

**Up Close and Personal with Lucia Macro, Vice President, Executive Editor, Avon Books**

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***By Chloe French***

Technology is impacting every aspect of our lives, and the writing field is no exception. It wasn't long ago that I was part of the die-hard crowd that refused to consider reading a novel on any type of electronic device. Rather, I wanted the full, visceral experience of holding a book, feeling its pages beneath the tactile pads of my fingers, and slipping the bulk of it into my satchel.

Yet, times have changed, and after receiving an iPad for my birthday, I'm singing a different tune. I've conformed, like a vast majority of readers, to the option of reading a book through a device. (I use the word *option* here intentionally, as I still haven't been able to give up tangible, bound books with pretty covers, and doubt I ever will.)

This being said, the digital age has dawned, and authors, publishers, and editors are engaging in new, technology and digitally-based, ways of getting books into the hands of readers. This is what it's all about, right? regardless of the medium. One of these front-running, digital mover and shakers is Lucia Macro, Executive Editor at Avon Books, and head of the digital line, *Avon Impulse*.

**Chloe French: It's been almost a year and a half since you launched Avon's digital line *Avon Impulse*. What sets *Impulse* apart from other imprints?**

**Lucia Macro:** Our commitment to giving an author a first-rate team to work with. With Avon Impulse, authors have the same team that they would with any of our Avon Books: editorial, marketing, publicity, and art. So, right from the start, writers have the powerhouse experience of Avon behind them.

**French: Digital print has flourished in recent years due to the vast array of technologies and e-readers on the market. As a result, publishers and editors alike have had to be malleable and come up with new strategies to meet the demands of readers. Can you share some details with us about what's worked and what hasn't?**

**Macro:** Of course, I think it's *all* worked! We've had success going right to the heart of the market—historical and contemporary romances. HOW MISS RUTHERFORD GOT HER GROOVE BACK by Sophie Barnes and the SUGAR SHACK series by Candis Terry are great examples. In fact, Candis is going to make her mass market debut next year. And we are so proud of our Rita Finalist I LOVE THE EARL by Caroline Linden.

That said, we've made strong inroads into the suspense market, which is a notoriously tough nut to crack, with authors like Lena Diaz and with our erotica by authors like Lisa Marie Rice.

**French: Is *Avon Impulse* actively seeking manuscripts from both unpublished and published authors? How has the response been? Do you feel writers benefit from going digital?**

**Macro:** I'm actually really glad to be working in publishing today, and believe that the industry is changing in such innovative and exciting ways. *Avon Impulse* is such a great adventure, and the response to the imprint has been so positive. Not only have we published stories from some of our very bestselling Avon authors in the imprint—like Eloisa James, Rachel Gibson and Stephanie Laurens, we've also discovered wonderful new voices, which is always such a delight. Carla Swafford, for instance, who wrote *CIRCLE OF DESIRE*, came to us through our Avon In Box, which is where unpublished authors can submit their queries and manuscripts. (Go to [www.avonimpulse.com](http://www.avonimpulse.com) and follow the directions.)

**French: What is the best advice you can give an author who would like to submit their work to you? What are your requirements?**

**Macro:** This will sound familiar: Write a fabulous love story—and that hasn't changed in all the years I've been in this business! Think of unique ways to “wow” us—and don't be afraid to try stories that might not have made it past the ‘gatekeepers’ of days gone by. Remember, with *Impulse* we ultimately go right into the hands of consumers. For example, JB Lynn's *CONFESSIONS OF A SLIGHTLY NEUROTIC HITWOMAN* is something I knew I could make work in *Impulse*.

**French: What types of books knock your socks off and why?**

**Macro:** For me—and this is across the board—I love authors who do amazing world-building, and who draw me into that world. I love characters with interesting flaws, who aren't perfect, as long as we know where they are coming from. And you know, there is that moment within the first 20 pages where I think to myself, “Oh my gosh. She's nailed it!” That's when the magic kicks in.

**French: If you could predict how the publishing industry will look in the next five years, what would you say?**

**Macro:** I'd say I have no idea. (Laughing!) But I'm sure it will be exciting, interesting, and filled with surprises.

**French: Self-publishing is a hot topic these days, especially because it's gained popularity through the success of individuals who've made a name for themselves. What do you feel are some pros and cons for both new and established writers who may be considering this option?**

**Macro:** There are many choices right now, and, as with anything in life, there are pros and cons no matter what road you take. I truly believe these decisions are personal, and everyone has to make the choice that is right for them. I encourage authors to really do their homework, to think about their own strengths and needs, and then remember that ultimately everyone has the same goal: to get great stories into the hands of readers. And I do believe Avon does a wonderful job doing just that.

**French: As an executive editor, you have a great deal of responsibility. If we were to walk in your shoes on a typical day, what things would we encounter?**

**Macro:** First, you'd see that every day is wildly different from the one that came before it. You'd encounter colleagues who are creative, energetic, and passionate about their work. We are in and out of each other's offices twenty times a day or more—we really do work like a team! And you would see e-mail, lots and lots of e-mail.

**French: What is the most challenging part of your job? The most rewarding?**

**Macro:** Well, this hasn't changed: there is never enough time in the day! I have to truly work to keep on top of my reading, and believe me I read FAST, and I can still get behind. What also hasn't changed: I get my greatest reward in helping authors get their books to readers. I love it when I hold the finished copy of any one of the books I've worked on. Every book is a little miracle.

**French: You've had the opportunity to collaborate with many authors. What qualities do you hope for in a writer? What things do you offer as an editor?**

**Macro:** Communicate, communicate, communicate. I can't stress it enough. As an editor, I hope I offer someone who is going to be your biggest cheerleader, who is always on your side. I also think that, as an editor, I'm responsive, helpful, and honest—oh, that makes me sound like a Girl Scout. But I do believe that to be an effective editor you have to be able to face the bad news and celebrate the good. It's important to have clear communication.

**French: Tell us about your journey to becoming an executive editor with Avon. Did you always know you wanted to have a career in publishing?**

**Macro:** In high school I thought I was going to be a writer. My dad thought I was going to be a lawyer (because I think I told him that and he agreed to believe me). But the awful truth is I fell into publishing after I read an article in Glamour (or was it Cosmo?) that listed “editorial assistant” as one of the ten things you could do with a liberal arts degree. Most people today have more focus, but honestly I just got lucky. And once I started, I never stopped. I found my “peeps,” and they were in publishing.

**French: When you read a book for the sheer pleasure of it, are you able to enjoy it, or do you always wear your “editor hat”?**

**Macro:** I read a lot of non-fiction, YA, and general fiction. I just can’t read anything that’s pretentious, which gives my book group a lot of amusement. I’m afraid *THE CORRECTIONS* has scarred me for life.

**French: If you could have three wishes granted, what would they be and why?**

**Macro:** [1] Since the Yankees are unlikely to do much but increase stock in BenGay this year, I wish the other team of my heart wins the World Series. Yes, that means you Baltimore Orioles! Go Os!

[2] I really wish the women of New York City would stop wearing flip-flops in the rain.

[3] I wish that the New Voices of 2012 become the Big Bestsellers of 2013 and beyond!

**French: It’s been such a joy getting “Up Close and Personal” with you, Lucia. Thank you for taking the time to let us peek in to your life and world today. Any final words you’d like to share?**

**Macro:** Publishing is such an exciting industry right now—lots is changing, but there are certain key elements that remain the same: love of storytelling, the joy that we find when we discover a new author we adore, the excitement of seeing ideas become books. I come to work every morning with a sense of optimism about the authors I work with and the books I work on.