

INDIE AUTHOR MAGAZINE

Volume 1 • Issue 5 • September 2021

DISTRIBUTION

This Issue's
Featured Author:

**CRAIG
MARTELLE**

The Magic
Portal: How
to Get Your
Books Into
Libraries

Naming the Beast:
Recognizing Impostor
Syndrome

Taking Chances, Making Friends:
How to Successfully Network at
Author Conferences

Throwing
Down the
Gauntlet:
What is
NaNoWriMo?

Up the Publishing Wide
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How to Successfully Network at Author Conferences



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From the Publisher

EXPLORERS AND TOUR GUIDES

In over two decades of entrepreneurship, there hasn't been a single successful person I've known, followed, or interviewed that hasn't admitted to doubting themselves at some point.

Call it what you will, I've distilled the many names I've used over the years down to "impostor syndrome", "existential crisis", and "plain old doubt". It's the voice in my head that says, "you're not good enough."

In this month's mindset article, we start a three-part series on banishing the beast of Impostor Syndrome and ways you can mitigate its effects on your life and career. It's a subject I have often struggled with over the years and even now have to battle.

Let me share with you some sage advice given to me by our own Alice Briggs that helped. She explained the difference between tour guides and explorers.

Tour Guides follow the well-worn path. They've seen the landscape and know all the rocks and trees by heart. They're in the safety zone, and they're content with what they have at that exact moment.

Explorers, on the other hand, take risks. They blaze trails. They are in charge of their own destinies because they're charting new territories and finding new ways up the mountain of success.

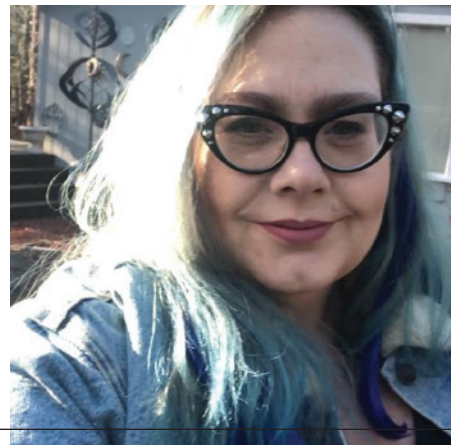
There's nothing inherently wrong with either. But if you're doing something new — if you're an explorer — then there will be times when you're not sure of what you're doing. You'll feel like an impostor because you're doing something that you've never done before and you're learning.

That to me is exciting. I love being an explorer. And it gives me a very handy stick with which to beat back that inner critic when she whispers, "not good enough."

"Hush up," I reply. "I'm on an adventure."

To your success (and adventures),

Chelle
Publisher
Indie Author Magazine



From the Creative Director

Distribution, especially with the growing number of avenues available to indie authors, is an important decision for any author, no matter where you are in your career. As I've progressed through my author adventure, my decisions surrounding distribution have changed and adapted to fit my growing skill set and bandwidth for added complexity of my business. I'm always interested to hear what others are doing and why they have made their choices.

There is no right or wrong way to distribute your books—there is only the best choice for you at this point of your career.

And, you can always change your mind, which is reassuring for me at least.

In the three feature articles this issue, you'll find some additional perspectives or strategies that you'll want to try. If not now, then later when you're ready.

I'm also excited for the series of articles on impostor syndrome we've begun in this issue. The impostor can be such a loud, obnoxious voice who derails you at every new venture. You'll discover in the next few issues that it's a liar and it can be beaten—and that it's far more common than you may have realized.

Maybe the impostor has been what's preventing you from trying a new distribution method, or exploring a new genre, or writing that nonfiction book on that thing people always ask for your help with. It's normal to be afraid when doing something new. Just don't let that fear, or the impostor, stop you from doing what you dream of doing.

Do it afraid, if you must, but do it!

Sending you courage,

Alice Briggs
Creative Director,
Indie Author Magazine



From the Managing Editors

Do you know where you're going?

For the last four issues we have helped you get your manuscript to be its best version. Now, it's time to decide how you are going to release that manuscript into the world as your book.

In this issue, we look at your distribution options—from all the boxes you need to check to upload to Amazon, to understanding the magical realm of libraries and how indie authors can access that fortified sanctuary.

The Mindset column and Indie Annie both talk about writing demons—imposter syndrome and creative fatigue—and how to deal with them.

With parts of the world beginning to reopen, in-person conferences and events are starting again. Getting the most out of conferences takes some upfront planning and a deliberate mindset. We walk you through all you need to know to not only meet connections at these events but to make friendships too.

Erika Everest
Managing Editor
Indie Author Magazine



“All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them.”—Walt Disney

You've written your book, edited it until it shines, and now you're ready to send it out into the world.

But how? What retailers should you use? What do all the terms mean?

There are a lot of questions that can lead to uncertainty when preparing to release your book into the wild. But never fear—we answer all these questions and more in this month's issue on Distribution. We look at what you need to upload to Amazon, the various distribution channels, and how to get your books into libraries.

One of my favorite articles this month is our feature on networking at conferences—a topic I wish I'd known more about before attending my first or even second conference, where I spent a goodly amount of time hiding behind the few people I already knew.

Putting our books out into the world is a dream for many of us. But as with anything that involves risk, there is fear associated with that dream. But if we have courage, we can make that dream of being published a reality.

Robyn Sarty
Managing Editor,
Indie Author Magazine



*Play
to
Win*



<https://writelink.to/iat>

Stack
the Odds
in Your Favor
with the Friday Five
from Indie Author Tools.
A free weekly email with the
best indie author tips, tools, and tech.

Throwing Down the Gauntlet

WHAT IS NATIONAL NOVEL WRITING MONTH AND WHY YOU SHOULD PARTICIPATE

Warning: This story starts and ends with a challenge. Choices have to be made. Read and walk away with insight. Read and walk away with the seed of an idea that will flex creativity, demand tenacity, and forever change the writer/story relationship. That, dear reader, demonstrates the powerful touch of National Novel Writing Month, henceforth discussed as NaNoWriMo.

A JOURNEY TO THE PAST

Let's flip back the calendar pages to June 1999. Now we are at the beginning of the challenge. The place is San Francisco. Picture a group of friends talking about the world as it was and dreaming about what they could do with it. The conversation is animated, especially when the topic of writing a novel, an entire novel, in a month rises to the surface.

This group of writers (twenty-one in all) decided to take the challenge. Keeping in line with the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time Based) goals, the novel was defined as a story that contains at least 50,000 words. Two weeks later, July 1, 1999, Chris Baty and his friends launched their first NaNoWriMo.

Several fell to the wayside, the process too demanding. Many succeeded. All were changed. The month of writing every day, fighting with and for characters, battling distractions and fatigue, changed their appreciation for the art of storytelling.

“
The month of writing every day, fighting with and for characters, battling distractions and fatigue, changed their appreciation for the art of storytelling.”

“Falling short of meeting the challenge doesn't connote failure.”

THE BATTLE CONTINUES

The next year, more joined the challenge, and it grew and grew. Last year, NaNoWriMo had 383,064 participants. The Young Writer's Program had 97,439 students and educators. A lot of these writers worked from home, many worked in the 448 libraries, bookstores, and community centers that are part of the Come Write In program.

The timing of NaNoWriMo changed too. Instead of meeting in July when the weather was perfect for outdoor activities, the date was changed to November. It gave people a chance to be productive when the weather kept them indoors anyway.

Best sellers like *Wool*, *Fan Girl*, *Cinder*, and *The Night Circus* were products of NaNoWriMo. *The Night Circus* attests to the flexibility of NaNoWriMo. It was written over two NaNoWriMo years. In other words, falling short of meeting the challenge doesn't connote failure.

JOIN THE FRAY

Countless indie authors started with NaNoWriMo.

If we set the challenge of writing 50,000 words in a month aside, there is so much more to glean from the NaNoWriMo experience. Over the month of November, authors around the world will meet in person and virtually for sprints, cheering each other on. People who volunteer as municipal liaisons coordinate the meetings. Twitter has round the clock sprinting sessions where people check in and share their progress. YouTubers post videos with tips and inspiration.

“

The beauty of the NaNoWriMo challenge is far greater than writing a book at the end of the month—it brings authors together.

”

The NaNoWriMo website is loaded with materials to keep an author going. It has a personal progress bar, stats for the authors in geographical communities, badges, chats to connect with other authors, and inspirational notes delivered to the inbox.

The beauty of the NaNoWriMo challenge is far greater than writing a book at the end of the month. Yes, that is awesome. But it also brings authors together. It debunks the myth of writers consuming copious quantities of coffee while pounding away at the keyboard, begging the muse for inspiration, alone. When the author accepts the gauntlet, they receive more than a story. Win or lose, 50k words or 500, on December 1st, those who attempted the challenge, walk with a confident limp in their ego.

Will you be one of them?

Merri Maywether

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Dear Indie Annie,

I have just released the fourth book in my series, and it is doing really well. Sales are good, and the fans love it and are clamoring for more. Doesn't sound like a problem, right? There are two more books to wrap up that series, but I am tired of writing these characters. I want to start something new—maybe even a different genre—but I don't write very quickly so it would mean a long wait for the next book in my current series, and I don't want to kill my momentum. That series pays my kids' tuition.

But the spark of excitement I used to feel when I sat down to write has been extinguished. Now it's just a slog. How do I get the magic back—or at least the fortitude to keep going when my heart isn't in it anymore?

Extinguished in Evora

DEAR SWEET EXTINGUISHED,

I'm afraid to admit I had to Google where in the world Evora is, but wow—you live in an incredible city. I am intrigued by the Chapel of Bones. Such stunning scenery and beautiful architecture. Inspiration surrounds you at every turn! Portugal is now on my bucket list, so thank you for a good thirty minutes of procrastination and dream weaving.

I know what you are thinking. I do, I really do. You are thinking to yourself, “What is Indie Annie wittering on about? How is this answering my question?” Well, I just did. Don't you see what I did there?

I WAS DISTRACTED, BUT NOW I HAVE RETURNED TO THE BUSINESS AT HAND.

I went off on an adventure, whetting my creative appetite with lovely new things, and then I came back to my work. And that is the best advice I can give you.

As you have said, you have two more books in this current series. And may I just take a moment to celebrate your success?

Four published books, and you can pay your children's tuition fees! For many, that would be enough incentive to write on into the night. You have eager fans clamoring for your next book!

A lot of authors reading this would scream what is your problem? BUT I detect there is something working on a much deeper level with you. *The call of the shiny.*

Like a magpie, you are attracted to that sliver of gold or silver



Need help from your favorite Indie Aunt?
Ask Dear Indie Annie a question at
IndieAnnie@indieauthormagazine.com



on the horizon. You are already sitting on a nest brimming with treasure, but what excites you, what feeds your soul, lies on a distant shore.

I too have fallen down many a Pinterest rabbit hole. I have a stack of notebooks to my left packed with fresh story ideas, fantastic new worlds, and fabulously fleshed out characters. They cry for my attention, and sometimes I need to feed them, if only to silence them for a while.

I suggest you do the same.

YOU NEED TO RECONNECT WITH YOUR CREATIVE SPARK.

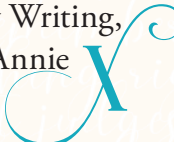
The seed you once watered grew into this stellar selling series of yours. To do that, you may need to give yourself permission to take a small writing vacation. Work on something else for a week or two, or even better, give yourself a regular day off. A day when you work on a new project, so that you can return to your current series with a renewed love.

Giving yourself permission—and being strict with yourself about returning—is the key here. There's a well-known phrase that says "It doesn't matter where you get your appetite as long as you go home for

dinner." I can't remember who said it, and another happy ten minutes of Googling couldn't help me find the answer. But, regardless of who uttered those words the first time around, the message is simple. We are all attracted to the new, the fresh, the uncharted. It inspires us. It ignites ideas, dreams, hopes, and fantasies—all things a writer needs in abundance, but remember "East, West, Home is best."

This current series is where you have your home. Maybe you are thinking about moving one day. For now, take some time to sate your cravings, look at a few property details, make a mood board, book a vacation in this desirable neighborhood. But don't forget to maintain the house you are living in. Monday through Friday, you sweep the floors and take out the trash. Get it?

Don't beat yourself up for looking elsewhere; treat yourself to some time out to explore distant shores, then row back to land with fresh wind in your lungs as you engage in the next two books.

Good Luck and,
Happy Writing,
Indie Annie 

10 TIPS FOR BOOKFUNNEL

BookFunnel specializes in e-book and audio distribution. Authors can send e-books directly to readers' preferred reading devices, collect email addresses, participate in group promotions, and more. BookFunnel has created tools that save authors time, facilitate reader engagement, and it prides itself on customer support.

1 DELIVERING YOUR READER MAGNET

Upload your free “reader magnet” and create a download page on BookFunnel, so readers who sign up for your mailing list from your website can receive an automated “welcome email” with the BookFunnel download link.

If you don't have your own website or are looking for a simpler setup, you can upload your reader magnet to BookFunnel and create a giveaway page. It's a signup and delivery page all in one, and you can customize the colors and text to suit your branding.

Pro Tip: Make your reader magnet the best example of your writing for better reader engagement. Consider keeping it exclusive and place a link in the front and back matter of your e-book. Examples of great reader magnets can be found here:

<https://blog.bookfunnel.com/2021/the-best-types-of-reader-magnets-fiction-and-nonfiction/>

2 ARCS AND BETA COPIES

Authors value social proof for gaining sales, but also manuscript security. With BookFunnel's Certified Mail, you compose the outgoing email for up to five hundred review team members per month. The email includes an unique, unshareable, private link to a watermarked copy. You can schedule reminders and follow-up emails, and can get a summary email after the campaign closes detailing which reviewers downloaded the e-book to keep your review team tight.

3

JOIN NEWSLETTER BUILDERS

Newsletter promotions are designed to build your mailing list and require a free e-book download, such as your reader magnet, and a landing page to join. Read the requirements carefully because many promos state genres, review ratings, story tropes, mailing list sizes, share by dates, or contributions towards ads or boosted posts.

Don't join too many promos at once, so you can introduce your readers to other e-books without overwhelming them. Also, other authors' readers are leads, so allow time for them to warm them up and become fans.

Pro Tip: Choose promotions that align best with your schedule or send a special edition newsletter to cover the dates in question.

4

EMAIL INTEGRATION

BookFunnel's direct integration with your mailing list provider (e.g. MailerLite, SendFox) collects email addresses on your behalf, confirms and automatically adds them to a mailing list specified by you, where you can set up an automated sequence to send the reader a download link for your e-book.

If your mailing list provider doesn't have direct integration, you can do it manually. With manual transfer, BookFunnel collects email addresses in a CSV file on your dashboard, and you export them in one of two ways: Either click the link in the notification email to log-in to your dashboard and then click the 'Export CSV' button, or click 'Landing Pages' on your dashboard, select the required landing page, and click the 'Export CSV' button from there.

5

SEPARATE LANDING PAGES FOR DIFFERENT SUBSCRIBER TYPES

Landing pages have options which can be used depending on your objectives. If you're growing your list with new subscribers, landing pages can require valid email addresses before readers can download your e-book. To avoid importing the same emails over and over, click the 'Don't allow subscribers to opt-in again if they have already downloaded the offered book' option to send them to their library instead.

If you're using BookFunnel to give away copies to existing subscribers, you can create a landing page that doesn't collect email addresses. And if you're managing a Beta/ARC team, BookFunnel's restricted pages feature will check the email they use against a mailing list you've created with pre-approved email addresses before releasing the download. Anyone not on the list will be denied.

Pro Tip: Instead of deleting landing pages, expire them, then they can be reactivated if needed to prevent having to recreate later.

6

KEEP UNSUBSCRIBERS OFF YOUR MAILING LIST

BookFunnel has two settings to keep readers from repeatedly signing up, if they've previously unsubscribed and are trying to subscribe again, or if they have marked your emails as spam. This is useful if your e-book is only available to new readers or if you have a download limit on the landing page. You will need to use integration to access this feature and be willing to block readers from rejoining your list, but they will get a polite default message to ease the blow.

7 AUDIO-TEASERS AND DIRECT SALES

BookFunnel's audiobook delivery provides all the same features associated with e-books, from ARC campaigns, download pages, gifting audiobooks, direct sales, and unique codes to audiobooks as reader magnets. It is in open beta at present, and you can get access by emailing the team and asking.

Audio can also be used for teasers—short audio samples that let readers listen to an MP3 on a sales page, and then click through to buy from select audio platforms. A multi-book landing page of audiobook covers, samples, and store links can also drive sales. Other uses include boosting newsletter engagement with shared clips, gaining new subscribers with narrated short stories, or as free teasers for upcoming releases.

8 DIRECT SALES

To expand your sales reach, BookFunnel will deliver sales from Payhip, Selz, and direct from your website with PayPal, WooCommerce, and Shopify.

To use direct sales, create a delivery action on BookFunnel for the e-book to be delivered, so when the reader buys, they are emailed a private link for the e-books purchased. If you are using PayPal on your website, the buyer is taken to the BookFunnel link once purchase is complete.

9 CUSTOMIZE LANDING PAGES

Customize landing pages with your own branding, such as color coordinating with your website or replacing BookFunnel's logo with your own. Apply to all landing pages as a default, or craft each with unique themes or designs for selected books or series. Style your own text and use bold or italicized headings to make it stand out. Both new and existing landing pages are customizable.

Pro Tip: To center justify the headline add “-=” (dash equals) to either side of the words.

Pro Tip: Consider using a contrast checker so background and text colors have very high contrast, such as light colors with dark text, to avoid alienating readers with vision impairments and losing sales and fans. <https://webaim.org/resources/contrastchecker>

10 GROUP SALES PROMO

Group promotions help authors collaborate for greater audience reach. Participants share the promo link with existing mailing lists and social media platforms. Fans can view all e-books in the promo and find new stories to read. The great thing is you control the theme, text, and pricing on your landing page so the regular price displayed can be slashed out and the sale price featured. The customized tracking link counts how many unique visitors you send to each promo so data can be used to compare later.

Pro Tip: If enrolled in KDP Select, send readers straight to Amazon to read with Kindle Unlimited.

With all the options on offer from BookFunnel to advance your e-book sales, the one guarantee is their customer service will be there for both you and your readers if you need them. ■

Anne Lown

Distribution Puzzle

Find the Following Distribution Words in the Puzzle

B R G Z R K E Q N B M Q J N Y J B D W J
W B O E N B C D T B B R T N Q O Y M T L
R D A T M B U Z I R T D Y Y O R K L X X
B C J T A J R D Q W X J L K R E G D M S
H J M T R G R J B D Y T F A Y M E Q E Y
T W X Z Y X E J Y Y N U R W C L P I Y R
E L D Y T R N R M B N D O V I I R D D B
N L A D R P C D G N Q R M V E O S D Q M
O B B T Q T Y R E G D T E C T Q G Y Y G
I R Y I I Z D L K S A R A I J Q R D H R
T V E T S G D B K R Y L R G B N D W L P
U G M V W S I B B N P R C A T E G O R Y
B N Y Q I J E D R T E C H A N N E L S V
I I R R D S G C E T T D M X Y N Y L T L
R C V D A D U K C D J I M K J G A D B W
T I M D G R R L D A Y R W N J B Q P K Y
S R J Y W A B R C D Z E W Q O N N Z R P
I P L R M T D I D X D C L L J L J R N Z
D W T R G T Z G L P E T G R L R K B G Y

| | |
|--------------|-------------|
| ACCESSIBLE | EXCLUSIVE |
| AGGREGATOR | GLOBAL |
| BOOKFUNNEL | KEYWORDS |
| CATEGORY | LIBRARY |
| CHANNELS | MARKETPLACE |
| CURRENCY | PHYSICAL |
| DELIVERY | PRICING |
| DIGITAL | REACH |
| DIRECT | TERRITORIES |
| DISTRIBUTION | WIDE |

CRAIG MARTELLE

THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE LEADER

To an online author group of over 50,000 people, a wise man once said, “The most important gift you can give somebody is your time because you don’t get it back when it’s gone.” And while that statement isn’t novel, it seems apropos, almost ironic even, when considering the speaker: Craig Martelle.

For readers of *Indie Author Magazine*, that name is likely known, or familiar at the very least. Until a conference in November 2019, to this author, the name was merely synonymous with 20Booksto50k®; he was part of the regular cast, a headliner, but distant all the same.

But Vegas was a place full of the unexpected, a place where *the* Craig Martelle shone.

The energy in the room was thick. You’d think we were all waiting for a popular band to start their set. The audience was enthusiastic as a voice echoed from the podium. “I’m Craig Martelle. This is Michael Anderle. Welcome to 20Books Vegas,” trailed closely by, “If we get a fire alarm, that means there’s a fire. Get the ... out.”

Thankfully, no actual fires were started over the course of the following few days. A few figurative sparks maybe, but we remained safe with our lanyards and giant cookies as the trajectories of more than a few author careers were changed on impact.

“The most important gift you can give somebody is your time because you don’t get it back when it’s gone.”



He's a hybrid author who understands the various paths up the mountain of publishing better than many.

THE MAN AND THE MYTH

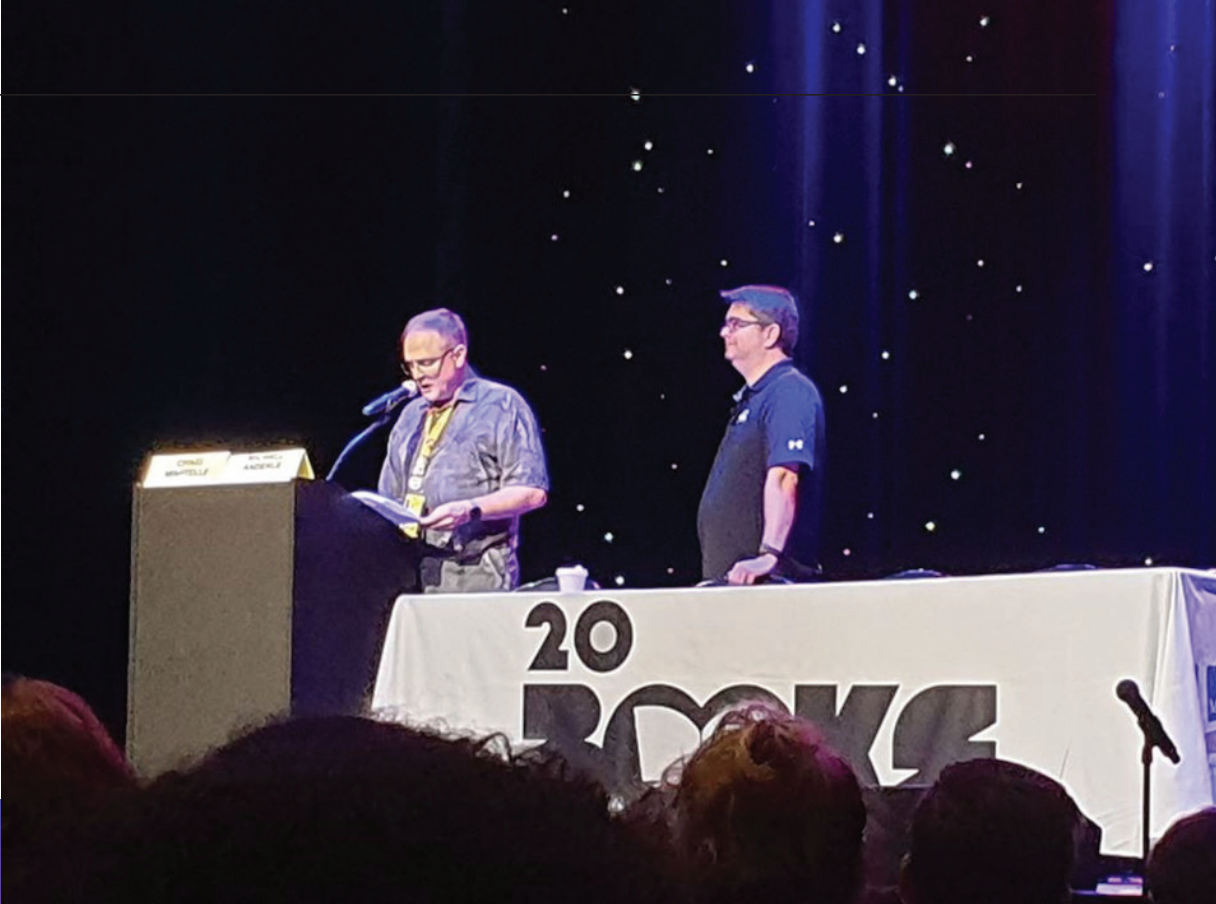
If you think managing the biggest indie author conference in the world is Craig's—a man who claims to be an introvert—only gig, you'd be wrong. There are over a hundred books in the genres of Military SciFi, Space Adventure, Space Opera, Space Western, Post Apocalyptic, Apocalyptic Western, Thriller, Mystery, and Non-fiction credited to Craig Martelle as an author, co-author, and collaborator. He's a hybrid author who understands the various paths up the mountain of publishing better than many.

When asked about what inspired him to start writing, Craig tells a story about being first introduced to the world of Dungeons and Dragons at the age of twelve while growing up outside of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, where the game originated.

“I liked how it excited the imagination, and I liked the stories that people were writing from this stuff. Gaming was okay, but I really liked the world and the stories.”

His love for the stories was put on hold during his twenty-one years in the Marine Corps followed by what he describes as very unfun law school and a seven-year career in business consulting spent working inside the Arctic Circle in Alaska. Eventually, Craig decided that a temperature of -74F and being away from his wife for months out of the year was enough to consider retiring. After a yard-





work accident resulted in lighting himself on fire, he was left bandaged and stuck in the house with far too much energy to sit idly. Sixty-one days later, a hundred-thousand-word book was complete.

By February 2016, he'd published book one with little fanfare and written two additional stories. A chance encounter with Michael Anderle on kboards.com, a forum for Amazon and Kindle, pulled him into the 20Books orbit, and as they say, the rest is history.

And by "the rest," we mean the aforementioned sixty plus solo-authored titles and more than forty titles co-authored in less than five years, almost-daily focus videos, interviews, scholarship efforts for newbies, and so much more—*definitely* too much energy to relax and enjoy what could have been a nice, relaxing retirement.

"It's okay to switch hats. I wear hats a lot because I have no hair."

THE LEADER

Now, you might believe that extreme cold followed by brief pyromania is fascinating enough, but it's even more interesting to listen to this very busy human talk about what it means to him to "lead from the front," in relation to the work he does in indie author spaces. If you review the videos for Craig's five-minute focus on the 20Books YouTube channel or in the 20Books-to50k® Facebook group, you'll find topics on everything from author websites to mental health. You'll also find an impassioned speaker preaching the gospel of openly sharing our publishing experience and knowledge to help everyone willing to do both the work and the research.

And the idea that being an author is *real* work is something Craig believes in wholeheartedly. "I can pants a book, but I definitely plot my business."

But even with all of the plotting for his ever-growing business, part of his strategy seems to revolve around making connections. In fact, he created an entire organization, The International Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors (IASFA), to bring writers in his preferred genres together to advance their careers. "If you want to move forward, that's IASFA," he says. Through IASFA, authors work as a group to host promotions and build a robust, targeted, organic newsletter audience along the way. All for the very low cost of zero. And no, that is not a typo.

Craig's approach to help newbie and veteran authors alike has included publishing multiple anthologies, including six large volumes of *The Expanding Universe*, and multiple 20Books collective anthologies in various genres while fronting the costs and distributing all profits to the participating authors. Based on the anthologies alone, it should be no surprise that a recurring theme during our interview was that we're all in this together. Literally together, as in pooling our collective resources to find our readers and thrive.

A recurring theme during our interview was that we're all in this together. Literally together, as in pooling our collective resources to find our readers and thrive.

Struggling to find all of the breadcrumbs Craig has sprinkled around the interwebs to help indie authors? We've got you covered. You can find Craig Martelle's wit, wisdom, and dog photos—maybe even books too—at the following locations:

www.craigmartelle.com

20Booksto50K® YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/c/20Booksto50kRLiveEvents/videos>

20Booksto50K® Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/20Booksto50k/>

International Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Authors (IASFA): <https://iasfa.org>

Even Craig's dog, Stanley, has his own social media, folks: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/alaskanstanley>

If recent efforts are any indicator, the train driven by Craig Martelle is only building momentum. He might re-evaluate and evolve with the ever-changing market, but the quiet of retirement in the wilds of Alaska with his wife and favorite furry sidekick, Stanley, appears to be all but forgotten for now.

“Anybody with a full-time job, they're like ‘hey, you're retired’ and I'm like, no, I have lots of full-time jobs that don't involve writing. And oh, by the way, I write to support my full-time jobs.”

A leader in Authorlandia, Craig is always looking to the future. When asked about the next big “thing,” he had this to say:

“I think we're going to see realistic animation of books ... I'm talking, you take your book and you run it through this super cool software and it generates the movie for you.”

While we wait to watch the first AI-illustrated movie from Mr. Martelle, we'll have to whet our appetites with the upcoming return of his kilt-wearing reluctant rockstar persona at 20Books Vegas this November. ■

Bre Lockhart



A Guide to Publishing Your Book on Amazon

So, your book has been edited, and your designer has sent you an amazing, genre-appropriate cover. Congratulations! Now it's time to upload it to the Amazon store, a retailer which accounts for 70% of the US e-book market. This article will take you through the process step-by-step and point out any pitfalls.

HOW TO FIND KEYWORDS

Amazon is the largest search engine after Google, which owns YouTube. Readers find book listings through typing words and phrases into the search box. By picking appropriate keywords and keyword strings, you tell Amazon which categories to place your book in, and more importantly, which readers to recommend it to.

Do this research before you begin uploading your book and keep a record. Keywords are important for uploading further books in the same series, but also for advertising further down the line.



By picking appropriate keywords and keyword strings, you tell Amazon which categories to place your book in.

Method One (Free): Create a list of keywords, starting with one to three phrases specific to your book, such as “Military Sci-Fi Space Marines” or “Small Town Cowboy Romance.”

Use characterizations like “teenage witch” or “Navy SEAL,” genre descriptors like “Dark Romance,” or tropes like “enemies to lovers.” Or list relevant settings, such as “Victorian London.”

Method Two (Free): Go to the best-selling books in your genre. Take note of recurring words in titles, subtitles, and blurb. These are keywords you can use as well.

Method Three (Paid): KDspy is a browser extension (US\$97*) that provides revenue metrics, keywords, competitor research, book tracking, and more at your fingertips. <https://kdspy.com>

Method Four (Paid): Publisher Rocket is a software (US\$97*) which makes keyword research very easy, not only for your listing on Amazon, but also for advertising and genre research. <https://publisherrocket.com>

*Price at time of printing.

Besides keywords, you need to know in which categories KDP should list your book. The paid methods above will help you with categories also. For a free approach, note the categories while looking for keywords with Method Two.

The screenshot shows the Kindle Direct Publishing dashboard. At the top, there are navigation links: 'Your Account', 'English', 'Help', and 'Sign Out'. Below that, the 'kindle direct publishing' logo is on the left, and 'Bookshelf', 'Reports', 'Community', and 'Marketing' are on the right. The main content area has three tabs: 'Kindle eBook Details' (which is selected and shows 'In Progress...'), 'Kindle eBook Content' (showing 'Not Started...'), and 'Kindle eBook Pricing' (showing 'Not Started...').

The 'Kindle eBook Details' section contains the following fields and options:

- Language:** A dropdown menu set to 'English'. A note says: 'Choose your eBook's primary language (the language in which the book was written). Learn more about languages supported on Kindle.'
- Book Title:** A text input field. A note says: 'Enter your title as it appears on the book cover. This field cannot be changed after your book is published. Learn more about book titles.'
- Subtitle (Optional):** A text input field.
- Series:** A section with a note: 'If your book is part of a series, add series details so readers can easily find the titles on a single detail page. (Optional) Learn more. Add your title to an existing series or create a new one. Linked formats for this title will be automatically added to the series once setup is complete.' There is an 'Add series details' button.
- Edition Number:** A section with a note: 'You can provide an edition number if this title is a new edition of an existing book. What counts as a new edition?'. There is an 'Edition Number (Optional)' text input field.
- Author:** A section with a note: 'Enter the primary author or contributor. Pen names are allowed. Additional authors can be added in the Contributors field. Learn more about authorship.' There are two text input fields: 'Primary Author or Contributor' (with sub-fields for 'First name' and 'Last name').
- Contributors:** A section with a note: 'If others contributed to your book, you can add them and they'll be listed on the Amazon product detail page. For multiple authors, they'll appear in the same sequence as you add them below.' There is a 'Contributors (Optional)' section with a dropdown menu for 'Author', two text input fields for 'First name' and 'Last name', and a 'Remove' button. There is also an 'Add Another' button.

READY TO UPLOAD YOUR BOOK?

Make sure you have an account with Amazon and navigate to the Kindle Direct Publishing dashboard at <https://kdp.amazon.com>.

Page 1: “Kindle eBook Details” Page

Click on ‘Create a New Title’ on the KDP dashboard to arrive at the Kindle e-book Details Page. This is where you input your project details as they appear on your book listing page.

Book title and subtitle: Don’t be tempted to keyword stuff by stringing them together artificially, but if your book is a “biker comedy romance,” use that as a subtitle so readers can find their favorite trope.

Series: Create a new series if you’re planning further books. This will help Amazon link your books as you write them so readers can easily read through from one to the next.

KDP will ask you to add your series title, whether your books must be read in order, and a series blurb. If you don’t have one, the system will use the description of book one instead.

Enter your **Author** name and the names and roles of any **Contributors** (e.g. illustrator, translator, or a co-author).

Description:

This is where you add your **blurb** or **book description**. Many writers find this difficult, but usually, their problems stem from a fundamental misunderstanding of what a blurb is.

A blurb is *not* a summary of your book.

This is your opportunity to sell your writing, to let readers know what your book is about, and ultimately, to entice them to buy. One simple formula to write a blurb is to establish

what the protagonist wants, what's in the way, and what's at stake if they fail. Finish with one last sentence which shows the reader why this book is for them.

For more information, here's an article going into more detail: <https://blog.reedsy.com/write-blurb-novel>

Pro Tip: A badly-formatted blurb will impact your sales. Use white space, bold, and italics to add emphasis. The Kindlepreneur Book Description Generator will help you turn your blurb into a html-formatted text which you can copy and paste into the KDP description box: <https://kindlepreneur.com/amazon-book-description-generator>

The image shows a screenshot of the Amazon KDP author information form, which is divided into several sections:

- Author:** A section for entering the primary author or contributor. It includes a link to "Learn more about authorship" and two input fields for "First name" and "Last name".
- Contributors:** A section for adding other contributors. It includes a link to "Learn more about authorship" and a form with a dropdown menu for "Author", input fields for "First name" and "Last name", a "Remove" button, and an "Add Another" button.
- Description:** A section for summarizing the book. It includes a link to "How do I format the description?" and a rich text editor with formatting options (B, I, U, link, unlink, Format) and a "Source" button. A character count shows "4000 remaining characters".
- Publishing Rights:** A section with two radio button options: "I own the copyright and I hold the necessary publishing rights. What are publishing rights?" and "This is a public domain work. What is a public domain work?".
- Keywords:** A section for entering up to 7 search keywords. It includes a link to "How do I choose keywords?" and four input fields.

Categories Choose up to two browse categories. [Why are categories important?](#) ▾

Age and Grade Range

Children's book age range (Optional)
Age Range

Minimum ▾ Maximum ▾

US grade range (Optional)
U.S. Grade Range

Minimum ▾ Maximum ▾

Pre-order

I am ready to release my book now

Make my Kindle eBook available for Pre-order. [Is KDP Pre-order right for me?](#) ▾

Next step: Content

kdpselect Make More Money Reach More Readers [Learn More](#)

KDP Select Global Fund July 2021 \$38.1 Million

Reach more readers through Kindle Unlimited [Learn More](#)

kindleunlimited

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[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) **KDP Select** Earn more money and reach new readers **KDP Community** Connect with experts and fellow authors **CreateSpace** Indie print publishing made easy

Keywords: This is where you enter your keywords. Dave Chesson did some great research on best practice and suggests you use all 50 characters per keyword box. His article explains the reasons: <https://kindlepreneur.com/7-kindle-keywords>

Categories: These categories are based on the BISAC, an industry standard code that KDP uses on their backend where you are required to pick up to two categories. The Amazon store front, however, uses categories that reflect what readers search for.

Pro Tip: Contact Amazon via email and request up to ten categories. You must include your ASIN number and the full category link, such as Kindle eBooks > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Reference. Alex Newton of K-Lytics explains the process in more detail: <https://k-lytics.com/bisac-codes-vs-amazon-kindle-storefront-categories>

Pre-order: Here you can specify a future date if you're not ready to publish yet.

Page 2: "Kindle eBook Content" page

On this page, you'll upload your e-book cover and content.

Manuscript:

You're asked to make a decision on DRM. Digital Rights Management is meant to stop piracy, but unfortunately, it is very easy to strip DRM from a document. It may also upset readers who purchase your book, but can't read it on a non-Kindle e-reader if DRM is enabled. Many authors don't use DRM for that reason.

Upload your manuscript in either EPUB or DOCX. The MOBI format is no longer supported by KDP.

Kindle eBook Cover: Upload your cover as an image file. Ask your designer for help if there are any problems with the upload.

Kindle eBook Preview: Sometimes, the cover layout needs to be adjusted, or there's a mistake inside your book. The preview catches any errors and makes sure your project complies with KDP's standards.

Indie Author Magazine: All About Outlining

Kindle eBook Details

✓ Complete

Kindle eBook Content

| In Progress...

Kindle eBook Pricing

| Not Started...

KDP Select Enrollment

Maximize My Royalties with KDP Select (Optional)

With KDP Select, you can reach more readers, earn more money, and maximize your sales potential. To enter the [Kindle Storyteller](#) contest, your eBook needs to be enrolled in KDP Select. [Learn more about KDP Select.](#) [How Do I Enroll?](#) ▾

Enroll my book in KDP Select

Territories

Select the territories for which you hold distribution rights. To enter the [Kindle Storyteller](#) contest, you need make your book available at least in Amazon.co.uk. [Learn more about distribution rights.](#)

All territories (worldwide rights) [What are worldwide rights?](#) ▾

Individual territories [What are Individual Territory rights?](#) ▾

Primary marketplace

Choose the location where you expect the majority of your book sales.

Amazon.com ▾

Pricing, royalty, and distribution

Select a royalty plan and set your Kindle eBook list prices below

35% 70%

i A manuscript hasn't been uploaded yet. If you choose the 70% royalty plan, the estimated royalty will reflect a delivery cost for a file size of 5MB. Delivery cost can change based on the size of your final file. We recommend using the grid on the [Kindle eBook Pricing](#) setup page to understand how file size and delivery costs can affect royalties. [Learn more about delivery fees](#)

| Marketplace ▾ | List Price ▾ | Delivery ▾ | Rate ▾ | Royalty ▾ |
|--|-----------------------------|------------|--------|-----------|
| Amazon.com | \$ <input type="text"/> USD | | - | - |
| Choose Royalty Plan All marketplaces are based on this price. | | | | |

The following list prices were converted based on the previous price you entered

| | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Amazon.in | ₹ <input type="text"/> INR | | - | - |
| Choose Royalty Plan Based on Amazon.com | | | | |
| Amazon.co.uk | £ <input type="text"/> GBP | | - | - |
| Choose Royalty Plan Based on Amazon.com | | | | |
| Amazon.de | € <input type="text"/> EUR | | - | - |
| Choose Royalty Plan Based on Amazon.com | | | | |
| Amazon.fr | € <input type="text"/> EUR | | - | - |
| Choose Royalty Plan Based on Amazon.com | | | | |
| Amazon.es | € <input type="text"/> EUR | | - | - |
| Choose Royalty Plan Based on Amazon.com | | | | |
| Amazon.it | € <input type="text"/> EUR | | - | - |
| Choose Royalty Plan Based on Amazon.com | | | | |
| Amazon.nl | € <input type="text"/> EUR | | - | - |
| Choose Royalty Plan Based on Amazon.com | | | | |
| Amazon.ca | CA\$ <input type="text"/> CAD | | - | - |

Book Lending

Allow Kindle Book Lending (Optional)

Allow your customers to lend your Kindle eBook after purchasing it to their friends and family for a duration of 14 days. [Learn more about Kindle Book Lending.](#)

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Kindle eBook ISBN: You don't need an ISBN for a Kindle e-book. You can assign one if you wish, but also feel free to skip this section. Press Save and Continue to advance to Page 3.

Page 3: "Kindle eBook Pricing" page

KDP Select Enrolment: Would you like to enroll your book in Kindle Select? Enrollment requires you to be exclusive to Amazon for ninety days. There are some benefits to the program, such as access to Kindle Unlimited readers (16-17% of the US e-book market, in addition to Amazon's 70%). You receive royalties for pages read (KENP) rather than a percentage of the purchase price.

If you want to "go wide" instead of being exclusive with Amazon, look at the next article in this issue, "Up the Publishing Wide Staircase: Go Direct or use a Distributor?"

Territories and Primary Marketplace: Tick "All Territories" if you want to sell worldwide and choose the marketplace where you expect to sell most. This uses the currency of your primary marketplace to determine the price levels for all other markets.

Pricing: KDP will pay 70% royalty if you price your book from \$2.99 to \$9.99. Outside of that range, you earn 35%.

There are many different pricing approaches, depending on whether you write in series or your promotion strategies. Research your pricing in advance.

Pro Tip: Manually adjust prices in different marketplaces to make them familiar to readers. For example, adjust an automatically determined price of €2.78 to €2.99.

Pro Tip: KDP charges delivery costs of a few cents per book when using the 70% royalty option. However, if you include images in your project, the delivery fees can become a considerable cost to you.

Your last action is to click 'Publish Your Kindle eBook.' KDP promises that your listing will go live within 72 hours, but you may find it often takes less time.

Congratulations on launching your first e-book on Amazon! ■

Marion Hermannsen

Up the Publishing Wide Staircase: Go Direct or Use a Distributor?

In “Wide vs. Exclusive: Which is for You?” (IAM May 2021), we covered the pros and cons of publishing e-books as widely as possible. The alternative is publishing through programs requiring exclusivity, like Amazon’s KDP Select program.

When authors decide to publish their e-books wide, the next question is: “go direct” or use a distributor? It’s a classic case of control versus convenience, with a smattering of opportunity.

Authors who “go direct” must upload files, fill out metadata, and manage promotions for each retailer separately. A distributor does the work of sending your files to each retailer and collecting your royalties, usually for some percentage of royalties. Many wide authors use a combination, publishing directly with some retailers and using distributors for others.

DIRECT

The advantages for going direct to each online retailer are promotion opportunities, metadata and categories, (i.e., not having least common denominator keywords and categories because the distributor has streamlined the data entry process), pre-order options, and receiving the full royalties.

“Go direct” or use a distributor? It’s a classic case of control versus convenience, with a smattering of opportunity.

At first glance, it might seem pointless to learn the ins and outs of each retailer. After all, you don’t know yet if your books will sell there. Consider this: the unique quirks of each retailer might be the hidden route to your ideal readers.

You can show the online bookstores you are serious about selling books with them by your thoughtful choices, polite questions, and consideration for their customers. (In a nutshell: “How can I help your customers find my book in your store?”) Remember, the retailer is the middleman between you and your readers; you want to build a strong relationship with the retailer yourself, to leverage the retailer’s relationship with their customers.

RETAILER PROMOTION

Many distributors and online retailers entice authors by offering book promotion opportunities. These are the digital equivalent of having your book on special display in a bookstore. Authors talk about the power of the Amazon algorithm, but other retailers also have the ability to push book sales.

For example, uploading your books directly to Kobo makes sense for their promotion opportunities alone. Their “promotion tab” lists upcoming sales and eligibility requirements and allows you to pitch your books to the Kobo Writing Life team. The tab isn’t automatically added to your dashboard; you have to email them to request it.

Advantages to using a distributor include convenience in publishing, pricing, finding out about possible new markets, and reaching markets that don't allow direct publishing.

Barnes & Noble (B&N) is another online retailer where promotion opportunities are available for eligible authors. B&N Press is now available for authors in the U.S., U.K., Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, The Netherlands, and Belgium. They also have promotions options and unique categories called "themes" for certain genres that you won't find in any of the other stores. That's why, if you use a distributor, you'll never see these themes or their promotion opportunities.

MANAGING METADATA

Publishing directly with Google Play Books makes sense for metadata and for scheduling price changes. Compared to Kobo Writing Life, Google Play Books takes a much more data-driven approach.

Google Play Books has no promotion tabs, but you can signal an upcoming promotion by using their coupon or price change scheduler. Instead of the familiar categories and keywords in Amazon's Kindle publishing dashboard, Google Play Books has extensive international categories and uses the complete book description in its search engine. Updates are almost immediate.

When you're setting things up, don't confuse Google Play Books with Google Books, the online library of books, or with Google Play, a marketplace for apps.

DISTRIBUTOR

Some advantages to using a distributor include convenience in publishing, pricing, learning of possible new markets, and reaching markets that don't allow direct publishing. They may also provide help with formatting and marketing.

RETAILER PROMOTION

Usually, direct authors have better access to promotion opportunities. Apple Books is one important exception: they allow authors to participate in all types of promotions no matter how the books arrive in their store. For example, Draft2Digital (D2D) distributes to Apple Books, but authors can be nominated for Apple Books promotion opportunities. Currently, D2D authors can fill out an online form to request promotion for new releases, permafrees, and discounted titles. If you distribute books via D2D, you can email support@draft2digital.com, and ask to be added to their promotion opportunities list.

ALL DISTRIBUTORS ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

Just to mix things up, some retailers are also distributors, like Kobo, and Germany's Tolino. Going direct to Kobo gets you into many other stores, including special access to the OverDrive library system with no deduction in royalties. You can email Kobo Writing Life (Writinglife@kobo.com) and request to be added to their notification list for OverDrive promotions.

There is no one distributor that covers all the retailers, and there is often overlap. If you choose more than one distributor, keep track of where you've opted in to each retailer. Duplicate records can cause problems with promotions and reviews.

UPLOAD AND HOLD

Once you've made your choices for Apple and OverDrive, don't change them. Apple doesn't "bring your reviews over," so if your books move from a distributor to direct or vice versa, you will lose

As your publishing capacity grows—i.e., your writing process isn't swamped by administrative tasks—you can add more venues, formats, languages, and countries. Pace yourself.

your existing reviews on Apple Books. OverDrive is a massive library system where you don't want to mess up the data. No author wants to make librarians angry.

While IngramSpark is a leader for print distribution, they are less strong for e-book distribution. If you start with them, it can be awkward and costly in terms of both time and momentum to delist if you change your mind later. If you want to use a distributor for your e-books, Draft2Digital, PublishDrive, or Kobo may be better options for you.

REACH AND REPUTATION

New opportunities for publishing e-books are popping up every day. As your publishing capacity grows—i.e., your writing process isn't swamped by administrative tasks—you can add more venues, formats, languages, and countries. Pace yourself.

When you start out, the online stores have a longer reach and are much better known to their customers than you are. You are building a business-to-business relationship with the retailer (<https://www.darcy-pattison.com/publishing/ebook-distribution/>), and your books benefit from their reach and reputation.

Mentioning online retailers by name on social media posts and your website sends traffic to their store. It might not seem like much, until you remember how many indie authors there are in the world. If each one of us posts regularly about our books, the traffic to the stores adds up, building a positive relationship between the author and the retailer. It's not so different from supporting your neighborhood bookstore, school, or library. This neighborhood just happens to be online.

Your books and author name become better known as you build your audience. Then you may publish in the most direct online model of all—selling from your website. That's a topic for another article. ■

Laurel Decher

RESOURCES

- WideWizard chrome extension (For direct wide authors for uploading book contents and metadata to multiple stores.) <https://widewizard.co/>
- Books2Read.com (Free tool to create book pages that link to all retailers where your book is available)
- Wide for the Win by Mark Leslie Lefaebvre <https://www.amazon.com/Wide-Win-Strategies-Platforms-Publishing-ebook/dp/B08Z38D9L7/>
- One author's plan publishing wide with Draft2Digital only: <https://www.janefriedman.com/marketing-and-promotion-plan-indie-author/>
- Darcy Pattison on Business to Business Relationships and wide authors: <https://www.darcypattison.com/publishing/ebook-distribution/>

RETAILERS

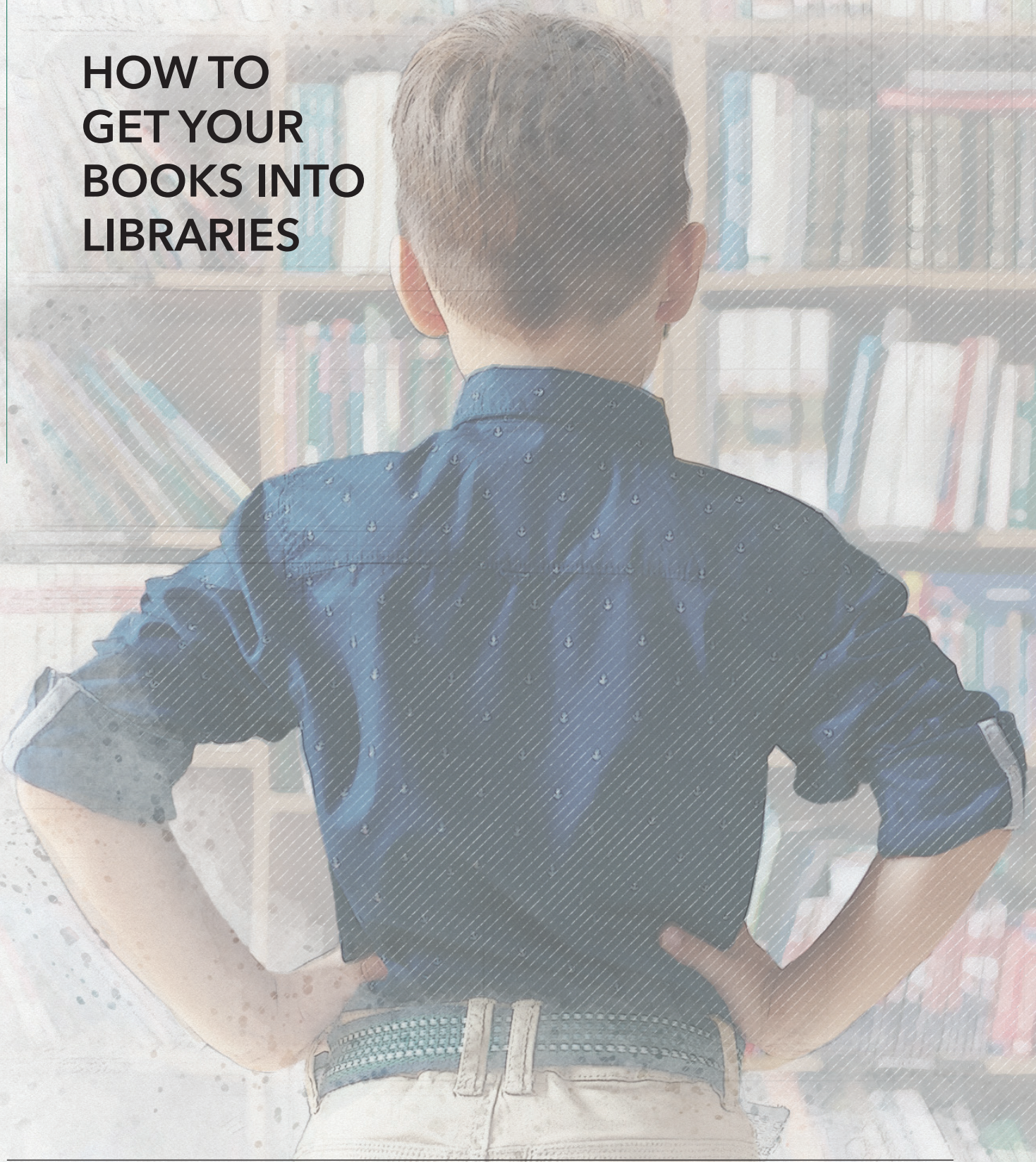
- Barnes & Noble Press <https://press.barnesandnoble.com/how-it-works>
See also "Becoming a Vendor" https://help.barnesandnoble.com/app/bnpress/detail/a_id/4051
- Google Play Books Partner Center <https://play.google.com/books/publish/>
- Kindle Direct Publishing https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/
- Kobo Writing Life <https://www.kobo.com/us/en/p/writinglife>
- Tolino media <https://www.tolino-media.de/> (requires bank account in Germany to go direct)

DISTRIBUTORS

- Draft2Digital <https://www.draft2digital.com/>
- PublishDrive <https://account.publishdrive.com/register>
- StreetLib <https://www.streetlib.com/>
- Smashwords https://www.smashwords.com/about/how_to_publish_on_smashwords

The Magic Portal

**HOW TO
GET YOUR
BOOKS INTO
LIBRARIES**



Imagine a kingdom where books are traded like currency. The wealthiest are voracious readers who never reach the end of their TBR piles. It's protected by wizards who teleport their patrons to distant fantastical worlds. In this realm, the castle at the center isn't a myth, it's a library, and it's real. Polish your armor and sharpen your swords, it's time to storm the citadel.


According to the American Library Association, there are 16,568 public library facilities with another 98,640 school libraries. In the United Kingdom, each of these literary repositories average over 68,000 visitors a year. While many authors are familiar with tackling e-commerce distribution, entry into the fabled halls of a library remains a widely debated conundrum. Historically, access to this population has been a challenge for independent authors, but it doesn't need to be.

ACCESSING THE INNER SANCTUM (DISTRIBUTION)

It cannot be expressed enough: the following insight is not universal. When exploring avenues of distribution to libraries, each establishment is unique. Libraries are governed by their bylaws, mission statement, geography, and patrons. There is no spell to cast that will instantly make books accessible in all locations, but there are a few cantrips that will increase your success rate.

One of the largest obstacles faced by independent authors is having their work purchasable by librarians. Unfortunately, because most libraries do not have access to a credit card and rely on purchase orders, it eliminates Amazon as a distributor. Thankfully, even those in KDP Select have the opportunity to take their physical books wide with IngramSpark. Not all libraries use (or can use) Ingram. However, the chances are increased as one of the distribution channels with IngramSpark is Baker & Taylor, a popular supplier. For those looking to reach the digital market, wide aggregators like Draft2Digital offer OverDrive, Hoopla, and BorrowBox as distribution channels,

Budget constraints limit the number of books a library can put on the shelf, but just as important is the lack of space.

A person in a blue shirt and khaki pants is seen from the back, looking at a bookshelf in a library. The shelves are filled with books of various colors and sizes. The background is a soft, light blue and green gradient.

methods for libraries to make e-book purchases. However, like before, not all library systems use or have access to this distributor.


But the hallowed halls of libraries are not limitless. According to Nancy O'Toole, a librarian at the Auburn Public Library in Maine and indie author of the Red and Black Series, budget constraints limit the number of books a library can put on the shelf, but just as important is the lack of space. And if this incantation isn't complicated enough, they must predict the needs of their patrons and identify titles that will be circulated.

FINDING A WIZARD'S SPELL BOOK (DISCOVERABILITY)

With over two million books published each year, there is an incredible amount of noise an author must break through to reach library shelves. Much like finding readers, discoverability is a challenge. It doesn't come with a one-size-fits-all solution, and not all solutions are appropriate for all authors.

The Informal Approach

A simple solution for informing the world that your book is available is to mail each library a postcard announcing this masterpiece. While these might be seen as viable options, there is a level of impracticality. Reducing the number for larger systems, this would require mailing over 9,000 libraries in the US. Using a bulk mailing service for postcards would put that at roughly US\$2,385 and limits the information that can be included.

An illustration of a person in a library, seen from the side, reaching up to a high shelf to handle a book. The shelves are filled with books of various colors. The background is a soft, light green gradient.

The author can strengthen their pitch if they are local to the town or state, and the library has a local authors shelf.

Maybe a sell sheet with more information (i.e., book cover, descriptions, ISBN, pricing, and even a review or two) would do better? When asked, O’Toole said that neither she nor her boss had encountered them before. To make matters worse, the incoming mail for libraries can be overwhelming. Susan Flagg, a former librarian for the Bucksport School District in Maine said, “Even with two of us in the library, the mail could be overwhelming. Junk mail went to the trash.” For those authors who send a free copy of their book, those rarely make it on the shelf, and often find their way into the book sale pile.

The Awkward Salesperson Approach

Authors can walk into a library and talk to the person in charge of acquisitions (note, this could be a different person depending on the section of the library) and ask, “How might I get my book on your shelves?” The author can strengthen their pitch if they are local to the town or state, and the library has a local authors shelf. This goes doubly for authors who are active patrons of the library. While time is valuable, this personal experience puts an author at an advantage over the stacks of mail left in the “will eventually get to it” pile. The downside to this approach is the time invested doesn’t guarantee returns, and libraries serving unique patrons, such as military bases or school libraries, may be inaccessible to most authors.

A librarian can serve as a point person in a public school and open the door for authors into the classrooms.


The Expensive Listing Approach

Sweat equity might save a buck, but it doesn't solve the solution of visibility to the masses. While a magical trek across the United States visiting every library while pitching a book might sound fun, chances are authors are writing their next book. Likewise, librarians don't have time to aimlessly scroll for selections.

Susan Flagg found herself swamped with updating catalogues at multiple schools. Her top method of selecting books came from the needs of teachers. "I relied on teachers to supply book lists for curriculum needs. But for fiction, I relied on two primary sources, Kirkus and School Library Journal. Their unbiased reviews did the heavy lifting and saved me time." Editorial reviews can be helpful, but some are paid services and some have long lead times that would need to be considered in your publishing schedule. All submission requirements are available on their websites: Kirkus, School Library Journal, and BookList.

EVERY PARTY NEEDS A BARD (PARTNERSHIPS)

While getting a book into every library is an unrealistic goal, using your position as a local author can at least provide local representation. This also allows authors a chance to partake in their community by hosting readings, book talks, or even launch events. For those seeking

An illustration of a library. In the foreground, a person is seen from behind, wearing a blue patterned shirt, reading an open book. The background shows tall wooden bookshelves filled with books of various colors. The style is soft and painterly.

access to public schools, this can be rewarding not only financially, but help grow awareness of a recent release. To take it one step further, a librarian can serve as a point person in a public school and open the door for authors into the classrooms where their books (or even their business) can help support the school curriculum. As many indie authors have discovered the power of storytelling, they are stronger with a well-rounded party. Never discount the wisdom and power of wizards, commonly known as librarians.

SECRETS FROM THE WIZARD'S GRIMOIRE

For those authors looking to storm the castle, there are steps to help prepare you for entry.

Physical Distribution: Create a hardback and paperback edition on IngramSpark to maximize distribution options.

Digital Distribution: Include the e-book edition in Draft2Digital to access OverDrive, Hoopla, etc., or in Smashwords to access Axis360. These channels provide options to libraries for purchase.

Explore Review Options: Submit to review journals read by librarians, such as Kirkus, School Library Journal, and BookList.

In Person Connections: Meet with a local librarian to talk about methods of getting on the shelf. They will know more about surrounding libraries and have more specific ideas to help. Build a relationship. Offer to do a reading or host a book group.

Mobilize Readers: Let your readers know your books can be ordered by the library if they ask for them. ■

Remy Flagg

Expanding Your Empire

HOW TO USE MERCHANDISE SALES ON YOUR WEBSITE TO MAKE MONEY AND GROW YOUR BRAND

In today's economy, it's a given that relying on a single stream of income is risky business. For authors, that means looking at your books as content and finding ways to slice and dice your creative work into other methods of consumption such as audiobooks, serials, or paid newsletters.

Having multiple channels of distribution and revenue for your books is a smart start. But how can you expand and maximize your sales potential without carving too deeply into precious writing time? The answer could be the addition of a merchandise store to your website to delight your fans, expand your brand, and reliably increase your bottom line.

WHAT'S FOR SALE?

Fans love merch. Posters, key chains, magnets, stickers, and notebooks have all become staples at Comic-Con and other public events.

For diehard fans, it's a way to identify themselves to one another and feel part of an inner circle. To satisfy that audience, it's common for traditional publishers to offer mugs, hats, stickers, and other swag on an author's website, for sale or as promotional giveaways. On Leigh Bardugo's website, for example, you can purchase a plethora of items related to her Grishaverse like Darkling socks and Six of Crows tote bags. They often run contests for autographed and one-of-a-kind items.

HOW INDIE AUTHORS CAN RIDE THIS WAVE

Technologically speaking, indie authors have the same capabilities at their disposal. With free website builders like Squarespace, Wix, and WordPress, innovative authors offer a multitude of products directly for sale or download from their website like signed books, collector's editions, downloadable chapters, free novellas in PDF format, and audio copies.

Some have expanded their ecommerce store to include branded merchandise using dropship companies like Printful and Art of Where, which allow you to create customized products like mugs, t-shirts, tote bags, stickers, mousepads, hats, keychains, and hundreds of other products. These items are displayed alongside any other merchandise you have for direct sale or download, creating a one-stop-shop for your fans.

Let's walk through the process of installing a shop on your site, choosing products you wish to sell, how to source the images and proper licensing rights to use on those products, and then see how it all fits together in an ecommerce store.

PLATFORM FIRST

WordPress is undoubtedly the website design platform that most authors use, and the WooCommerce plugin is also free to install and use to set up a basic shop. Most web hosts meet the requirements for use, which you can check here: <https://docs.woocommerce.com/document/server-requirements/>.

Once installed, the basic setup wizard will walk you through establishing the required pages of your shop with just one-click, including the storefront, shopping cart, checkout page, and privacy policy, which you can customize if needed. Out of the box, they'll match your current site's theme, branding, and colors.

Beyond the basics, you'll only need to finish configuring your tax and shipping parameters, depending on what you plan to sell. Taxes can get a little tricky, and it's best that you check with your tax professional to confirm how to remain compliant in your own country and local jurisdiction.

Once you've installed and configured WooCommerce, it's just a matter of adding the products you wish to sell. WooCommerce comes with the ability to sell tangible products that you ship to your customer, such as signed copies of your books, and intangible products, further classified as virtual products (such as a subscription or a video meet-and-greet), and downloadable products, (i.e., a pdf file). An e-book, for example, would be both virtual, since it's not shipped, and downloadable.

MERGING WOOCOMMERCE AND BOOKFUNNEL

If you plan to sell e-books from your website, you can configure the delivery of those files via WooCommerce. It's a seamless transaction and easy to set up. However, the burden of support lies with you. If someone has trouble loading

their file onto an e-reader, you'll be the one answering those frustrated emails, which can be time-consuming.

BookFunnel offers a solution. With a few additional steps outlined on their website at <https://authors.bookfunnel.com/help/setup-woocommerce>, you can sell from your website and pass the burden of support and delivery to them. It's the best of both worlds—you keep the customer details for future marketing purposes, and BookFunnel handles the technical side of delivery and support requests.

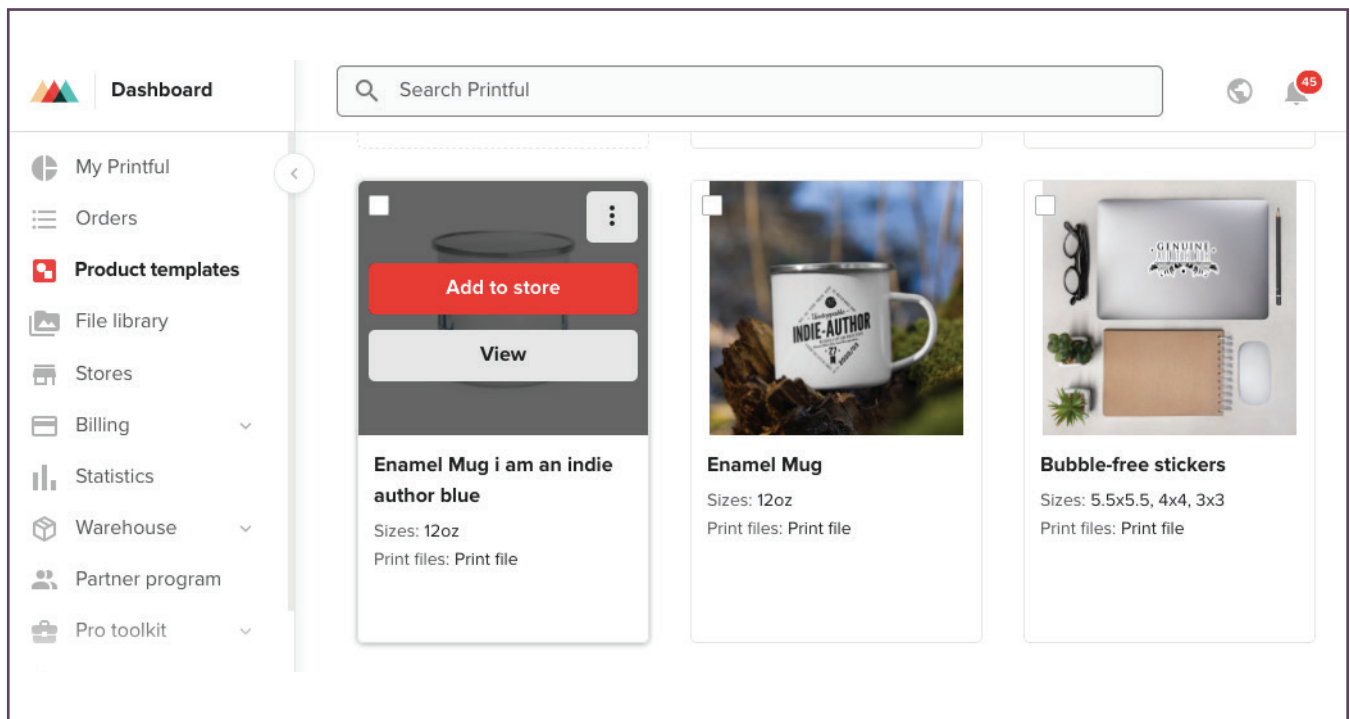
DROPSHIP LIKE IT'S HOT

Once you have WooCommerce configured you might choose to expand and sell branded merchandise. The easiest way to create branded products to sell on your own website store is to use a reputable dropship company. With a dropship company, you create an account and choose the products from their catalog, which are then displayed for sale on your site. When a customer places an order from your website, you take payment and then pay the dropshipping company to create the customer order on demand.



The dropship company ships the order directly to your customer without branding. This is known as “white-labeling.” Some companies will let you upload your own logo and messaging to include on the printed invoices inside the packaging of your customer’s order.

From the dropship company’s website you’ll choose the products you want to sell, and the images you want on those products to create a product template. You’ll also set up the payment method you wish to keep on file, because you will pay the dropship company for your customer’s order after your customer pays you, pocketing the difference.



AN IMAGE IS WORTH WHATEVER SOMEONE IS WILLING TO PAY

Before you dive in and create a million coffee mugs with your own logo, take a step back and think about what kinds of products your customers will want to collect and purchase. Chances are your logo isn't a hot collectable yet, so you'll want to start with other images that have a better chance of being desired. Is there a quote from your novel that's been highlighted many times? You could consider creating some word art and adding it to mugs or t-shirts. If you've created a fantasy world, you could commission artwork of your map.

Once you've decided on what kind of artwork could be successful to sell in your shop, be sure you have the legal right to use it. You can review this article on copyright to confirm.

CONNECTING DROPSHIP DOTS

If you're using a dropship company, they ship the products directly to your customer, so you'll want to be sure you charge your customer properly. To make it simple, many companies provide a plugin which connects a live shipping calculator and charges the customer the correct rate automatically.

The last required setup item is how you'll accept payment from your customers. WooCommerce currently lists 67 payment options on its website, and you can choose the one that best works for your business needs.

Pro Tip: If you currently use PayPal for your business, this is the easiest way to accept payments without much extra work. If you keep PayPal on file with Printful you'll have one central account for incoming and outgoing transactions, and your bookkeeper will thank you for keeping it simple.

PLUGINS TO THE RESCUE

Once you have a basic WooCommerce setup, the last piece to connect is the dropship company. Printful makes it very simple with their own plugin, which will import all the products you've created on their site, and will keep them updated if you add new ones.

In addition to calculating shipping in real-time for your customer, the plugin will automatically place orders on the Printful site when a customer buys from your shop, and trigger order and shipping confirmations to the customer.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Once the store is set up, you'll need to maintain the extra WordPress plugins and ensure they remain up-to-date. Any customer service issues will come to you and not the dropship company, but the companies we list here have a good history of delivery and few issues.

With a little tech savvy and some creativity, indie authors can create a store to surprise and delight their own fans. Beyond that, it's possible to create an income stream that requires minimal maintenance and expands your brand. ■

Chelle Honiker

Examples of IAM
merch available
via Printful.



Tech Tools

Courtesy of IndieAuthorTools.com
Got a tool you love and want to share with us?
Submit a tool at IndieAuthorTools.com

**KIRKUS
REVIEWS**

**KIRKUS
REVIEWS**

As an unpublished or self-published author, it can be a relentless struggle to attract a significant amount of attention to your book or manuscript. Our indie reviews are written by qualified professionals, such as librarians, nationally published journalists, creative executives and more. While we do not guarantee positive reviews, unfavorable reviews can be taken as valuable feedback for improvements and ultimately do not have to be published on our site.

<https://indieauthortools.com/kirkus-reviews/>

acx

**ACX FOR
AUTHORS**

ACX is a marketplace where authors, literary agents, publishers, and other Rights Holders can connect with narrators, engineers, recording studios, and other Producers capable of producing a finished audiobook. The result: More audiobooks will be made. Every audiobook you make on ACX will be available on Audible.com, Amazon.com, and iTunes, but also if you grant Audible exclusive distribution rights, then you'll earn royalties of 40%.

<https://indieauthortools.com/acx-for-authors/>

StoryOrigin

STORYORIGIN

StoryOrigin is a cross-promotional marketing tool for authors - designed to help authors work together to build their email lists, increase sales/page reads, and get more reviews. Its services include Review Copies Management, Universal Book Links, Reader Magnet Distribution, Audio Promo Codes, Audio Books Links and Direct Downloads. It's often thought of as a newsletter content and swapping site, but it offers a lot more.

<https://indieauthortools.com/storyorigin/>



bookfunnel **BOOK-
FUNNEL**

Whether it's delivering your reader magnet, sending out advanced copies of your book, handing out ebooks at a conference, or fulfilling your digital sales to readers, BookFunnel does it all. It focuses on delivering your book to readers and includes features like landing pages and email integration, but also includes stats and reporting features so you can measure your efforts.

<https://indieauthortools.com/bookfunnel/>

Taking Chances, Making Friends

HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY NETWORK AT AUTHOR CONFERENCES

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

Maximize your conference experience by planning ahead. A few simple steps can elevate your experience and ensure you get the most out of attending. Ideally, you want to stay in the same hotel as the conference is being held. You will become a familiar face to others as you walk from and to your room, and can easily access the conference.

Check the website for the speaker list. Identify which talks and panels you want to attend. All of them can seem appealing; however, narrow down which topics would be the most beneficial for the current stage of your author business. Download any available presentation packs to read in advance.

Decide where you'll be keeping track of the notes you'll take during the conference. You could use your smartphone or a notebook. Be sure to list all the topics you're interested in attending and schedule them into your smartphone or jot them down in your conference notebook.

Reach out to your friends and ask if they will be attending. This is a good opportunity to reconnect with them. An added benefit of this is expanding your network, when they include their friends.

A good way to meet more authors writing in your genre is to attend a meet and greet session. Check if your conference has a place to reach out to other authors, such as their website, Facebook group, or Google sheet. If it doesn't, you can set up your own meetup event. An easy place to have it would be at the conference bar where people naturally congregate. It also provides a chance to meet additional people.

You can set up your own meetup event. An easy place to have it would be at the conference bar where people naturally congregate.

Let your friends know what day you'll be having your casual meetup and invite them to share it with their connections. Send an email to people you're interested in meeting with an invite with the time, date, and place, and let them know they're welcome to bring a friend.

Prepare business cards with your genre and contact details to hand out to authors in your genre. The people you meet will be certain to hang on to them if you provide something of value, such as cross-promotional opportunities. Include a QR code they can scan if they choose not to take the card.

Don't like carrying physical business cards? Grab HiHello, a digital business card app. You can scan the cards you get from others, as well as share your digital business card via email and more. You'll also be able to organize your contacts easily and customize them by adding notes and tags, in addition to groups.


DURING THE CONFERENCE

Keep track of the talks on your smartphone or in your handy conference notebook, under the headings/sections you set up in advance.

Be sure your name is clearly on display at all times, to ensure people know who they're talking to. Don't clip your badge to your belt, so it is too low for them to read, or let your jacket cover it up. Add your genre under your name so that they can tie the two together.

A good way to start a conversation with someone is to ask them what talk they're most interested in attending. You can also ask them if they've been to the conference before and what they hope to get out of this experience. As the conference progresses,

Prepare a five-second pitch of who you are, what genre you write, and what your main series is about.



a stronger question will be to ask them what is the most helpful thing they've learned so far. It can be an opportunity to discover something new, possibly from a room you didn't attend, and a chance to contact them later to discuss this at length. Be sure to get their contact information.

Prepare a five-second pitch of who you are, what genre you write, and what your main series is about. For example, "Hi, I'm Fatima. I write urban fantasy books set in Spain." Have a longer version if people ask for more details. Offer the person you're talking to your business card. Don't be offended if they don't take it. After COVID-19, people prefer less contact with physical objects. Offer them to scan the handy QR code on the card instead, or to send them your digital card.

Introverts, it's okay to take a break if the talks and networking become too much. This can happen during a talk or an event. Excuse yourself by leaving quietly and take some time out before you return. If you are staying at the same hotel as the conference, go to your room to recharge your batteries. You can use the time to go over the notes you took and see what upcoming events you don't want to miss. Or you can recharge by doing something else that will help you refresh your energy levels.

As you navigate the conference, you will meet people standing in line or sitting next to you. Take the opportunity to ask them about themselves and introduce yourself. Use the opportunity during the moments in between to jot down notes in your smartphone or notebook of who you met and where. If you plan to reach out to them later, write a few comments on what you discussed so you can include it in the email you'll send when the conference ends.

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

You've managed to attend the conference and survived—hopefully without accruing the dreaded con crud. What's the next step? The first thing is to consolidate all the information you collected from the conference in one place. Do this as soon as possible while memories are still fresh in your mind.

Check social media hashtags and respond to items others have posted, adding your feedback to talks and panels you've attended. This is a chance to meet people virtually that you may have not encountered during the conference or to reconnect with those you did. Follow them or like their remarks.

If you took photos during the conference, share them by sending them directly or tag people. Be sure you have consent if you plan to share them publicly on social media.

Compile a list of people you want to reach out to. Prepare the emails with the notes you (hopefully) wrote down about your meeting. Remind them when you met and what you discussed. Mentioning the conversation you had and something personal can go a long way in creating a positive impression. To reinforce that positive impression, be sure to offer them something of value such as knowledge or a collaboration opportunity. Even as a newbie, you have something to offer. You can let them know something you learned that converted into more book sales or newsletter signups—or that you plan to try something and will share the results of your experiment.

Ask your contacts what other conferences they attend to get leads on others that may be great for professional development and networking. Learning their favorite conferences can identify which ones you're more likely to find them at next time.

If your goal was to connect with and form a small community of authors in your genre, start a group and invite them to participate. You can create a Facebook group, a Discord channel, or host talks on Zoom. Invite them and ask if they would like an opportunity to participate.

Keep in touch. Reach out to the people you met months after the conference even if it's just to see how they're doing. Regular contact with them will be helpful for breaking the ice the next time you see them at a conference. ■

Fatima Fayeze



Instant Networking
Share your contact card, website, pay platforms, social profiles, email & more



Share with Anyone
Others do not require an app or a Popl to receive your info



Popl App
Activate your Popl, manage your profile, view your pop history & more



Compatibility
Pop to iPhone XR or newer, and most Android phones



Privacy
Link usernames & no passwords are ever required



Business Card
buy business cards again and save on reprinting costs

Consolidate all the information you collected from the conference in one place as soon as possible, while memories are still fresh in your mind.

Podcasts We Love

GREAT AUTHORS SHARE

Hosted by Daniel Willcocks

Tips, tricks, strategies

... from the best and the brightest in the biz.

<https://www.danielwillcocks.com/greatwritersshare/>



THE INDIE AUTHOR LIFESTYLE SHOW

Hosted by Angela J. Ford and Stephanie BwaBwa

The Top 10 “indie author” podcast that teaches you how to write your manuscript, publish your best novel, and market to profit while curating your best indie author life.

<https://indieauthorlifestyle.com/ial-podcast/>

SELF PUBLISHING SHOW

Hosted by James Blatch and Mark Dawson

The Self Publishing Show provides weekly inspiration and education to writers at all stages of their careers. We feature interviews with million-selling indie authors, breakout stars from traditional publishing, industry insiders and tech geniuses who show you how to put the incredible tools at our disposal to their best use.

<https://selfpublishingformula.com/spf-podcast/>



Maintaining Historical Accuracy Without Slowing the Narrative

You've written a rollicking good story set in eighteenth-century France, and now you want to add some killer details. It's time to immerse yourself in research.

TURN BACK TIME

All historical novels begin with the promise that the author will subtly connect the “Then” to the “Now” so the reader can suspend disbelief throughout. To do this, and maintain a well-paced narrative that grabs the attention and holds it, you'll need to ensure you steer clear of anachronisms and other inaccuracies.

In *Medieval Underpants and Other Blunders: A Writer's (& Editor's) Guide to Keeping Historical Fiction Free of Common Anachronisms, Errors and Myths*, Susanne Alleyn recommends asking yourself, “Do I know this, or do I think I know this?” To which might be added, “Did they think like this? Did they act like this?”

Historical novels begin with the promise that the author will subtly connect the “Then” to the “Now”

Diaries, autobiographies, and written histories are useful for small details and period dialogue.

DOING THE RESEARCH

In non-fiction, an often used research analogy is that of the three-legged stool (the fact), which is only stable when all three legs (supporting sources) are present. In fiction, using a primary or reputable secondary source performs the same job.

Primary (contemporaneous) sources should always be your first choice. These can be found in libraries, museums, and archives, and online catalogues will allow you to search before you visit. If you intend on using a real town or city, get a map from the era, as street layouts and names change over time. If your story is set post-1839, make use of photographic archives to keep descriptions on point.

Other works such as diaries, autobiographies, and written histories are useful for small details and period dialogue, and good websites for these include *Project Gutenberg* and *Google Scholar*. Contemporaneous fiction can be a good way to immerse yourself in the atmosphere of the period, e.g., Jane Austen for the Regency era or Charles Dickens for the Victorian era. However, as it is fiction, still check with a factual source for any specifics you wish to include.

Secondary (later) sources include magazines, biographies, and current historical works. *History Today* (UK) or the *Smithsonian Magazine* (US) offer well researched articles on a wide range of subjects. Historical works are useful for an overview of the period and contain footnotes and bibliographies giving further sources.

TALK OF THE TOWN

On the whole, it's best not to use archaic language and far better to tweak your dialogue for the modern ear. "Thee," "thou," and "prithee" may sound good but they will slow the narrative. Instead, consider both word order and speech patterns, or try

While colloquialisms add period color to dialogue, it's important to place them in context.

removing contractions and using “I cannot” instead of “I can't” to suggest older forms of speech.

While colloquialisms add period color to dialogue, it's important to place them in context. For instance, if, in your Victorian novel, you create a character who constantly makes silly mistakes and gets called a *foozler*, a reader should have no difficulty knowing what that means. Whereas, if you throw in the word *tufthunter* with no explanation, they're going to be flummoxed and bumped out of the story. Colloquialisms are best used sparingly and for impact.

For similes and idioms, check the date of first usage. The same goes for words that have meant different things at different times, or in different locations. A good place to start for all of these is John Dierdorf's website *You Can't Say That* <https://www.prismnet.com/~dierdorf/nono.html>

If you can't find a supporting source for an important detail, it doesn't necessarily mean you have to leave it out. Remember, you're writing fiction and can only do your best to get things right. If you're worried about being questioned in a review then include an author's note at the end of your book.

Historical fiction and its readers thrive on detail, so by doing your research and checking the facts, your novel will maintain its accuracy without losing its pace. ■

Jac Harmon

SPACE OPERA

Space Opera is a popular genre among authors and readers who enjoy Sci-Fi themed stories with an epic scope, splashy tech, romantic subplots, and a sharp contrast between good and evil. Where other genres of Science Fiction speculate on the intersection of technology with society, Space Opera shifts its focus from the substance of Sci-Fi onto the style of Sci-Fi.

USE THE SOURCE, LUKE!

Space Opera often starts with terrestrial source material, adds tech-flavoring, and recasts the story among the stars.

Buck Rogers was Rip Van Winkle, *but in space*. Star Trek was conceived as a Western, *but in space*. The original *Star Wars* was a samurai movie, *but in space*. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* by Douglas Adams was a travelogue, *but in space*. *Space Opera* by Catherynne M. Valente is a Eurovision Song Contest, *but in space*.

WELCOME TO THE PLANET OF HATS

Worldbuilding in Space Opera tends to be streamlined. The genre is famous for single-biome planets and monocultural worlds where all inhabitants share the same personality type, physical characteristics, and fashion sense. Since





ALL YOUR FAVORITE STORIES ...IN SPACE

characters may visit several planets in a story, each for only a chapter or two, deeper world-building can become a distraction.

Fortunately, Space Opera readers are willing to suspend disbelief when confronted with worlds and cultures that defy logic, or which incorporate systems of space-magic and orders of space-wizards.

HAVE FUN STORMING THE SPACE-CASTLE

Simply dressing a story in allegorical space-clothing isn't enough to make it a Space Opera. This genre also features uncomplicated protagonists on an uncomplicated quest. The heroes are extra heroic, the villains are extra villainous, and the bug-eyed and/or reptilian aliens are extra bug-eyed and/or reptilian. The stakes are often galactic in scope, and no one has time to wrestle with their conscience for long when the fate of the galaxy hangs in the balance.

Character goals and motivations usually boil down to something simple: the protagonist may need to collect the space-McGuffins, storm the space-castle, battle the space-ninjas, rescue the space-prince/princess, and return home to enjoy a space-medal ceremony.

The important thing in a Space Opera is that the hero always wins and good always triumphs over evil. This may happen in a standalone book or certainly by the finale of a series.

SUBVERTED TROPES

Knowing what tropes make up a genre can help us figure out which rules can be bent or twisted without breaking reader expectations or shifting the story into a different genre.

Space Opera tends to gloss over hard-science explanations for space weapons, alien biology, faster-than-light travel, and the like. Injecting realistic science may subvert that expectation. An episode of *Futurama* centered around a real-life mathematical theorem invented for the show by a writer who holds a PhD in applied mathematics. The result was an effective contrast between the goofy antics of space-basketball players and a puzzle of real-world logic.

But injecting science at the wrong time or in the wrong way can threaten the sense of magic and wonder on which Space Opera relies. For example, many fans expressed outrage when the *Star Wars* prequels retroactively explained the mysterious all-pervasive Force as resulting from space-bugs in a Jedi's bloodstream.

Letting the hero fail or allowing the villain to win can provide a powerful and unexpected cliffhanger in the middle of a series. Exploring character backstories, redeeming villains, adding moral complexity, and developing the story world can bring gravity into a previously free-floating work of escapism. But readers will still expect a return to the Space Opera's light-hearted form and an ultimately happy ending.

HAPPILY EVER AFTER...IN SPACE!

These stories take readers on an uplifting joyride through a galaxy of wonder. When all the elements fall into place, they have the potential to become iconic, beloved, and cemented into our popular culture.

SPACE OPERA TROPES

1. **Source Material in Spaaace!** – From Bible stories to Shakespeare’s plays to *Gilligan’s Island*, a wide variety of source material has been adapted into Space Operas by moving the action off-planet and sprinkling in the tropes.

2. **Single-Biome Planets** – To help distinguish one world from another, every part of a planet can be given the same climate, vegetation, and terrain.

3. **Planet of Hats** – To help distinguish one world from another, every member of a human or alien culture may share a common personality trait, physical trait, or proclivity toward wearing the same stylish hat.

4. **The Galactic Empire** – No galaxy is big enough for our good-hearted heroes to share with an interplanetary evil empire bent on conquest.

5. **Spaceships with Personality** – The obligatory journey from world to world becomes more memorable in an iconic spaceship, especially one that breaks down at the most inconvenient times.

6. **A Menagerie of Aliens** – They range from humans with prosthetic noses to Lovecraftian nightmares with laser eyes. The thing about aliens is that they come in all shapes, sizes, and temperaments.

7. **Robots, Droids, and Cyborgs** – Fully or partially mechanical beings are a fixture. Some, indistinguishable from biological humans, may not even know what they are.

8. **Space Magic** – Aside from the sufficiently advanced technology that works like magic, there is often actual magic, telepathy, and New Age crystal goodness that works like technology.

9. **Good vs Evil** – Even when the story focuses on smugglers, scoundrels, and bounty-hunters, all characters can choose whether they are fundamentally good or fundamentally evil.

10. **Good Triumphs Against All Odds** – Much like Romance readers expect a happy ending, Space Opera readers expect a victorious ending or a reset to a prior state. ■

Greg Fishbone

SIT AND STRETCH

FINDING TIME FOR MOVEMENT THROUGHOUT YOUR DAY

Being an independent writer can mean a lot of hours behind a desk. It also means we can take on a lot of stress while we push for deadlines, learn marketing strategies, and plan our world domination. Exercise can be hard to stick to when we're tied to our chairs.

Fortunately, there are a lot of options to do at our desk that don't take a lot of time. (Generally speaking, don't start any exercise routines without consulting your doctor or physiotherapist.) All exercises can be tailored to our own mobility needs: we don't need to do burpees to make our bodies happier. Nor do we need to force our range of movement past what our bodies can handle—small movements have the same benefits as big ones.

Chair yoga is a great option for busy writers. Created for arthritis sufferers and those with limited mobility, it was popularized in the 1980s. It uses adapted poses of regular asanas and has many iterations that give gentle strength training and stretches to the masses. Add a handful of these to your sprint breaks and track the difference in how you feel over time.



FIVE SIMPLE STRETCHES:

Prayer Hands 1: Put your hands together at chin level and slowly lower them to your mid-chest.

Prayer Hands 2: Put your hands together pointing downward starting at your waist level. Slowly raise them to your mid-chest.

Shoulder Circles: Roll each shoulder forward. Then repeat going backwards.

Arm Raises: Stretch your arms out to the sides like wings, and slowly raise them as high as you are able.

Leg Lifts: Sit as upright as possible and slowly extend your leg at the knee. Repeat for the other.

You can do these in repetitions of five, increasing as you desire. The first four stretches help unlock tight upper body muscles while the leg lifts help our legs and bottoms. Do these throughout the day to promote circulation to give us an extra hit of oxygen to our tired brains.

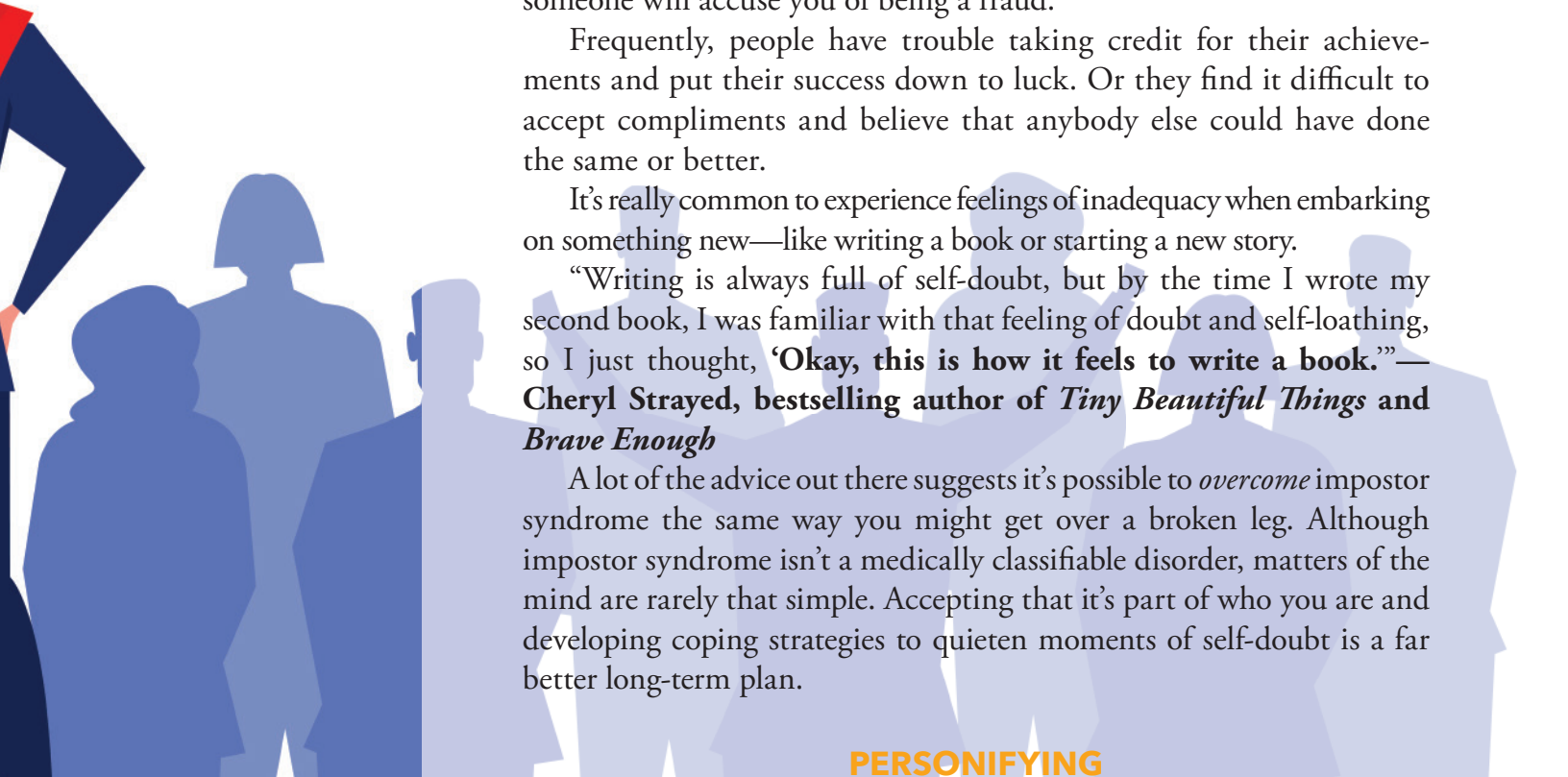
Take a Free Chair Yoga Course: <https://writelink.to/wellness> ■

Sine Màiri MacDougall

NAMING THE BEAST

RECOGNIZING IMPOSTOR SYNDROME





This is part one of a three part Mindset mini-series focusing on impostor syndrome. You may or may not have heard of it, you may or may not have experienced it, but it's said to affect seven out ten people.

DEFINING

Impostor Syndrome is a term first coined by psychologists in 1978, and it refers to feelings of self-doubt, inadequacy, and the worry that someone will accuse you of being a fraud.

Frequently, people have trouble taking credit for their achievements and put their success down to luck. Or they find it difficult to accept compliments and believe that anybody else could have done the same or better.

It's really common to experience feelings of inadequacy when embarking on something new—like writing a book or starting a new story.

“Writing is always full of self-doubt, but by the time I wrote my second book, I was familiar with that feeling of doubt and self-loathing, so I just thought, ‘Okay, this is how it feels to write a book.’” — **Cheryl Strayed, bestselling author of *Tiny Beautiful Things and Brave Enough***

A lot of the advice out there suggests it's possible to *overcome* impostor syndrome the same way you might get over a broken leg. Although impostor syndrome isn't a medically classifiable disorder, matters of the mind are rarely that simple. Accepting that it's part of who you are and developing coping strategies to quieten moments of self-doubt is a far better long-term plan.

PERSONIFYING

Personifying your impostor syndrome is one way to help keep you moving forward. Give it a name like Harold, Blippy, Snowball—call it whatever you like, give it a shape like a squishy kid's toy, anything that will help you diminish its power over you. When it speaks to you, acknowledge it and say “*thanks very much for your help,*” and then carry on writing.

If that sounds too ridiculous, then ask yourself this: “*What would another author do?*” You could go deeper and insert your favourite author's name to make it more specific, “*What would Maya Angelou do?*” Would she cave in to self-doubt, or would she carry on writing? And if she can do it, why not you? ■

the ORIGIN of the character

CREATING BETTER BACKSTORIES

Backstory is what happened to your characters before page one of your story. Not everything—the reader doesn't need to know what she had for breakfast on her tenth birthday, unless it led to anaphylaxis, and that pertains to the story you're writing. Backstory adds depth to your characters. It helps the reader to connect with a character. Knowledge of elements of the character's backstory can introduce tension and foreshadowing (now the reader knows about that tenth birthday trip to the ER, they'll be giving the side-eye to those strawberry pancakes she's about to eat). You can also use backstory to establish character flaws or misbeliefs they need to overcome through the story.

Backstory can be fed in to encourage the reader to empathise with a character. As readers, we began to experience empathy toward the previously maligned Professor Snape when we learned that he loved Harry's mother and was bullied by the boy's father.

Sacha Black, author of craft books on how to improve your prose and write better heroes, better villains, and better side characters,

Knowledge of elements of the character's
backstory can introduce tension and
foreshadowing.

believes that before writing a backstory, you need to consider who actually needs one.

“The amount of backstory you need and its purpose depends on the level and type of character. Your hero obviously needs backstory. The protagonist is the one that has the most depth and the most comprehensive personality. Your villain needs some level of backstory to explain the motive for their behaviour. But then when it comes to side characters...”

**“NOT ALL SIDE CHARACTERS ARE
MADE EQUAL.”**

Sacha explains that cameo side characters who are only in your story for a brief second don't need a backstory. Other minor characters might appear in your story a few more times than a cameo and have some transactional exchanges. They might have something distinctive about them but don't need much depth. “A good example is Mr. Filch in the Harry Potter series. You could remove him from the story, and he wouldn't really change it. But he has some transactional changes with Harry and causes a tiny bit of conflict. You may get the odd sentence or two of back story.”

But what about major side characters? Sacha describes them as *the big guns*. “They require significant page time, have an effect on the protagonists, and on the story. All of these things mean that you need some depth or illusion of depth.”

We asked Sacha how the backstory should be added.

“Backstory is required when you need to

Watch the Interview with Sasha
on our YouTube Channel.

explain a behaviour, when you need to give context for why somebody is in a current situation or why they are reluctant to change. And it also helps to provide an understanding for the *whys* of somebody's personality. It's relevant to the point and to the action and motivations in that scene. You have to find those scenes where the action is oriented towards explaining behaviour or showing flaws or showing the plot problems and then drip it in."

But what if you want the reader to know something, but not give away too much? Sacha explains that backstory can be added as foreshadowing, which she describes as the art of dropping something unusual, unexpected, and then moving very quickly on from it so that it doesn't become a distraction.

LET'S TALK TOOLS.

There are going to be times when you might need a little help to create a character's backstory.

"I want to expand the power of creativity."

Jay Stilipec, a retired U.S. Navy journalist, created the Better Backstories cards through her love of role-playing games. "I just loved making new characters, and I loved making them very diverse."

The author community factored into Jay's endeavors shortly after she ran a Kickstarter which provided \$25,000 funding and interest from people all over the world.

At Alaska Comic-Con in 2020, Jay met Craig Martelle. She showed the cards to the successful indie author, who loved them and immediately ordered thirty packs to use as giveaways in his Facebook group, 20Booksto50k.

CURSED

Unfortunately, some things never go your way.



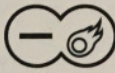
Rain
Mountains

1. Have or give bad luck.
2. Have an unattractive physical feature.
3. Carry a disease.
4. Often accused of being guilty.
5. Hate cities.
6. Suffer from insomnia.
7. Have nightmares.
8. Have or had a stutter.
9. Affected by the full moon.
10. Always losing things.

Better
Backstories
Big Bundle Box



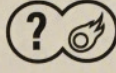
Big Bundle Box

OCCULT 

Balmy
Lava Field

You or your family were involved with a cult. You may still be a member, or you escaped. Either way, the teachings still affect your life.

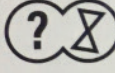
from Backer Chris Cheung
"Sadly, the tales of me gorging on corpses are not fabricated. Exaggerated? Sure. Embellished? Absolutely. I know that doesn't really help." —Rygel of Sable City

BEWITCHED 

Overcast
Peninsula

Someone in your life had a curious encounter with a magical creature. This could be a tale you've heard, or something more real passed down to you.

from Backer Christian Cooper
"Rule one for picking a door's lock: if the door is warm to the touch, it's always a mimic!" —Twitch

RUNAWAY 

You left your family behind. **Partly Cloudy**
Island

1. You never returned.
2. You fell in with criminals for a period of time.
3. You returned home on your own after a while.
4. You were captured by police and returned home.
5. Taken in by a new family.
6. You wound up very far away.
7. You almost died.
8. You returned home with no memory of where you went.
9. Your parents died looking for you.
10. Your family treats your brief departure as a joke.

That connected the entrepreneur with more writers, and her project took off from there.

We asked Jay, how are the cards used?

"You flip over a few cards, and you've got a character."

"I know people who just use the title (in bold), and they let that spark their imagination. But you've got some cards that have flavor text that'll give you some suggestions. You've got cards that have a chart that has up to ten more suggestions. It's just a spark to ignite the fire of this character's back story and to make their life a little bit more realistic and believable."

Jay is occasionally surprised and delighted by the different creative ways people use the cards.

"I've had people say they shuffled out three cards to each player during the [roleplaying] game at a crucial moment in the narrative. That's brilliant. It never occurred to me. I love to hear different people's ways of playing it, whether random or deliberate. You don't even have to use the whole deck. You can literally go through and say, 'you know what, these twenty cards are the backstory elements that I want to

Backstory is required when you need to explain a behavior, when you need to give context for why somebody is in a current situation or why they are reluctant to change.
-Sacha Black

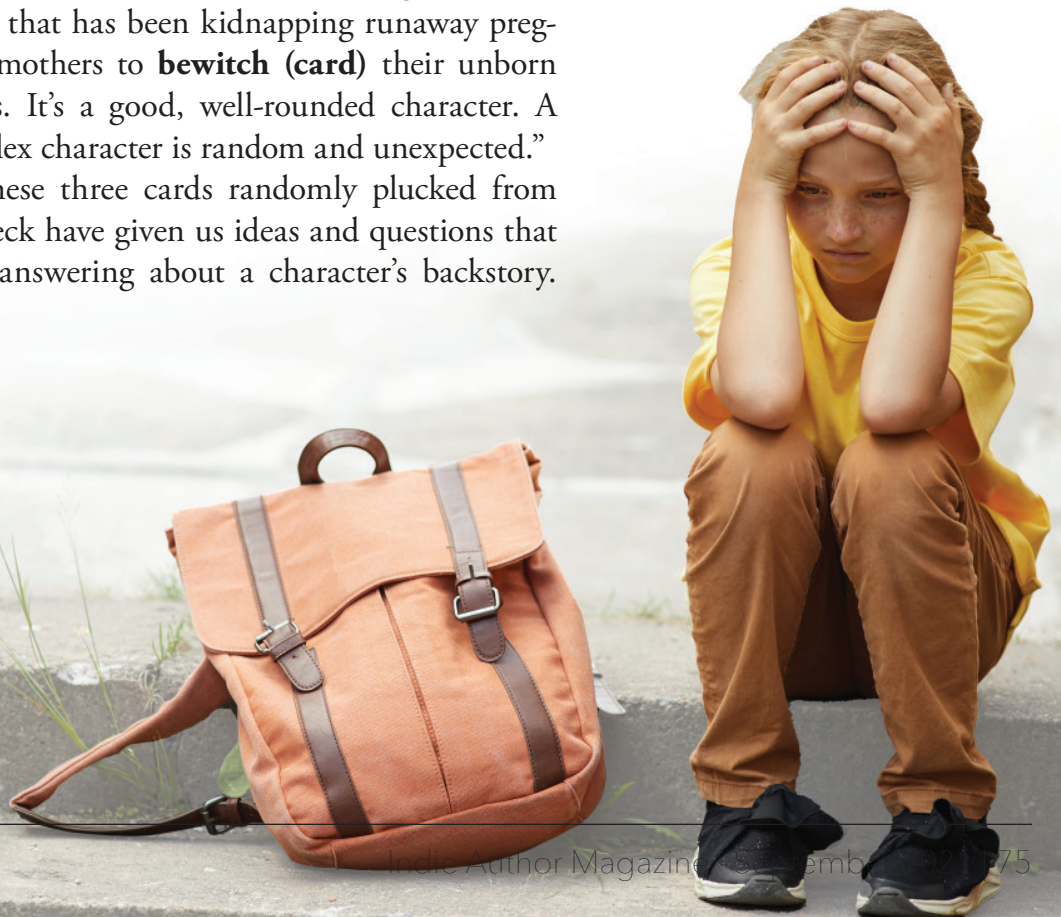
see in my story.”

“Brainstorming power in the palm of my hand.”

We gave her the scenario of a protagonist watching a man walk down the street. Here’s what the cards revealed about the character.

“The **occult card**. This guy is wearing a dark robe. There’s a red glow coming from just inside the cowl. And this is already kind of leaning towards a fantasy angle. He’s looking suspicious, and then he kind of goes up to a doorway, and I get the **runaway card**. Our protagonist finds a cult that has been kidnapping runaway pregnant mothers to **bewitch (card)** their unborn babies. It’s a good, well-rounded character. A complex character is random and unexpected.”

These three cards randomly plucked from the deck have given us ideas and questions that need answering about a character’s backstory.



Science Fiction author Jon Evans says, “If you know where a character comes from, what their formative moments were, you can reference that in your story in a way that will intrigue the reader.”
Jon Evans

But they have also potentially inspired a plot for a whole book or series.

How deep does Jay’s interest in backstory go? We asked if she had ever made up a backstory for a character she felt didn’t already have a sufficient one in a movie or book?

“I’ve always wondered, how did Martin and Doc meet? (*Back to the Future*) It’s a weird relationship that this 16-year-old boy has with the local crackpot inventor.” Jay’s backstory-finding superpower suggests they might have met when Doc put an ad for a lab assistant in the local paper, and we think she might be right!

“Intrigue the reader.”

As Science Fiction author Jon Evans says, “If you know where a character comes from, what their formative moments were, you can reference that in your story in a way that will intrigue the reader.”

So, if you feel that offering more in the way of backstory will immerse your readers more deeply into your story, it might just be the way to keep them coming back for more. ■

Elaine Bateman

WANT TO FIND OUR INTERVIEWEES IN THE WILD?

Jon Evans can be found at jonevansbooks.com Twitter: @ImaginaryBros

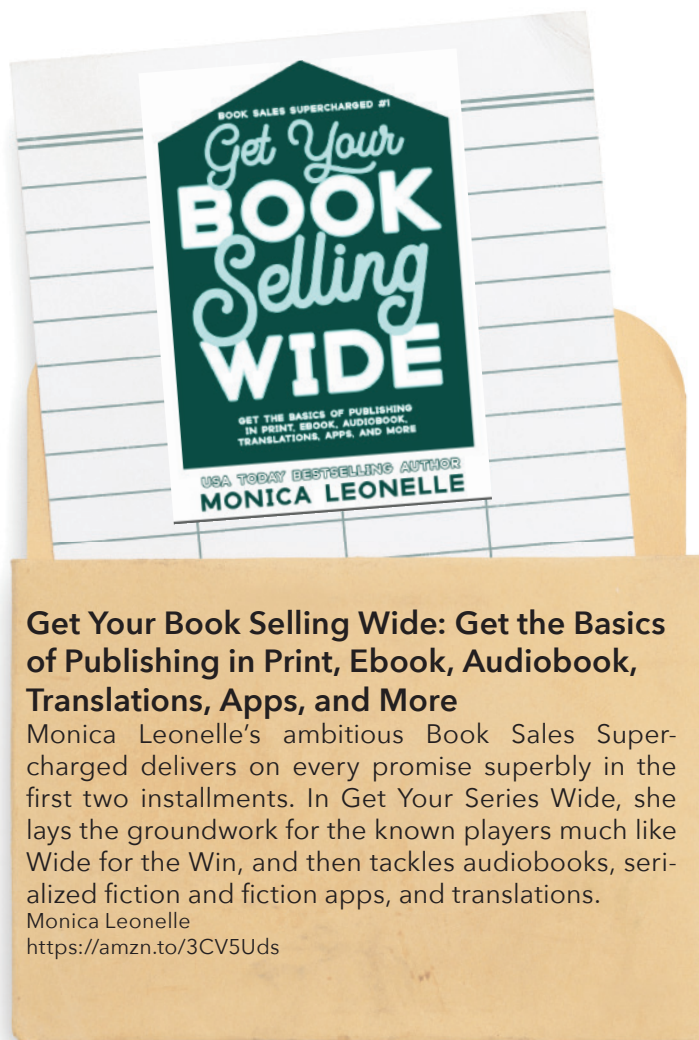
You can see Jay and glimpse the Better Backstories cards at Baltimore Comic-Con in October. Jay's website is Betterbackstories.com. On Instagram: @backstories22 - Twitter: @backstories22 - Facebook: betterbackstories.

Find Sacha at sachablack.co.uk. On Facebook her group is Rebel Authors, and on Instagram: @SashaBlackauthor. Podcast: Rebel Author



BOOKS WE LOVE

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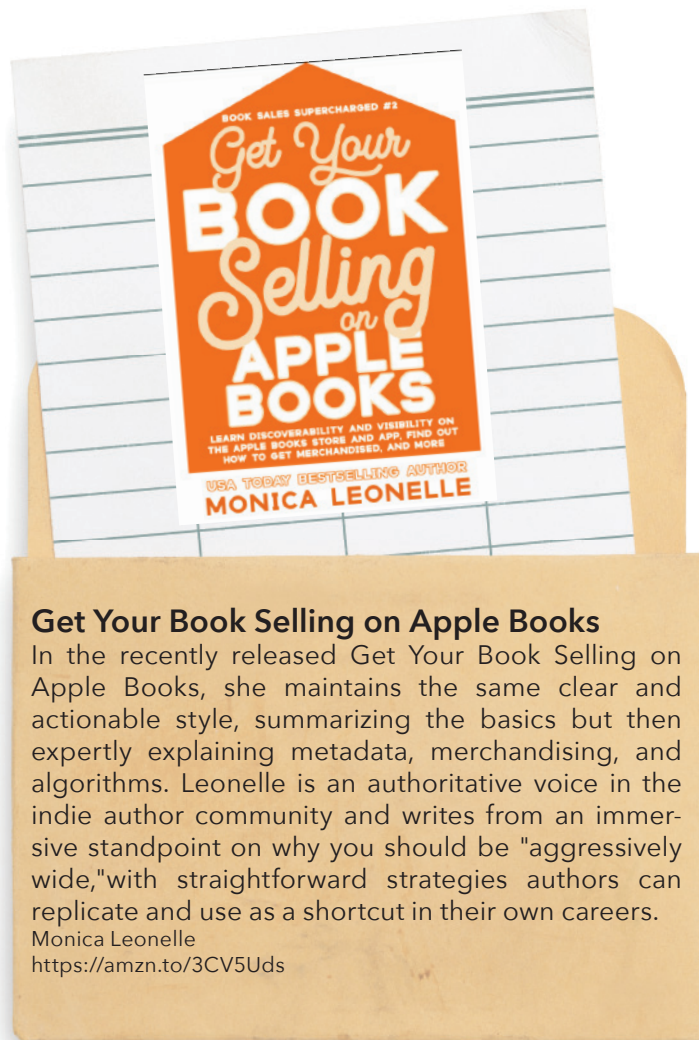


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Monica Leonelle's ambitious Book Sales Supercharged delivers on every promise superbly in the first two installments. In Get Your Series Wide, she lays the groundwork for the known players much like Wide for the Win, and then tackles audiobooks, serialized fiction and fiction apps, and translations.

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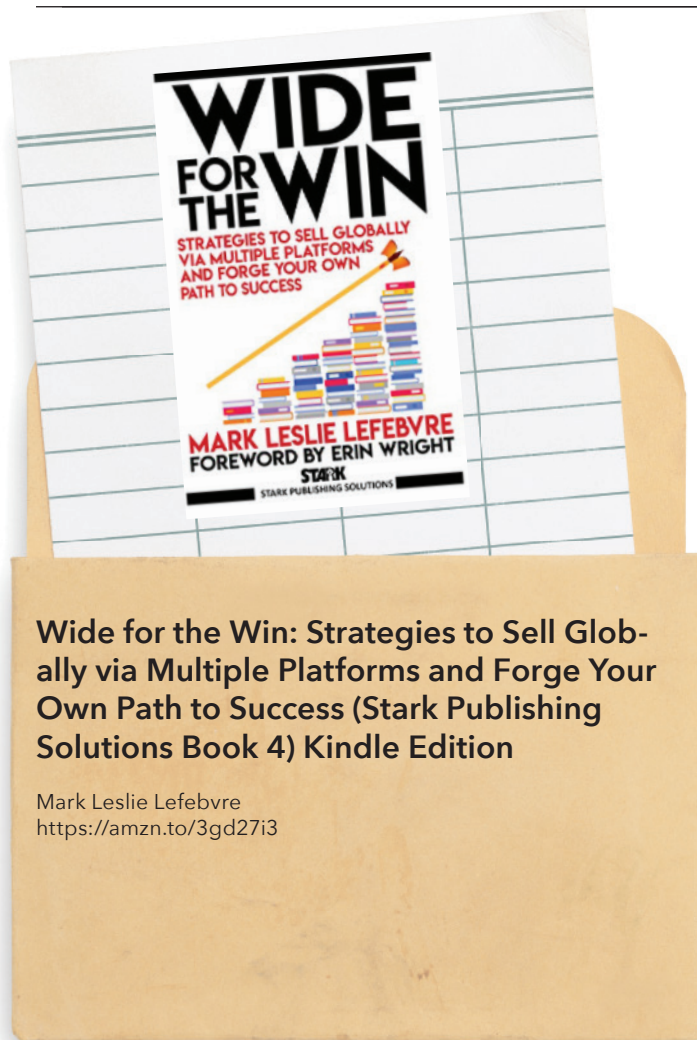


Get Your Book Selling on Apple Books

In the recently released Get Your Book Selling on Apple Books, she maintains the same clear and actionable style, summarizing the basics but then expertly explaining metadata, merchandising, and algorithms. Leonelle is an authoritative voice in the indie author community and writes from an immersive standpoint on why you should be "aggressively wide," with straightforward strategies authors can replicate and use as a shortcut in their own careers.

Monica Leonelle

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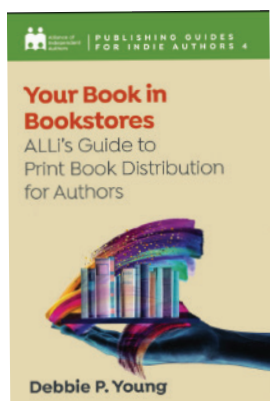
Wide for the Win: Strategies to Sell Globally via Multiple Platforms and Forge Your Own Path to Success (Stark Publishing Solutions Book 4) Kindle Edition

Mark Leslie Lefebvre
<https://amzn.to/3gd27i3>

Wide for the Win: Strategies to Sell Globally via Multiple Platforms and Forge Your Own Path to Success

Arguably the gold standard when discussing distribution and platforms. Mark Leslie Lefebvre articulately breaks down each concept with skill and his signature humor and gentility. Drawing on his experience working for heavy-hitters Kobo and Draft2Digital, as well as his own experience as an indie author, his book deftly expands the indie author’s viewpoint to explore what’s possible with other distributors.

What’s most helpful are the case studies, which include sharing his own numbers as both social proof and a delightful open conversation with the reader. He offers counterpoints to ensure the reader can make an informed decision and challenges the author to see what’s possible, backing up each of his engaging points with rock-solid examples of revenue.



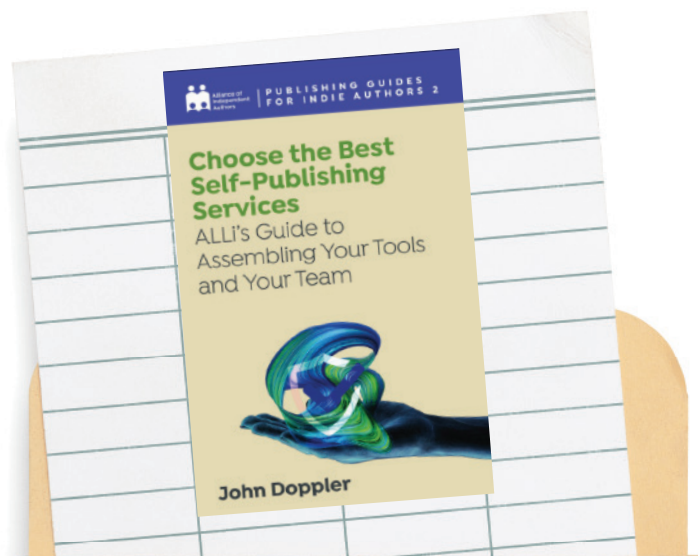
Your Book in Bookstores: ALLi’s Guide to Print Distribution for Authors

This skillfully written guidebook serves as both cautionary tale and practical advice for indie authors hoping to find their tomes in bookstores. It bills itself as a reality check on

the feasibility of selling self-published books in physical locations, providing pragmatic insight.

It’s broad advice covers basics like the benefits of physical bookselling, and steps indie authors through a pro/con list for going wide. Offering many case studies, it’s a smooth read for any author considering expanding their backlist and future list into print.

Alliance of Independent Authors
<https://amzn.to/37TWoZP>



Choose the Best Self-Publishing Services: ALLi’s Guide to Assembling Your Tools and Your Team

A thorough guide to finding a team and avoiding the pitfalls that are rampant within our industry, explaining how to find professional assistance in editorial design, production, distribution, marketing, promotion, and rights licensing areas.

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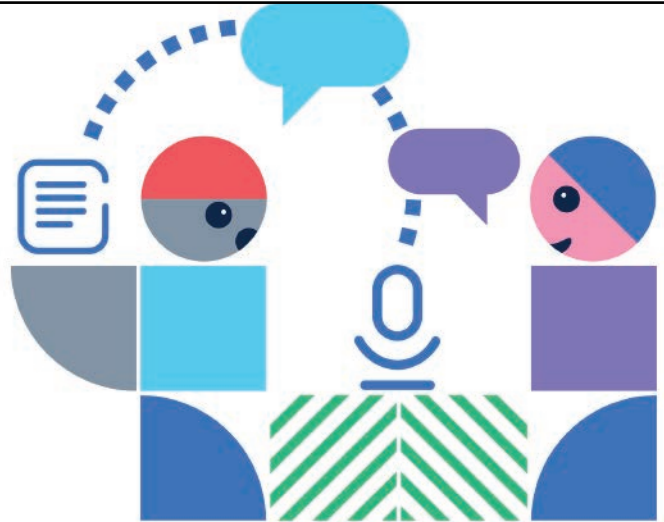


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In This Issue

Executive Team

Chelle Honiker, Publisher



As the publisher of Indie Author Magazine, Chelle Honiker brings nearly three decades of startup, technology, training, and executive leadership experience to the role. She's a serial entrepreneur,

founding and selling multiple successful companies including a training development company, travel agency, website design and hosting firm, a digital marketing consultancy, and a wedding planning firm. She's organized and curated multiple TEDx events and hired to assist other nonprofit organizations as a fractional executive, including The Travel Institute and The Freelance Association.

As a writer, speaker, and trainer she believes in the power of words and their ability to heal, inspire, incite, and motivate. Her greatest inspiration is her daughters, Kelsea and Cathryn, who tolerate her tendency to run away from home to play with her friends around the world for months at a time. It's said she could run a small country with just the contents of her backpack.

Alice Briggs, Creative Director



As the creative director of Indie Author Magazine, Alice Briggs utilizes her more than three decades of artistic exploration and expression, business startup adventures, and leadership

skills. A serial entrepreneur, she has started several successful businesses. She brings her experience in creative direction, magazine layout

and design, and graphic design in and outside of the indie author community to her role.

With a masters of science in Occupational Therapy, she has a broad skill set and uses it to assist others in achieving their desired goals. As a writer, teacher, healer, and artist, she loves to see people accomplish all they desire. She's excited to see how IAM will encourage many authors to succeed in whatever way they choose. She hopes to meet many of you in various places around the world once her passport is back in use.

Erika Everest, Managing Editor



Over fifteen years in the corporate sector, managing international projects and teams, gives Erika Everest a strong foundation for managing the globally-dispersed editorial team

working at Indie Author Magazine.

She has co-curated eight anthologies in the past three years, and works with authors for proofreading, beta reading, editing, formatting, and newsletter set up and maintenance.

With a PhD in Biostatistics and a postgraduate qualification in International Business Management, Erika values strategic and analytical thinking. She also values unicorns, tiaras, and happily ever afters. She has published three novels in a series of fairytale retellings, and likes to procrastinate by writing nonfiction books to help authors.

Robyn Sarty, Managing Editor



As a managing editor at Indie Author Magazine, Robyn Sarty brings over a decade of experience as an editor and proofreader. She is the author of two novels and several short stories,

and manages her own publishing company. She loves helping other authors with their books and

can often be found nerding out over story elements with her friends. She spent five years as a project coordinator for an international engineering firm, and now uses those skills to chase writers instead of engineers and hopes it will be good training for her first marathon.

Growing up as a third culture kid, books were the one constant in her life, and as such, Robyn believes that books are portals to the magic that lies within, and authors are wielders of that magic. She also admits to being a staunch, loyal, and unabashed supporter of the Oxford comma.

Writers

Angela Archer



Having worked as a mental health nurse for many years, Angela combines her love of words with her love of human psychology to work as a copywriter in the UK. She independently

published a novella and novel in 2020 and is currently fending off the lure of shiny new novel ideas to complete the second book in her sci-fi series.

When she's not tinkering with words, she's usually drinking tea, playing the saxophone (badly), or being mum and wife to her husband and two boys.

Elaine Bateman



In her pre-author life, Elaine worked for FTSE 100 and Fortune 500 companies in procurement, project support, and IT Training. She has a bachelor of science BSc. in

Systems Practice and Design.

She is the author of eight published fiction novels and is working on her ninth.

Elaine enjoys giving back to the writing

community through her work with 20BooksTo50k, an online author community.

She was the Acorn Sports Bar Ladies' Yard-of-Ale Speed-drinking champion of 1985 (she was the only lady to enter and it took her all night.)

She lives in the UK with her husband, son, and three dogs. She no longer drinks ale.

Laurel Decher



There might be no frigate like a book, but publishing can feel like a voyage on the H.M.S. Surprise. There's always a twist and there's never a moment to lose.

Laurel's mission is to help you make the most of today's opportunities. She's a strategic problem-solver, tool collector, and co-inventor of the "you never know" theory of publishing.

As an epidemiologist, she studied factors that help babies and toddlers thrive. Now she writes books for children ages nine to twelve about finding more magic in life. She's a member of the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI), has various advanced degrees, and a tendency to smuggle vegetables into storylines.

Fatima Fayez

As a writer for Indie Author Magazine, Fatima unites her love of connecting with people and giving back to the author community. She is a co-founder of The Author Arena podcast, in addition to The Author Conference on Clubhouse. She is also an administrator for the 20BooksTo50K® Facebook group.

Fatima has lived in countries across Europe, Asia, and North America. During her various residencies, she managed to collect a bachelor of science in Journalism, along with a masters in Business Administration, and a handful of management certifications. She currently resides in Kuwait with her family.

On Saturdays, you can find her playing Dungeons & Dragons with her party.

Greg R. Fishbone



Greg R. Fishbone is an author of science fiction and mythic fantasy for young readers including the Galaxy Games series of middle grade novels and the mythic fantasy serial, *Becoming Hercules*. Greg is the founder of Mythiversal, a project dedicated to broadening representation in classical tales by amplifying historically marginalized identities and restoring traditions erased by centuries of gatekeeping. As a former Assistant Regional Advisor for the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, Greg co-directed regional conferences for authors and illustrators and presented workshops on a variety of craft and career development topics. He also served as president of the groundbreaking Class of 2k7 group of debut authors.

Remy Flagg



Jeremy Flagg is the creator of the dystopian superhero universe, Children of Nostradamus. Taking his love of pop culture and comic books, he focuses on fast paced, action packed novels with complex characters and contemporary themes. He also writes steamy gay superhero stories in the Men of Vanguard universe under the pen name Ryder O'Malley.

When not writing, Jeremy wears many hats. He is a graduate level creative writing professor in New England. Marrying his love of writing with his graphic design education, he operates Cover Villain, a graphic design studio focused on creating sci-fi, urban fantasy, and paranormal book covers. He is also one of the co-director's of Superhero-Fiction, a consortium of authors creating novels featuring superheroes.

Jac Harmon



While studying for her doctorate in Medieval History Jac Harmon spent her time poking around in old buildings and reading manuscripts which gave her plenty of experience when it came to doing the research for her historical fiction. After many years spent working in university administration herding students she is now getting involved in voluntary work at a historic house and being trained in paper conservation. The idea behind this being that one day she'll be allowed to get her hands on some of the rare books in the library there. Not that this will help with her current novel which is set in the seedy criminal underworld of late-Victorian London. An era of gas lights and grime which was purposefully chosen to give her an excuse to indulge in her love of all things Gothic. Dark twists and bad weather are to be expected.

Marion Hermansen



Marion is a bilingual author, working in both German and English. She holds a masters of arts MA in English, Spanish, and Italian, as well as a DipM (Marketing). She spent thirteen years both in London and Ireland while working in the finance and consulting industry.

Marion loves learning about writing craft and marketing best practices. She spends time mentoring other writers and enjoys the freedom of being able to work from anywhere.

She now lives in Frankfurt and is an active member of the local writing community, having published eight novels to date.

Her Irish husband has not only taught her the benefits of drinking copious amounts of black tea, but has impressed his Irish accent on her, to the amusement of her friends and colleagues.

Bre Lockhart



Armed with a degree in Communications and Public Relations, Bre Lockhart survived more than a decade in the corporate America trenches before jumping headfirst into writing urban fantasy and sci-fi, followed later by mystery under a second pen name. She's also one-third of a fiction editing team who probably enjoy their jobs a bit too much most days. As an experienced extrovert, Bre uses her questionable humor and red—sometimes other colors, too—glasses at writer conferences to draw unsuspecting introverts into her bubble of conversation; no one is safe. On her days off, you can find Bre camping and traveling with her family or organizing an expansive collection of lipstick at her home in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Anne Lown



Postal worker-turned-author, Anne Lown's career in the postal service, and her previous life in picturesque Devon, inevitably led to an interest in the small-town element of cozy mysteries.

As she sorted the mail, she considered how evil can lurk behind the most delightful of settings.

Thankfully, she became an author, not a serial killer.

Anne has had the privilege of moderating the Facebook group for authors, 20Booksto50K, since 2018 and has delighted in cheering on fellow authors as their careers have grown and blossomed. She also runs the YouTube channel for the group.

Anne is the author of four novels and is working on the next in the current series, with others in development. At home, she is a life-long learner and hoarder of courses, much to the horror of her son. Her dog's interests are food and sleep.

Sine Màiri MacDougall



Sine Màiri is a Gàidhlig speaker from the Nova Scotian Gaidhealtachd. She's an author, international incident starter, and recovering educator. Having taught all over the world from the UK to Northern Canada to China, and back again, her specialties are language and literature, history, and youth services for alternative education. She unapologetically writes about the themes she's encountered in her travels; resilience and found family being chief amongst those themes.

Her current fiction projects include two urban fantasy series that she hopes to launch in the coming year.

Merri Maywether



Merri Maywether lives with her husband in rural Montana. You can find her in the town's only coffee house listening to three generations of Montanans share their stories. Otherwise, she's in the classroom or the school library, inspiring the next generation's writers.

Susan Odev



Susan has banked over three decades of work experience in the fields of personal and organizational development, being a freelance corporate trainer and consultant alongside holding down “real” jobs for over twenty-five years. Specializing in entrepreneurial mindsets, she has written several non-fiction business books, once gaining a coveted Amazon #1 best seller tag in business and entrepreneurship, an accolade she now strives to emulate with her fiction.

Currently working on her fifth novel, under a top secret pen name, the craft and marketing aspects of being a successful indie author equally fascinate and terrify her.

A lover of history with a criminal record collection, Susan lives in a retro orange and avocado world. Once described by a colleague as being an “onion,” Susan has many layers, as have ogres (according to Shrek). She would like to think this makes her cool, her teenage children just think she’s embarrassing.

Nominate a Featured Author!

Know someone making waves in the industry? Tell us about them.



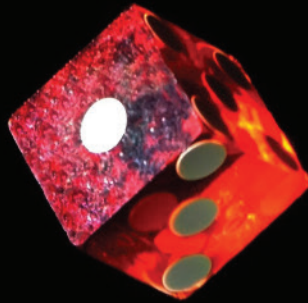
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