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## University of North Florida 2010 Writers Conference almost here



**Steve Berry, New York Times bestselling author of The Paris Vendetta, The Charlemagne Pursuit, The Venetian Betrayal and many more is back as keynote and key presenter**

by ANNA RABHAN  
published: July 8, 2010

Dig out that dusty novel manuscript, pull the children's book out of the drawer, resurrect the memoir you finished last winter – the second annual University of North Florida Writers Conference, co-sponsored by UNF's Division of Continuing Education and the Florida Writers Association, is fast approaching!

Last year's conference was quite successful. The conference organizers expected about 30 writers to attend; 90 registered, and it just got better from there. Veteran writer William Rawlings, who has attended his share of writers conferences over the course of his five-novel career, both attended and was a speaker at the 2009 conference. He said at the time, "This is one of the best conferences I've been to in quite a while. I would highly recommend it..." The organizers did not rest though. They took attendees' suggestions to heart and have truly created a schedule for the 2010 conference that balances workshops, critique sessions, networking time and exposure to possible publication or representation opportunities.

On Friday, August 6, participants in this year's conference can expect a day of informative, interactive workshops that will stimulate the writer to examine and practice the craft. The workshops are co-sponsored by the Florida Writers Association ([www.floridawriters.net](http://www.floridawriters.net)), a professional organization made up of both novice and experienced writers, several of whom are faculty members at this year's conference. Workshop topics will appeal to quite an array of interests. Find out from the University Press of Florida's Editor-in-Chief why editors reject nonfiction proposals and how to avoid having yours rejected. Learn from an actual Hollywood screenwriter how to create organic characters. And, of course, you won't want to miss the writing tips passed on by New York Times bestselling author and fixture at local writing conferences, Steve Berry. Visit the conference website, [www.unfwritersconference.com](http://www.unfwritersconference.com), for a complete list of workshops and for faculty biographies.

Writers tend to agree that while they can usually glean some useful information from the workshops offered at writers conferences, not all conferences provide sufficient time to focus on the writer's own work. UNF has addressed that issue by offering a solid day and a half of critique sessions on Saturday, August 7, and Sunday, August 8. The organizers have opened more groups and reduced the number of participants allowed in each group. Writers will surely appreciate the individualized attention. Conference director Sharon Cobb says, "It's not just sitting and listening to people talk about things. [Writers] get to have their work critiqued, which is extremely valuable." Furthermore, participants will be able to sign up for their preferred critique group, provided there are open seats in that group. How refreshingly useful it will be for an aspiring screenwriter to experience 30-45 minutes of critique of his or her own screenplay moderated by a professional, experienced screenwriter! Such an intimate gathering, along with the reception and the various lunches throughout the conference, will surely allow writers, both professional and novice, to get to know one another. Who knows where such networking could lead?

The logistics of exposing writers to agents, editors and publishers at writing conferences often prove problematic. Valuable conference time is taken up with face-to-face pitch sessions (meetings between writers and editors, agents or publishers in which the writer presents a short "sales pitch" for his or her work), and writers usually have to choose who they want to book time with, thus excluding others who may also be interested in their work. Not so at the UNF 2010 Writers Conference. On Sunday,



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August 8, after a panel critique of writers' first pages, attendees will participate in a workshop designed to help them perfect their pitches. Then, writers will have about four weeks to polish those pitches and submit them to be compiled into a "pitch book." Various agents, editors and publishers have already requested this collection of conference attendees' pitches. The advantage is that entities already interested in new acquisitions will receive your pitch. No wasting time sending proposals to those who aren't currently accepting them! Plus, since the pitch is made in print, the writer doesn't have to count on a 30-second oral pitch, which can go badly if he or she gets too nervous. The pitch book approach has proved very successful. According to the conference's website, 46 agencies requested additional materials from 30 writers who attended in 2009. Plus, Cobb says, "Several writers mentioned to me last year that they were much more relaxed at the conference because they weren't looking around the room trying to find the agent who they needed to go and network with."

Finally – and this is breaking conference news not yet listed on the official website – the organizers have invited Snapshot Interactive ([www.snapshotinteractive.com/client...](http://www.snapshotinteractive.com/client...)), a video marketing company, to the conference. In addition to the opportunity to hear Snapshot Interactive's Josh Talkington speak about how authors are finding success with Web marketing at Saturday's lunch, conference goers will be able to arrange to create their own author's video right there at the conference. This service will be available for a separate and additional fee, so visit the Snapshot Interactive website above for details.

***Registration for the UNF 2010 Writers Conference, to be held at the University Center, closes on July 16. Registrants must submit payment, as well as all materials for critique, by that date, so visit the conference website for registration details and submission guidelines.***