to be comped the membership cost. If you're a bigger guest, you'll probably also have a free hotel room, and as a GOH, you'll fly there on the organizers' ticket. Your editors will be there, your agent will be there, your writing buddies will be there, and so will a whole lot of fans who like what you wrote (as well as a few who hate it, and tell you so loudly). SFWA will have a suite and if you're a member, you can attend the SFWA meeting and parties, but if you're published but not a member, you'll still get conference benefits. You can sign books. You can sit on panels. You can judge costume contests. (I love doing this.) As a writer, you'll talk about writing in the halls and on panels, attend workshops, run workshops, have a wonderful time. You won't get paid for doing it (most of the time, anyway, unless you're really, really big and they cut you a deal) but you won't pay an arm and a leg to be there, either.

You can be a professional fantasy or science fiction writer and attend fan-run events and never pay big bucks, but still get the benefits of attending a conference. You can be a neopro or an unpublished writer and do the same. Con fees are

reasonable (even WorldCon only charges about \$150 for a membership, though travel and hotel rooms will hurt, and for most cons, the door ticket is between \$15 and \$50 bucks. Does SFWA throw its own conference? Don't know. Never went if it did. Point is, the fans run the events because they want to meet the writers, the writers attend the events because they want to meet the fans, the editors and agents show up because the writers are there. It isn't some big freaking RWA "make money off the writers" game, and it's great.

I love cons. I love the people who throw them. I look forward to the day when I'll be able to start attending again (freakin' deadlines.) So again I'll ask: Where are the romance fans, and why aren't they doing this? Why is the RWA with its pricey conferences the only game in town for romance writers? What gives, guys?

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