

AUTHORING, AUTOMATED

*Making Use of
Automation Workflows*

AUTHOR BOOTHES 101

*Stand out to Sell
More at Reader
Events*

**The Rainmaker
Behind the Curtain:
J.D. Barker**

10 TIPS FOR GOING BEYOND THE BOOK

WHAT DOES 'INDIE' MEAN TODAY?

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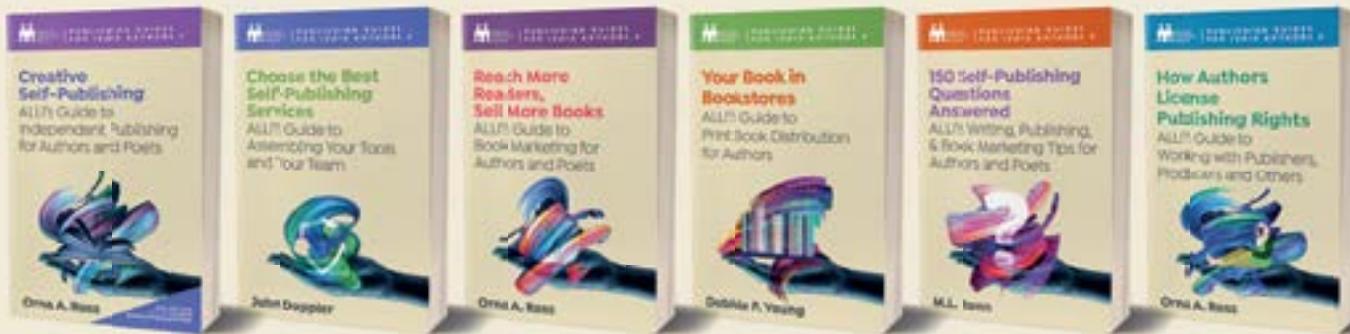
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COVER PHOTO CREDIT: RUTH GANEV

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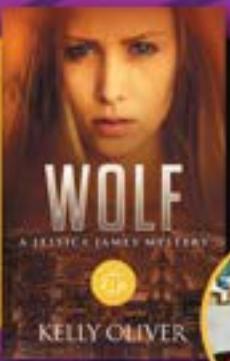
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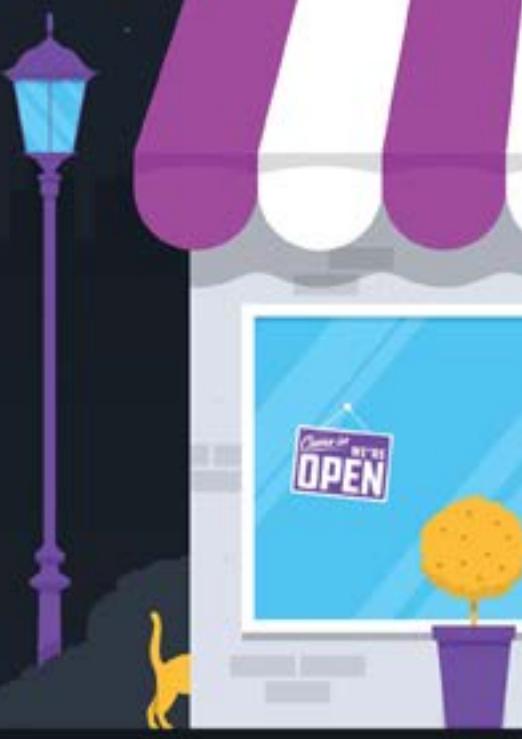
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Nicole Schroeder
Editor in Chief

From the **EDITOR IN CHIEF**

We, as indie authors, love that we wear many hats. We all seem to love the idiom, at least. At this point, it probably deserves a place on the list of most-used clichés, right beside that breath our characters didn't know they were holding.

Yet given the list of tasks we juggle daily—writing, editing, cover design, marketing, administrative work, social media—I'd say the “hats,” and the idiom, fit us well.

Since indie publishing arrived in the industry in force in the 2010s, of course, our hat collection has grown considerably. As *IAM* staff writer David Viergutz writes in this month's Ten Tips article, “Where the debate was once whether to publish through Kindle Unlimited or wide, authors today are going wider than wide and more indie than indie.” Beyond the work that goes into publishing a book, authors today are exploring more avenues for storytelling and connecting with readers, from creating and selling tie-in merchandise to managing subscription services, running crowdfunding campaigns, and expanding into online content creation.

None of this means we aren't wearing all those hats we were initially; we are still authors, first and foremost. But in looking beyond the book, indie authors are expanding what it means to be a storyteller—reaching new audiences, creating new revenue streams, and reshaping the independent publishing industry outside the confines of traditional publishing. In this month's issue, we explore the specific ways in which authors are expanding into new territory, as well as the effect this has had on the industry at large. We also speak with an author who, like many in the industry today, has published in both the traditional and indie realms to build his career.

Among the industry's many changes, the most important aspect of independent publishing remains unchanged: It's independent. The stories you tell, and how you tell them, are entirely up to you. And whether you've found your success by broadening your business beyond books or by writing and publishing just as you have from the beginning, you're exemplifying exactly what it means to be an “indie.” For that, I'll tip my many hats to you.

Nicole Schroeder

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ALLi Exclusive: How Indie Authors at Every Stage Can Build a Thriving Author Business

Independent publishing offers authors unparalleled freedom, not just to publish books but to build thriving, diverse creative businesses. From offering courses and landing speaking engagements to pursuing opportunities for rights licensing, today's indie author businesses can go far beyond the book. Here's how authors at different stages can think bigger about their business.





For Beginning Authors: Laying the Foundation

Many beginning authors naturally focus their energy on completing and launching their first book. It feels like crossing a finish line, but in reality, it's more like a starting line—the first step in all the opportunities indie authorship offers.

Publishing a book proves you can move a creative project from idea to completion. And by building relationships with readers, you also build a foundation for relationships with potential business partners: individuals and organizations you can partner with for mutual benefit.

Now is the time to investigate those opportunities and decide which are most aligned with your creative and business goals. A book might provide opportunities for speaking, teaching, content licensing, and collaborations, but pursuing all these right from the start is a recipe for overwhelm. Dip your toe into each area. Give a talk at a local library to explore the possibility of building out a speaking career. Coauthor a short article for your



“Every quarter, try one new thing that sounds interesting, and hope that every year, one of your four tests will bear fruit.”

— Russell Nohelty
ALLi Advisor

writers' group's newsletter to explore the possibilities of collaboration. Use these experiments to better understand which opportunities you find most intriguing and enjoyable.

"Most beginning authors get too wrapped up in checking off a list of tasks they 'have' to do and not finding things they actually like to do," says ALLi Advisor Russell Nohelty. "Every quarter, try one new thing that sounds interesting, and hope that every year, one of your four tests will bear fruit. If you can just build up one killer skill a year that reliably brings in revenue, that's really all you need to get started, and adding one more every year will make you a dynamo in half a decade."

Become an expert in those areas that your investigations suggest are the best fit for you. Intrigued by the idea of selling merchandise with a tie-in to your book? Dive deep into the logistical considerations, such as researching the pros and cons of create-on-demand production versus stocking supplies produced by a local vendor. Want to double down on offering classes? Explore options such as using a third-party course hosting platform, building on your own website, or focusing exclusively on in-person offerings.

Beginning authors who shift their mindset from "I'm publishing a book" to "I'm building an author business" make smarter long-term decisions.

For Emerging Authors: Diversifying Income Streams

As your author portfolio expands, it's time to act on the investigations you did as a beginning author and move beyond the book to add additional contributors to your indie publisher income. Lean into the idea that the work stemming from your book is intellectual property, and understand how to make the most of it.

ALLi Advisor Joanna Penn has long been a proponent of the value of multiple streams of income. "As a nonfiction author, I turned my books into online courses and also monetized my show, *The Creative Penn Podcast*, with corporate sponsors, all of whom are companies I work with and personally recommend," she says. "I also make affiliate income from recommending tools and services. I have a Patreon subscription, a lively community of over one thousand authors, where I provide a monthly audio Q&A, as well as live Office Hours, videos, and tutorials on how I continue to adapt my craft and my author business in the ever-changing publishing ecosystem."

Building a range of income sources not only provides security; it also opens doors to new ways to connect with your audience and expand your brand.



For Experienced Authors: Leveraging Rights and Scaling Up

Authors who have an established body of work and have already pursued and perfected book-adjacent business opportunities through a solo entrepreneur model can expand their reach by engaging with organizations on a larger scale.

Licensing translation, audiobook, film, TV, and merchandise rights can multiply your income without multiplying your workload. Joint ventures with other authors, publishers, or businesses can open new avenues; for example, you may choose to partner with a game developer to turn your stories into interactive apps or work with a course provider to expand into education markets. Focusing on making your adjacent content evergreen will lower the cost of maintaining that content and offer higher profitability.

You might also consider pursuits that require more upfront financial outlay, such as hosting a writers'

retreat—an idea that's appealing to ALLi Advisor Anna Featherstone.

“‘Beyond the book’ is all about expanding on and bringing your book and the lessons in it to life, and a retreat might make the perfect vehicle,” Featherstone says. “Start small by attending a few yourself to see how they run, then pitch yourself as an expert guest, or plan and host an event yourself. Retreats can be held around any theme or subject matter imaginable and can run for a single morning or multiple days. Real-life connections made through attending and hosting real-life events can pay off in so many ways, from making rich friendships through to book sales, consulting gigs through to more fun and effective collaborations.”

Establishing and nurturing relationships with your fans and your colleagues ensures long-term sustainability and growth.



For All Authors

As appealing as all these options may sound, don't try to do them all at once. Prioritize your efforts to go beyond the book by careful assessment of what offerings will most appeal to your existing fan base or to new bases you might want to reach. And don't allow your enthusiasm for these adjacent offerings to lead to neglect of your core offering: your books. As ALLi Ambassador and Editor-in-Chief Roz Morris says of moving beyond the book, "These are all such exciting prospects. However, I have to think about my own resources. Do I have time to do a new thing well? I am already writing a free newsletter, Substack, and blog, which my readers appreciate—and these take time. I'm prepared to put that time in because I want them to bring people to my books, but nothing can be rushed—even a blog post. I'm also running a busy editing and writing business, and there's no slack there, either. So at the moment, I'm not jumping into another new obligation, but of course, I'm eagerly watching in case something might be useful in future."

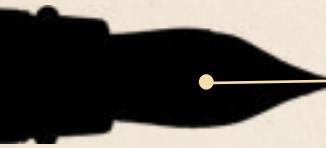
Looking for more information on how to move beyond the book? Check out these resources from ALLi.

- 1 ALLi's blog post, "Maximizing Your Earnings: Speaking as an Income Stream for Authors," shares how authors can present as subject matter experts on topics they research for their books, providing a new income stream and a chance to build their brand: <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/speaking-as-an-income-stream>.
- 2 Read how ALLi Content and Communications Strategist and author Sacha Black expanded her sales opportunities by launching her own fulfillment center for printing and distributing her books: <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/fulfillment-center>.
- 3 ALLi's blog post "When Platforms Collapse: Authors Move to Diversify" explores how authors are expanding their reach into a broader variety of platforms for greater security and flexibility within their business. Read it at <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/diversify>.
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Matty Dalrymple, ALLi Campaigns Manager

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Author Inklings

... on AI in the Writing Room

Welcome back, my pretties! **W** Confession time: I've been cheating on my thesaurus. Yes, I've been sneaking off for a little late-night fling with an AI tool. Scandalous, I know. Before you cast me out of the indie author coven, let me reassure you—I haven't replaced my trusty brain with a bot. I've just ... experimented. And I'm willing to bet a good number of you have, too.

Whether we like it or not, AI is the noisy new neighbor in our indie publishing village. It's knocking on doors, peeking through windows, and making everyone mutter under their breath about what it all means for our books, our businesses, and our sanity. Some are embracing it as the fairy godmother of productivity. Others are glaring at it like the frenemy who borrows your best dress and "forgets" to give it back.

So let's talk honestly about AI in the writing room: the panic, the possibilities, and the practical ways we can use it without losing our souls. Whilst this magazine remains agnostic about the use of AI in the indie author world, I believe it's always good to engage in healthy debate whatever the topic, especially when it's an area that ignites such heated conversations. This article reflects where I am on the subject at this moment in time. My stance may change in the future.

The Panic: Robots Stealing Our Quills

You've probably seen the headlines and the TikToks: best-selling authors posting videos of handwritten edits with captions like, "No robots were harmed in the making of this draft." There are even books being sold with shiny stickers declaring it was "Human Written" (as if that weren't the default for, oh, all of history).

The panic is real. Authors are terrified AI will flood the market with generic copycat books, undermine reader trust in what's authentic, and devalue the blood, sweat, and tears we pour into our stories.

I'll admit, the first time I asked an AI tool to "write a Cozy Mystery scene with a talking Pomeranian," my heart sank. In ten seconds, it spat out a perfectly serviceable, if soulless, scene. I thought, *If a bot can*

do this, what am I even for?

But then I read it again. The dialogue was flat. The humor was strained. And the “adorable” Pomeranian was weirdly obsessed with tax law. Seriously, what algorithm thinks readers want a canine lecture on capital gains? That’s when it hit me: AI can mimic voice, but it can’t be me. It can’t be you, either.

The Reality Check: Humans Still Win at Storytelling

Here’s the thing: Storytelling is not just about stringing sentences together. It’s about lived experience, emotional resonance, cultural nuance, and that indescribable spark of humanity. AI doesn’t know the joy of laughing with a friend until your ribs hurt, or the heartbreak of losing someone you love, or the mischievous glint in your dog’s eye when he steals your sandwich.

Readers don’t fall in love with efficient text. They fall in love with your voice.

That’s why, despite the hype, AI novels aren’t topping bestseller lists. Readers can tell when a story has been stitched together by an algorithm. It lacks the fingerprints of a human heart. And in a world drowning in content, authenticity is the one currency you can’t counterfeit.

Tools, Not Ghosts: How Indies Are Using AI

Now, before you think I’ve turned full Luddite and plan to smash my laptop with a hammer, let me be clear: AI has its uses. It’s a tool—and a powerful one, if you keep it in its place.

Here are some ways indies are already using AI without compromising their art:

- **Brainstorming titles and subtitles:** Sometimes the bot’s thirty suggestions are all dreadful—but suggestion 31 might spark the idea for a title that will catch readers’ eyes.
- **Blurb help:** Distilling a ninety-thousand-word novel into 150 snappy words is torture. AI can offer a rough draft that you can then polish into gold.
- **Ad copy:** If you need five variations of a Facebook ad and your brain has left the building, AI can save your sanity.
- **Metadata and keywords:** Creating or updating metadata is a boring but necessary task for any publisher. Why not outsource the drudgery to a machine while you sip tea?
- **Line editing:** Think grammar checker with a boost. AI won’t replace your editor, but it might catch a rogue comma or three.

I could go on, but do you notice one key thing that's missing from that list? Drafting your actual book. That, my friends, is the one job only you can do.

Protecting Your Voice

So how do you keep AI in its place and ensure your voice stays center stage? There are a few golden rules:

- **Write your first drafts yourself.** Even if they're messy, even if they're riddled with typos, that raw, imperfect draft is where your magic lives.
- **Use AI as seasoning, not to make the whole stew.** AI can spice things up, but if you let it cook the whole meal, you'll be left with bland mush. It's always important to taste-test your food before putting it in front of paying guests. The same goes for your books. Is your AI creation too salty, too sweet, or just right?
- **Keep a “just for fun” project.** Perhaps you are using AI to speed up your production line, especially with nonfiction books, and whilst efficient, you feel it's draining your soul. Then draft something that will never touch an AI tool, never see the light of day, and exists purely to remind you why you love writing. Although I would argue you should use that creativity to improve your main work-in-progress, you do you.
- **Fact-check everything.** AI is notorious for confidently making things up. If it tells you Agatha Christie once moonlighted as a trapeze artist, don't take its word for it (though I'd read that novel)!
- **Talk to your readers.** Be transparent if you're using AI in your workflow. Many readers don't care if you used a bot for your blurb—but they care deeply that you wrote the story.

The Future Isn't Written Yet

AI is here, and it's not going away. But neither are we. Humans have been telling stories since we were scratching mammoths on cave walls. Technology has always changed the tools—printing press, typewriter, word processor—but it hasn't changed the heart of storytelling.

So yes, experiment with AI if you want. Use it to save time, cut through the boring bits, or spark new ideas. But remember: Your readers aren't here for a string of neatly arranged words. They're here for you. Your perspective. Your quirks. Your emotional truth.

That's something no algorithm can replicate.

Publishing can feel like a mystery you have to solve, but you don't have to do it on your own. Whether you have questions about the indie author world or just want to air your writing woes, send your thoughts to: feedback@indieauthormagazine.com and include "Author Inklings" in the subject line. I'd love to hear from you!



Final Thoughts (or the Bit where I Get Philosophical Again)

AI can feel like a frenemy—helpful one minute, unsettling the next. But like any tool, it's only as powerful as the hands that wield it. The hammer can build a house or smash a window. The pen can sign a love letter or a lawsuit. It's not the tool. It's the storyteller.

So, my pretties, don't fear the robot overlords just yet. They still can't make a decent cup of tea—or write that story only you can tell.

And until the day they do, I'll be here, hunched over my keyboard, muttering to myself, wrangling words into something resembling a novel—the messy, maddening, magnificent, human way.

Happy writing,

Susan



Susan Odev

Susan Odev is the co-author of the Mike Atwell Cozy Mystery series and several other successful whodunnits involving vicars, Shakespeare, and suspicious cake. A lifelong list-maker, deadline-dodger, and one-woman writing retreat (complete with dog), she wrote her first best-selling nonfiction book in 2010. She lives in Kent, England, dreams of the Portuguese hills, occasionally tidies her desk, and is always five minutes late for her own ideas. Susan has written for numerous magazines, spoken at international conferences, and contributed to workshops on a range of personal development topics, and yet can still get lost in her own bathroom.

10 Tips for Going Beyond the Book

Independent publishing is a well of opportunity for the writer with a bit of a creative spark. Writing the next book seems like the next logical step in any author career; however, when we think of independent publishing only in terms of print books, ebooks, and audiobooks, we're missing entire avenues through which to grow our audiences, our story worlds, and our businesses.

For some authors, a book alone is not enough; they find success by viewing the book as just one way to make money from their story, with other mediums and creative outlets taking that intellectual property (IP) even further.

Here are ten ways authors are taking their IP beyond the book—and ten tips for how you can follow in their footsteps.



01

Go Direct to Audio.

With the advent of cost-effective AI narration, some authors have opted out of writing novels for print and instead write primarily for audio-focused audiences. Enter YouTube, where a host of faceless channels have emerged to tell stories. Some print authors choose to post their audiobooks for free on YouTube and benefit from Google AdSense, but publishing stories directly for audio on YouTube is different. Storytellers rely on highly “binge-able” episodic chapters, where placing mid-roll ads won’t be as intrusive and listeners are encouraged to come back for more—think in terms of TV show arcs rather than blockbuster movie storylines.

02

Early Chapters for the Win.

The creator economy is one in constant flux, and authors have long sought ways to deepen their relationship with readers, not in competition with other authors but in competition for readers’ attention.

Some authors have found an opportunity in showing their readers how much their attention is worth by offering chapters of their books before they’re published, either as newsletter sign-up incentives or on subscription sites like Substack or Patreon. Some authors have even streamed themselves writing the books in real time. Authors at any level can use this opportunity to deepen their relationship with readers, monetize the access to the chapters, build hype, and even get constructive feedback before publication.

03

Make Movies ... from a Book?

Over the past few years, there’s been an exponential increase in the number of AI programs available. Outside of the usual large-language models like Claude and ChatGPT, several tools for generating short-form video have also emerged. Applications like Freepik and Google Gemini (VEO3) can now make lifelike videos for a reasonable price, in the form of credits purchased for the respective platforms. Using these tools, authors can consider important scenes, character introductions, or bonus content that would work well in a visual medium. Making book trailers and even short-form video episodes of a book to share online and as promotional content on social media was something once affordable largely only to big-box studios or Big Five publishers, but today, AI platforms provide authors who are interested an affordable and accessible route for expanding their IP into video.

Pro Tip:

Providing your most supportive readers a sneak peek of your story before it’s published also gives you the chance to receive beta feedback as you write. If your audience doesn’t like the direction a book is taking, they’ll be able to let you know—and you’ll be able to fix it as you write instead of in revisions afterward.

04

Your Book: The Game

From Harry Potter video games to Star Wars–themed tabletop role-play games, if a fan base is large enough and rabid enough, they’ll look for any opportunity to go deeper into their favorite worlds. Some authors are taking note of this and turning their books into board games, card games, or tabletop games for their fans to enjoy, then running Kickstarter campaigns to make sure the project can be funded. They’re also finding success—indie Horror author Duncan Ralston saw his Kickstarter project for *Ghostland: The Game* funded with just a few hundred backers.

05

Create a Whole New World.

Some authors, especially in genres such as Fantasy and Sci-Fi, are world-builders, creating massive playgrounds for their characters and filling them with conflict, turmoil, heartbreak, and love. Why not turn these expansive worlds into something tangible for the readers who love them? Some authors have opted to actually create these worlds in other mediums, such as interactive maps, vellum paper tip-ins, and scrolls with burned edges and tied with twine. These props can become giveaway prizes, rewards for readers who back a crowdfunding campaign or purchase a book directly through your website, or more—and for your superfans, they’ll be valuable collectors’ items.

06

Revive Your Old Works.

Breathing new life into an old backlist title is a strategy authors can use to get a bit more out of a book that once did well but may have fallen by the wayside. Make your old books feel new again through new cover designs or special edition print runs. Printers such as 48 Hour Books or Bookvault offer a variety of customizations, such as sprayed edges, gold-foil covers, and slipcases, depending on which company you choose and the specifications of your book. Even incorporating unreleased chapters or publishing revised copies of an old story can not only make a project worth collecting but also make it feel like you’ve created something new for your audience—all without you having to write another book.

07

Brainstorm Merchandise Options.

When looking to expand IP into other mediums, authors need to think about the reader's experience. How will this story best be told? What details or pieces of merchandise will connect with audiences most?

Perhaps your story has a quote that would make a great T-shirt, or your character mentions a favorite recipe in an important scene of the story. Science Fiction author Christopher Hopper has created collectible trading cards for the characters in his Hoperverse. As you write, keep merchandise opportunities in mind—your book doesn't have to be all that you create, and in many cases, it could be the catalyst for another corner of your business.

08

Create Premium Content.

Does the end of your book really need to be the end? Stephenie Meyer's *Midnight Sun* was a retelling of the original *Twilight* novel with a different POV that was published in 2020. The book was released fifteen years after the original story, yet it immediately topped bestseller lists and revived interest in the series.

Like Meyer, some authors are now seeing opportunities in altering their published books, offering alternative scenes behind a paywall or in exchange for an email signup. Try writing a chapter or two from a new perspective, creating a different ending to the story, or writing an epilogue that stretches a few years beyond where your story originally stopped. These writing exercises can be a fun way to return to an old story world for the author, but they also can go a long way in building out a world for readers who might be craving more. Plus, you may just spark an idea for a spin-off series in the process.

09

Listen While You Read.

Authors are now seeing the value in making their books stand out from the crowd by offering more than just the words on the page. Specifically, they're giving readers access to the soundtrack of the story—including external links in their ebooks or QR codes in their print books to playlists that are specifically curated or created for them. If you're looking to expand your IP, take it a step further, and create songs and media specifically for your projects. There are multiple options for producing audio tracks, from recording them yourself to hiring freelancers or using generative AI. Use these tracks as bonus content, as another layer of ambience in an audiobook, or on their own in other creative ways to pull readers even deeper into your story world.

10

Try Something New.

There's no limit to what an indie author can create and no rules to follow—other than find an audience and feed it. Author Maggy Beeler took that rule literally; her book of mocktail and cocktail recipes based on popular genre tropes, called *Tropetails*, has kicked off a series of events at local bars and breweries, in which one brewery even sold out of gin thanks to the popularity of the book's drinks in-house.

Beeler's story shows that an author can find their audience anywhere, even outside of traditional channels. Think outside the box, and don't be afraid to try something new or unexpected to grab your audience's attention or broaden your business. Storytelling exists in countless forms, and that new idea or outlet you're exploring may just spark a success story of your own.

Wrapping It up Neatly

The indie author landscape is an ever-changing playground, with opportunities abounding for any author who sees more for their books than just a paperback, audiobook, and ebook. Where the debate was once whether to publish through Kindle Unlimited or wide, authors today are going wider than wide and more indie than indie. They're taking their books to the farthest reaches of their IP, making more money and feeding their audience more of what they crave. ■



David Viergutz

David Viergutz is a disabled Army Veteran, Law Enforcement Veteran, husband and proud father.

He is an author of stories from every flavor of horror and dark fiction. One day, David's wife sat him down and gave him the confidence to start putting his imagination on paper. From then on out his creativity has no longer been stifled by self-doubt and he continues to write with a smile on his face in a dark, candle-lit room.



From the Stacks

Book Club Summary

Never Split the Difference

Chris Voss

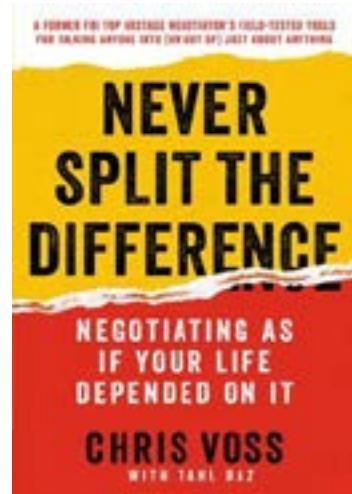
<https://indieauthortraining.com/courses/never-split-the-difference-by-chris-voss>

You may be wondering how a book written by a guy who used to negotiate with terrorists could help you in your indie author career. In *Never Split the Difference*, you'll learn real tactics that work to help you negotiate and have tough conversations with publishers, agents, or anyone who thinks exposure is a valid form of payment. Unsure how to price your masterpiece? The methods Voss used in the FBI may be the surprising strategies you need to know.

Take a look at this book through Indie Author Training's Book Club Summaries to find

- an audio deep dive into the material,
- a synopsis geared toward indie authors,
- a discussion forum to connect with other readers, and
- questions to help you apply what you learn to your business.

Visit <https://indieauthortraining.com/course-category/book-club-summaries> to learn more and explore other titles.



Course

Automations Masterclass

<https://indieauthortraining.com/courses/automations-masterclass>

This two-hour interactive session will teach you how to create a reusable social media automation system to manage your posts efficiently month after month. Designed for authors and creators, this workflow will save you hours by automating captions, visuals, and scheduling across platforms—all tailored to your brand.

Webinar

“Kickstart Your Indie Sales Career”

<https://webinars.indieauthortraining.com/talks/kickstart-your-indie-sales-career>

Want to run a Kickstarter campaign but don't know where to start? In this webinar, Amy Wolf, veteran of ten successful campaigns, shares what really works on the platform and how to get started, even if you have no audience.



Podcast

<https://open.spotify.com/show/1MjZYaA5iClRL2JMtEiY12>

The *Indie Author Magazine* podcast has been refined and focused for bite-size listening, giving you just what you need to know about some of the biggest topics in the industry. Here are episodes you may have missed:

“Building Believable Worlds by Consulting Subject Matter Experts”

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/1CZ32Zum36PgiQHQ5UoAqk>

As ironic as it sounds, the authenticity of your fiction—depending on your genre—may be the key to setting your book apart from others on the shelf. Careful fact-checking, research, and consultation with subject matter experts to ensure the small details are correct builds trust with readers. Learn tips and advice for how to do it right.

“Transforming Action into Emotional Immersion for Readers”

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/30A6uAxeKyWgSU9LmlmzQt>

Cinematic storytelling can be wonderful for helping a reader picture a scene—but if your story lacks interiority, book coach Rona Gofstein warns, it may not be enough to keep them turning the page. Hear a breakdown of the four tips she offered in her guest series to help you pull readers into the story and keep them there, so they feel like they're living through the events right alongside your characters.

“Letting Character Vulnerabilities Shape Your Plot: Four Practical Steps”

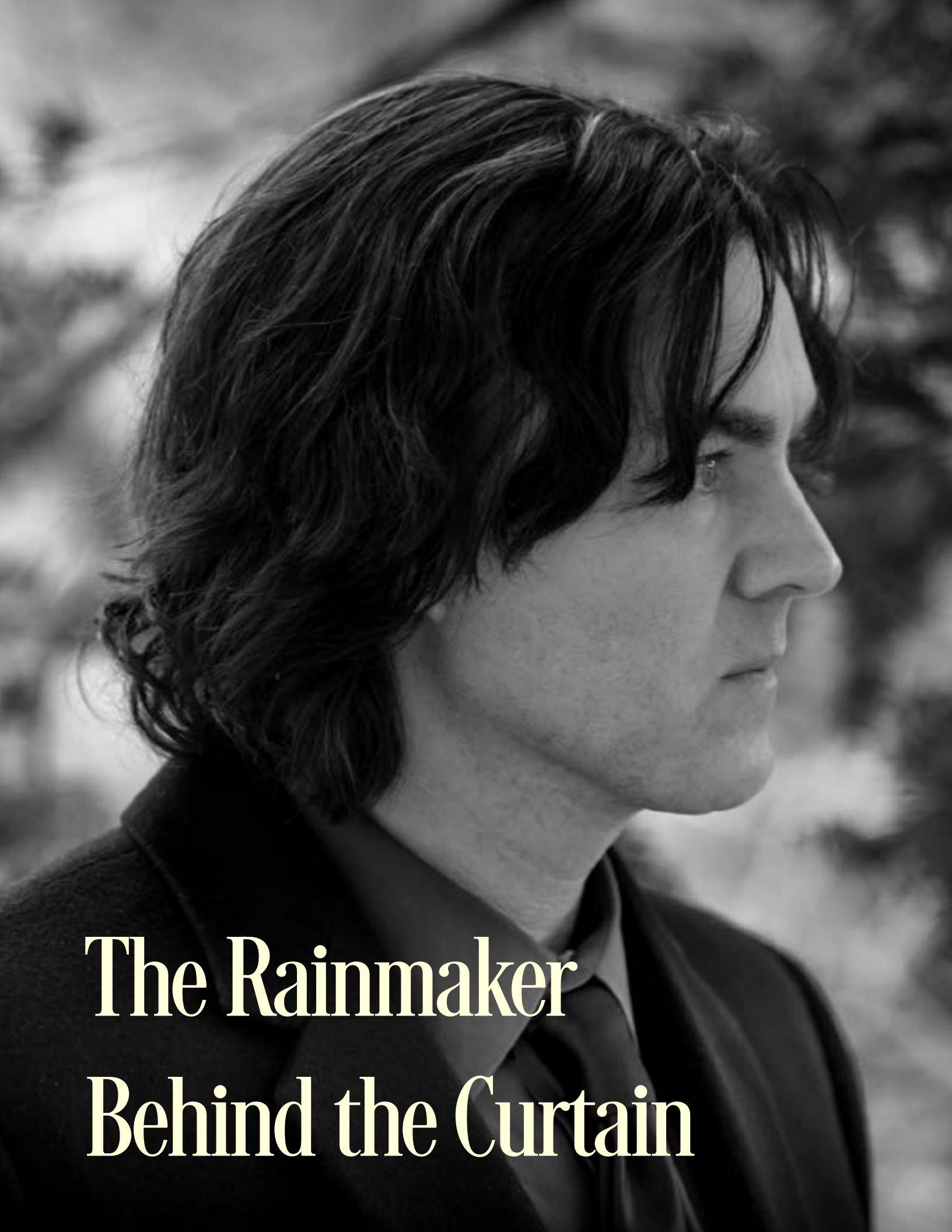
<https://open.spotify.com/episode/6uLJocLMbRHfmH4KoKGbZL>

Humans aren't perfect; your characters shouldn't be either. In this episode, explore how you can make your characters more flawed on the page—and therefore more believable in your readers' minds. ■

Karen Guyler



Always being the new girl at nine schools on two continents was no fun at all so books became the only constant in Karen Guyler's life, even if they didn't help her get out of sports days. Now settled in Milton Keynes, England, Britain's best kept secret, she juggles reading with writing twisty thrilling stories, her children, husband and two grand-puppies – a much nicer mix! She also teaches Creative Writing for Adult Education with lots of laughter in amongst the word wrangling and discovery.



The Rainmaker Behind the Curtain



How J.D. Barker, Behind-the-Scenes Book Doctor, Became One of the Most Strategic Minds in Modern Fiction

The first thing you notice about J.D. Barker isn't the best-selling books or the high-figure deals. It's that he doesn't carry himself like someone who's had any of that. He's a quiet hurricane of a guy—part rock star, part technician, all storyteller.

When we sat down for our most recent chat—one of many over the years—we started with something familiar: weather. J.D. lives on an island, and a storm was moving in. He was matter-of-fact about the threat of losing power, casually talking over seventy-mile-per-hour gusts like most of us would complain about traffic. That's J.D. Cool in chaos. Always a little ahead of the next crash.

Before the book deals, before the collaborations with legends, there was just a guy chasing a way in. J.D.'s path to publishing wasn't a straight climb up a well-marked trail—it was a maze of side doors, blind alleys, and self-made shortcuts. He didn't wait for permission. He engineered opportunities, often from scraps that most people would have stepped over without noticing.

From Ghostwriter to Breakout Author

J.D.'s story doesn't start the way you might expect from a guy with books on the shelves of Barnes & Noble and airport terminals worldwide. He didn't fall into this business. He built a trapdoor into it and crawled through on his own terms.

"I grew up without a TV in the house," he says. "We'd hit the library a couple times a week, and I'd disappear into books. I was autistic—though I didn't know it at the time—and books were a safe place."

He's talked about stapling together his own stories and charging his sister late fees when she'd check them out of his childhood bedroom library. The instinct was there early, but it took years—and a detour through the music industry, finance, and ghostwriting—to turn that impulse into a career.

"My last real job was as a chief compliance officer for a brokerage firm," he says. "Sixty- to eighty-hour weeks. I'd come home and write just to stay sane."

And he did it for twenty-three years.

The transition from anonymous book doctor to best-selling author reads like a movie

script: ghostwriting books that hit the *New York Times* list—six of them—all while watching other names ride the success. Then his wife, in an act of faith most dreamers only fantasize about, suggested they sell everything, move into a duplex, and give him eighteen months to make it work as a full-time writer.

That was a risk. That was a turning point.

His breakout novel, *Forsaken*—a dark, Stephen King-flavored tale with a supernatural twist—did more than sell. It caught the eye of King himself. J.D. made a reference to King's *Needful Things* in the manuscript as a placeholder, certain he'd have to take it out. But his wife convinced him to take a shot and ask for permission to keep it in. King said yes.

"Getting that green light became the hook," J.D. says. "A failed trip to Stephen King's house turned into a headline. That piece ran in *Publishers Weekly*, and it lit the book on fire."

What followed was a sales storm—over two hundred fifty thousand copies moved—and suddenly J.D. Barker was no longer the man behind the curtain. He was front and center.



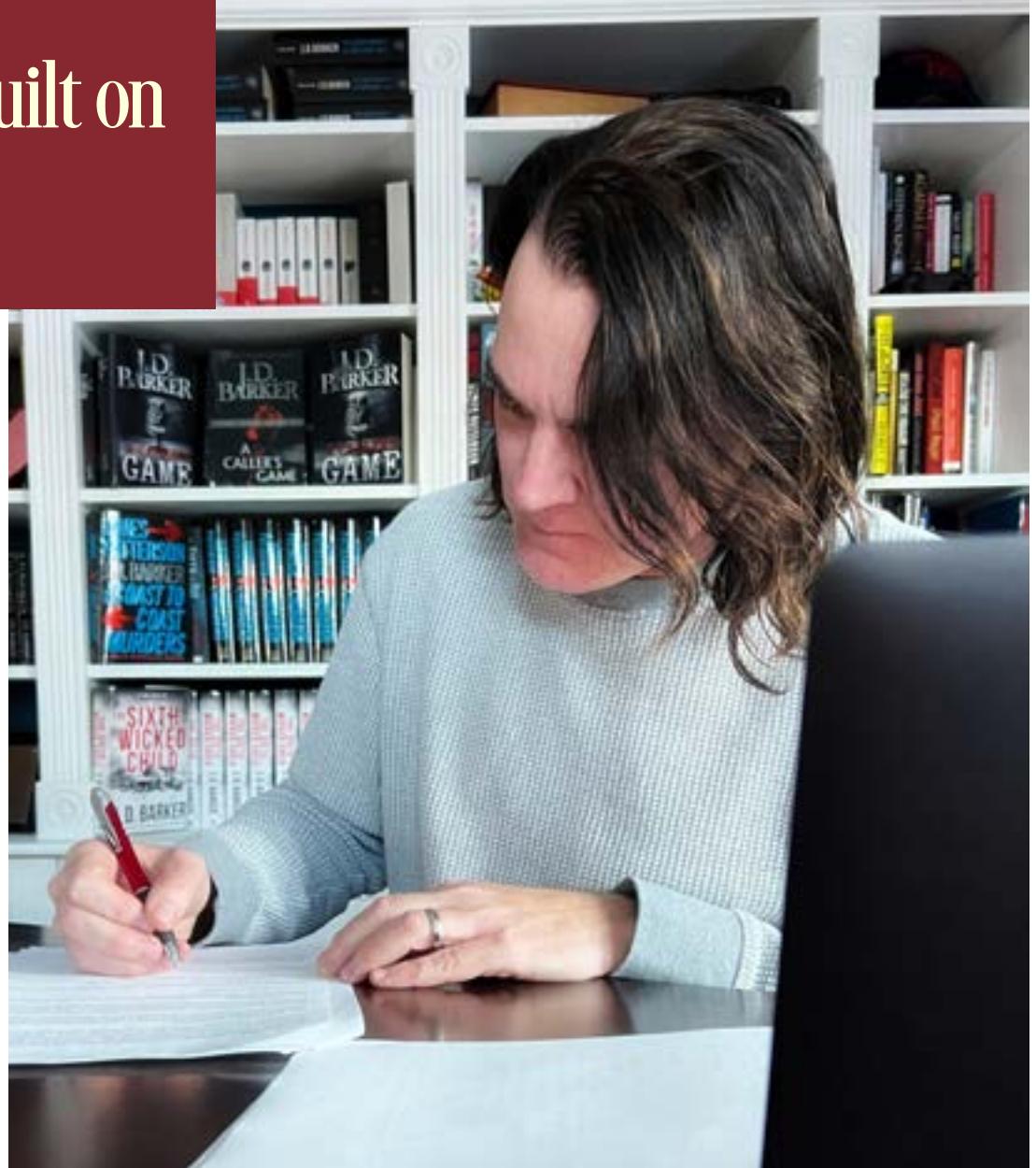
A Career Built on Strategy

His next book, *The Fourth Monkey*, caught the attention of publishing powerhouse Houghton Mifflin Harcourt before the manuscript even landed on shelves. In early 2016, it was sold in a series of preemptions and auctions worldwide, with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt acquiring the US publishing rights and HarperCollins taking the UK rights.

Word of the novel's dark, high-concept hook had spread quickly through his agent to editors, sparking interest that escalated into a dinner meeting. "By the time dinner was over, we were looking at a seven-figure deal, with a feature film and TV show in play."

Since then, J.D. has played on an entirely different level. He co-authored *Dracul* with Dacre Stoker, Bram Stoker's great-grandnephew, using the original notes and journals from the *Dracula* archives. That book sparked a bidding war and landed at Putnam with a Paramount film deal attached.

He also teamed up with James



Patterson—yes, that James Patterson—on multiple thrillers, including *The Coast-to-Coast Murders* and *The Noise*. And though you might expect the two head-butted over writing methods—Patterson is the meticulous outliner, and Barker labels himself a pantser and discovery writer—it turns out they zigged and zagged right into each other's rhythms.

"We wrote the first one without an outline," J.D. says, laughing. "I'd trap him in a scene, and he'd

send back something wilder. Then he sent me an outline for the next book, saying, 'Here's an outline for a book called *The Noise*. I want you to try it my way.' So we wrote that one based on his outline. And the process was so much smoother. I've been outlining ever since."

It's this hybrid thinking—creative wildness paired with analytical discipline—that makes J.D. a rare breed. He's not just a writer. He's a strategist and a business-minded artist who studies every angle, then



invents a new one.

That's how he ended up with his own imprint under Simon & Schuster. Not many authors can say that. Fewer still can say they walked away from a seven-figure deal to protect their career from industry shakeups. In this case, J.D. was wary of internal changes at the publisher—editorial teams

shifting, marketing priorities in flux—and he didn't want to risk being locked into a contract that might strand his books without the support they deserved. J.D.'s the kind of guy who'll turn down the check if it doesn't come with control.

And control is important to him. "I acted like Random House

when I self-published *Forsaken*," he says. "Hardcover, paperback, audiobook, all released on schedule because I wanted readers to get a product that felt professional."

His approach works. Whether publishing independently or traditionally, J.D.'s books are in fifty countries, twenty-five languages, and counting. His hybrid

approach gives him a unique combination of flexibility and control—even when leveraging traditional publishing avenues and resources, he thinks, markets, and pivots like an indie.

But the thing that really sets J.D. apart is his marketer's mind. "I learned a lot from Madonna," he says. "She said she looked at what everyone else was doing and did the opposite. Zig when they zag."

There's no ceiling. Every book, every deal—it's just a stepping stone to something bigger.

— J.D. Barker



Innovation, Collaboration, and What's Next

Case in point: For his book *Something I Keep Upstairs*, a Supernatural Thriller based on a real-life haunted house in New England, J.D. ran a promotion to send one lucky reader and three friends to spend the night, alone, on a private island in that same house. No gimmicks. Just guts.

“There’s a real paranormal community out there,” J.D. says. “People love ghost hunting. This gives them something to talk about—and the book’s along for the ride.”

In addition to a busy writing schedule, J.D. also co-hosts the *Writers, Ink Podcast* with me, Christine Daigle, and Jenna Brown. His original reason for jumping on a podcast mic? To overcome his fear of public speaking.

That’s what makes him who he is. He’s constantly leveling up—not by chasing trends but by mastering the obstacles in his own path.

So where’s he headed next?

He’s betting big on co-authoring—collaborating with experts like Daigle, a real-life neuropsychologist, to bring authenticity to his books. And he’s working on a number of projects under his imprint, building out a publishing model that gives him the best of both worlds: indie flexibility and Big Five reach.

“There’s no ceiling,” he says. “Every book, every deal—it’s just a stepping stone to something bigger.”

That includes a little project he and I are working on together. No spoilers yet, but let’s just say it’s got teeth. When J.D. Barker steps into a story, it doesn’t walk—it runs.

You can learn more about J.D. and his work, and maybe even catch wind of our upcoming collaboration, at JDBarker.com. And if you’re lucky, maybe you’ll get the chance to be stranded overnight in a haunted house on an island, or find yourself tangled up in whatever is coming next. The only thing predictable about J.D., his books, and his career is that you’ll never see the twist coming. ■



J. Kevin Tumlinson

J. Kevin Tumlinson is an award-winning and bestselling novelist, with more than 70 titles in multiple languages and hundreds of countries worldwide. He's known as 'The Voice of Publishing' for his prolific podcasting and public speaking, and considers it an honor to have helped thousands of writers start, build, and grow their own writing careers. Find Kevin and his books at kevintumlinson.com.

What Does 'Indie' Mean Today?

Reflections on the Many
Paths of the Modern-Day
Indie Author





Indie authors are so much more than just authors. If you've been in the indie publishing industry for any length of time, you have had to adapt by necessity.

In the early days, indie authors faced challenges stretching far beyond writing—questions such as how to publish, how to distribute their work, and how to build a readership in a marketplace that viewed them with skepticism. Technology, of course, changed everything, bringing greater freedom for authors who wanted to build their own publishing businesses, new distribution options, and broader acceptance for self-published works within the industry. Those who pioneered the independent publishing route smashed down barriers that had stood for generations, but new challenges arose—more authors, more books, and more voices to rise above. Opportunity and competition arrived hand in hand.

Now, indie publishing has become an industry in its own right. What was once considered a fringe alternative is now a thriving, legitimate path with its own communities and success stories. With constant change, it's sometimes good to hit the "pause" button and take stock—not only to look back at how far the industry has come but also to recognize the momentum carrying it forward. Indie authors today stand at a point of possibility, giving them the freedom to shape their own careers and how they connect with readers, as well as to help define the future of publishing.

Where Indie Publishing Started

In the early 2000s, the rise of print-on-demand opened the door to publishing without the need for warehouse space and shipping. Yet self-publishing was still being branded as vanity publishing, a separate publishing model that still exists today in which authors pay a company to publish their work. It wasn't until the Kindle boom that indie authors shook off that tired perception, proving that \$0.99 ebooks and rapid-release series could capture a global readership. Indie authors could skip the traditional publishing slush pile, retaining control and achieving speed to market over traditionally published peers.

Consider Amanda Hocking, an indie author often cited as one of the first major indie success stories. In 2010, she uploaded her Paranormal novels to Kindle, and by 2011, she had sold almost half a million books. Her success challenged industry perceptions and led to traditional publishing contracts for her work. She proved that self-publishing could be viable, even lucrative, if paired with persistence, speed, and adaptability.

Hocking's story is emblematic of the early indie movement—authors proving that the stigma of self-publishing was outdated. Her trajectory also showed traditional publishers there was a thriving audience for books discovered online, influencing how the industry viewed digital-first authors.



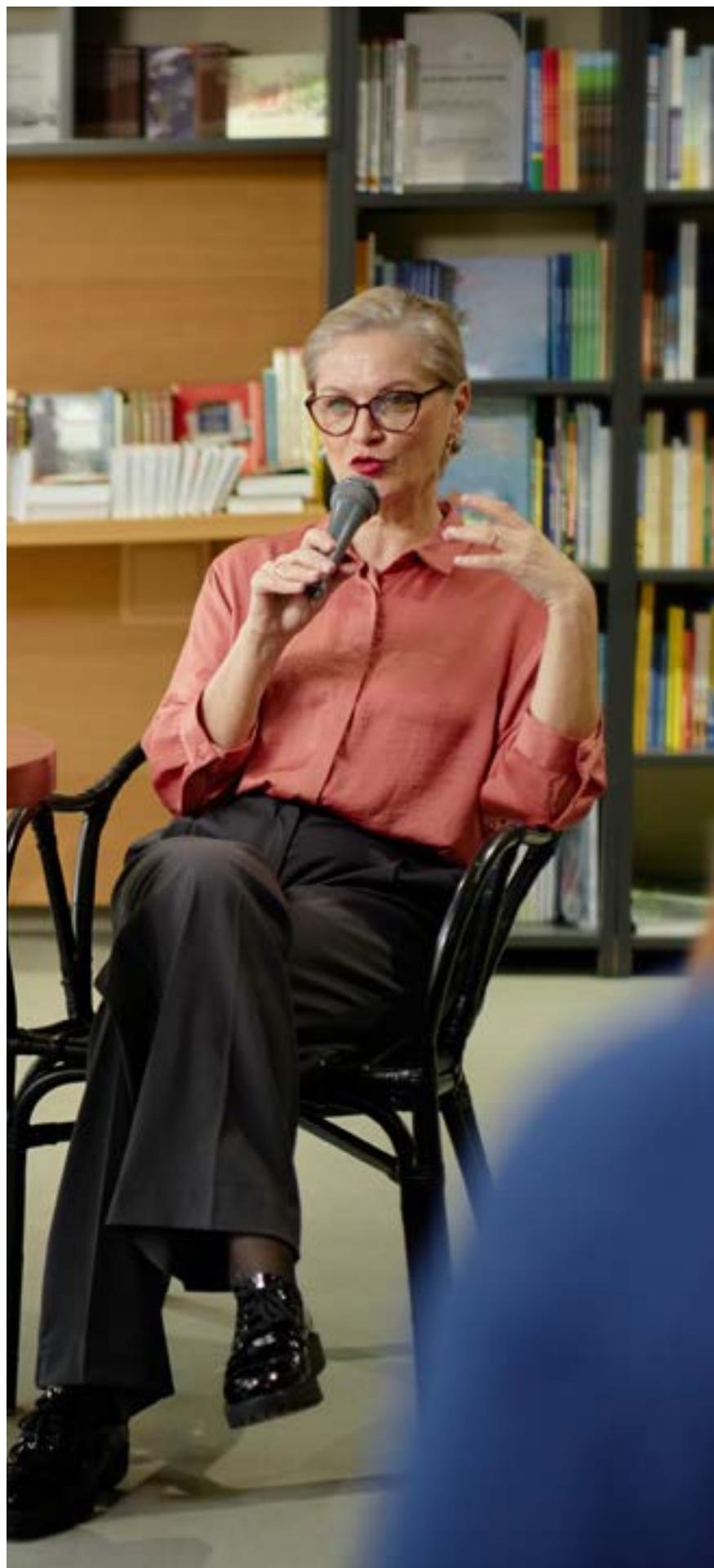
How Indie Authorship Looks Today

If the early years were about breaking down barriers within the industry, the current moment is about building sustainable businesses on the foundations of those breakthroughs. Authors today aren't simply releasing books; they are running publishing houses of one. A modern indie career often extends beyond books into podcasts, videos, serialized online stories, audiobooks, and more. What was once a sidestep around barriers has evolved into a dynamic, multi-platform endeavor.

Indie authors today operate with a business-first mindset. Success is no longer measured by getting a book into print but by building a sustainable publishing system around one's work. Many authors sell directly to readers through platforms like Patreon, Substack, or Kickstarter. Others turn to social platforms, where short-form videos introduce their work to entirely new audiences. The algorithms that once lived in online bookstores now live on social feeds, and indie au-

thors have adapted accordingly.

Many modern indie careers are hybrid. An author may self-publish one series, sign a traditional contract for another, then experiment with other forms of writing or branch into online content creation, such as launching a YouTube channel. The endpoint, however, remains the same: autonomy. Being "indie" today is less about the method of publication and more about a mindset of independence and control.



How Indie Authors Find Success

S. R. Webster, a dark fiction author of Horror, Suspense, Psychological Thrillers, and Speculative Fiction who has been publishing independently for more than fifteen



S. R. Webster

teen years, describes today's climate as "both a challenge and an inspiration." The tools at hand, she explains, allow writers to "share their vision with readers worldwide without gatekeepers." But that same accessibility creates what she calls "a tsunami of content," where every book must struggle for visibility.

"Just because it's as simple as pressing the 'publish' button doesn't mean you should," Webster says. "And just because you've published a book, it doesn't mean anyone is going to read it. So the first thing any indie author should do to succeed is to invest in themselves. Take courses and put in the time to hone the craft and produce quality products.

"Word of mouth promotion still goes a long way, so spend some time in your community with book clubs, festivals, libraries, and bookstores," she adds. "It's the fastest way to make a name for yourself."

That sense of community, online or off, has become one of the defining elements of indie authorship today. Where early pioneers often worked in isolation, today's authors thrive on interaction. They build newsletters, host Discord groups, run serialized fiction communities, and foster networks of superfans. Authors are con-

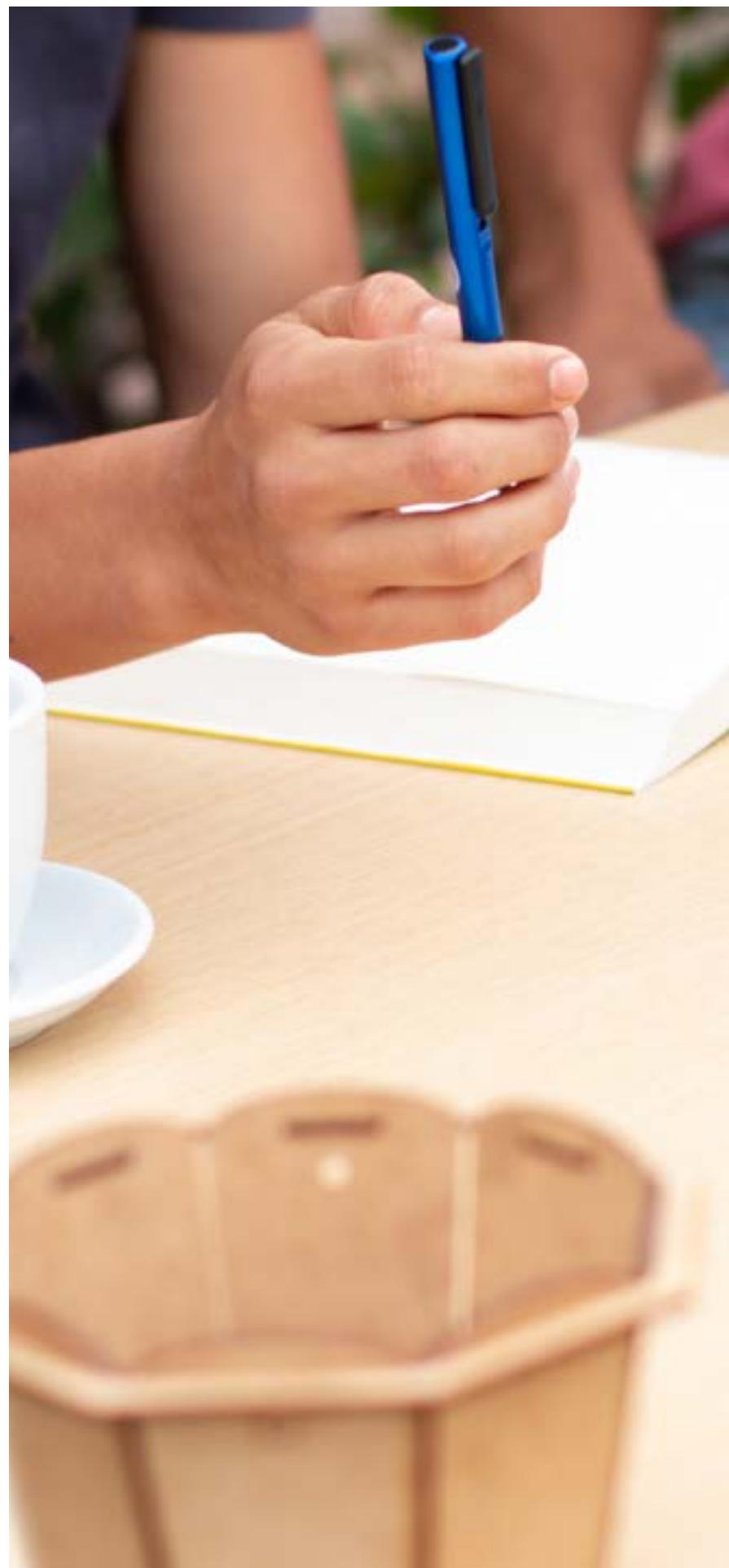
necting with each other as much as with readers—Webster mentions engaging with other writers “through social media, conferences, and writing groups.” Crowdfunding campaigns not only generate funds but also transform readers into stakeholders who champion a project long before its release. In this way, publishing is no longer a solitary act but a collaborative relationship.

Professionalization is another marker of how far the industry has come. Readers expect indie books to look and feel indistinguishable from those published by the big publishers. “Never skimp out on hiring a good editor and cover designer,” Webster says. Covers are expected to be polished, editing to be professionally done, and branding to be consistent. The bar has risen, and serious authors meet it not only because they must but because they respect their work enough to do so. This rising professionalism has had ripple effects, pushing traditional publishers to recognize the quality and staying power of indie-produced books.

Driving Further Change

Today, indie publishing is tied closely to the broader creator economy. Books are still at the center, but they are rarely the only product an indie author sells. A novel might be accompanied by a spin-off short story or serialized fiction on a subscription platform, behind-the-scenes content for patrons, conference appearances, or viral marketing clips that reach thousands of potential readers overnight. The indie author is now part of a larger creative ecosystem, building audience relationships across multiple channels and inviting readers to engage at varying depths.

Technology accelerates this reality. Algorithms can elevate an unknown author to viral success. Crowdfunding tools make it possible to launch a book with an audience already invested. Distribution platforms extend reach across borders, and advances in audio and digital tools put once-expensive formats within reach of the solo creator. Where access was once the primary challenge, now the challenge is visibility, strategy, and endurance.





Together, the creator economy and these technologies are dissolving the old lines between indie and traditional publishing, and broadening the boundaries of the publishing industry. Success is less about which path an author chooses and more about how they connect with readers, diversify income, and maintain control of their creative vision. To be indie now is to embrace entrepreneurship, adaptability, and experimentation.

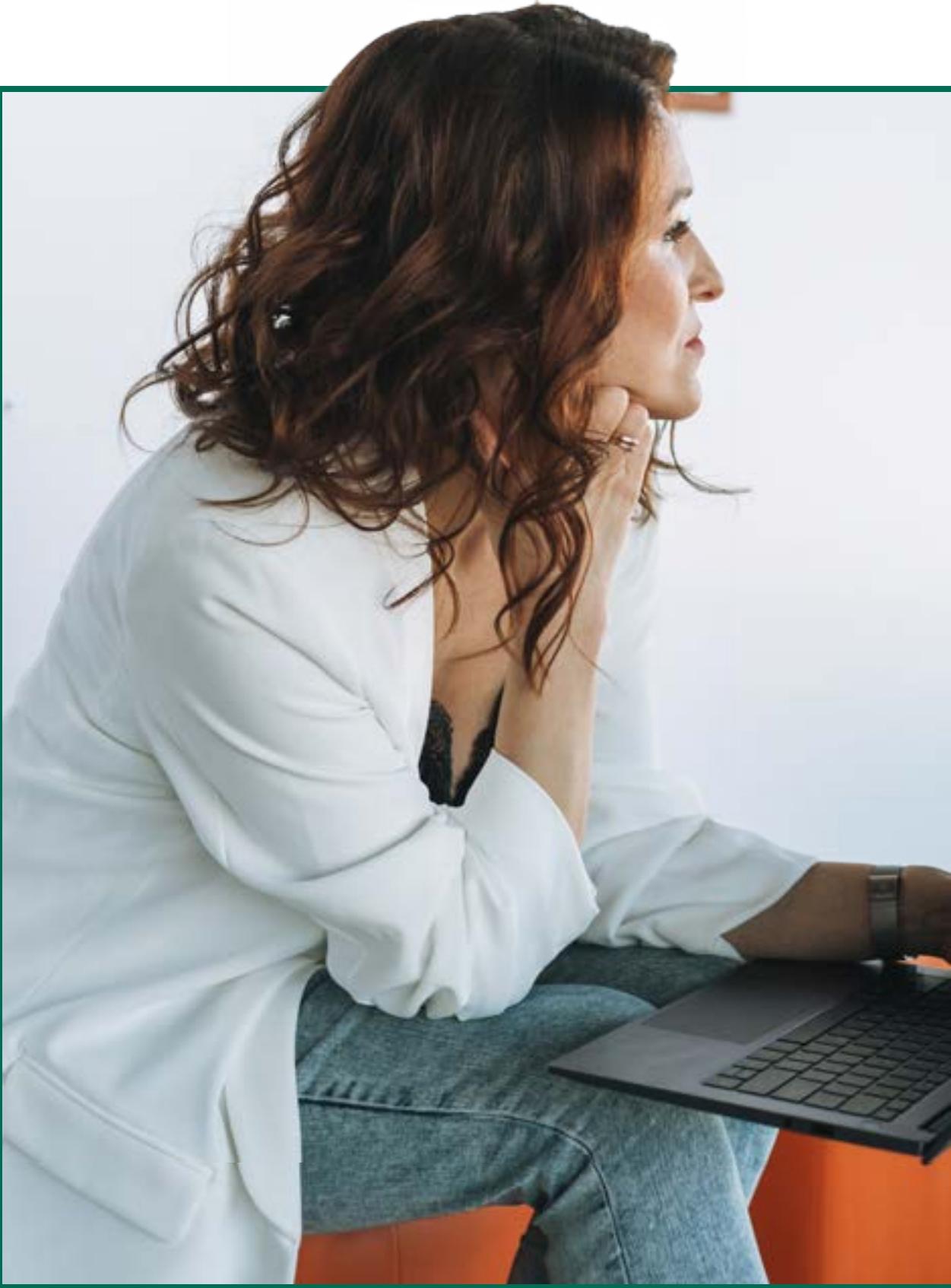
The next decade may bring even more change. As technology continues to evolve—through artificial intelligence, new distribution platforms, or immersive storytelling formats—indie authors will do as they have always done: forge a new path. The drive to create, to innovate, and to connect with readers wherever they are will ensure that indie authorship remains not just relevant but essential to the future of publishing. ■

Desiree Smith-Daughety (D. Lara Smith)



Desiree Smith-Daughety lives just a short paddle away from the Chesapeake Bay. She has been published in multiple publications, including Up.St.ART Annapolis magazine. Her home is in words and in the beauty and mystery of the natural world. She has published two nonfiction books.

You Hit 'Publish.' What's Next?



All the Lives Your Book Can Live After Publication

Publishing a book can feel like crossing the finish line. You worked hard, you made it through editing, and you hit that “publish” button. But here’s the truth many writers don’t expect: Publishing is not the end. It’s just the beginning of a new phase in your book’s journey.

Many authors focus so much on writing and launching their book that they forget what happens after it’s out in the world. But if you want your book to find more readers, gain reviews, and keep growing, you can’t just let it sit on the shelf and hope. You can give your book a second life through new formats, new audiences, and updates that make a big difference. Sometimes, a fresh cover or a new edition is all it takes to open new doors. Other times, it’s about reaching out to a new reader group or republishing your work in a different place to keep sales moving.

Keep the Buzz Going

It’s easy to think once your book is out in the world, it can take care of itself. Some authors believe that publishing the next book is the only way to promote, with the first book becoming a backlist option that relies on the sales of the second. Although it’s true that having more books helps, your first novel still deserves attention.

Books often sell best when readers see them more than once. Marketing’s “rule of seven” reminds authors that one post or ad is not enough; your audience must see your book many times before they’re likely to take action. That’s why a consistent, low-stress promotion is key. This doesn’t mean posting about your book every day. Instead, plant small seeds of interest with readers each month. Share a short quote from your book on social media, write a blog post about a theme in your story, or join a podcast as a guest to talk about your writing process, about your favorite book genre, or about yourself as an author.

You can celebrate little milestones, such as when your book gets its twenty-fifth or hundredth review, or on the anniversary of its launch. These are great opportunities to remind your audience that your book is out there or, even better, to connect with new readers who may not have seen it the first time around.

If you’re just starting with marketing, don’t try everything at once. Choose one method, and do it well. Once it feels comfortable, you can add something else. A slow and steady approach will help you keep going without getting overwhelmed.

Pro Tip: Set up a twelve-month content calendar the week after your book launches. Plan just one small activity per month, like a post, interview, or giveaway. It’s enough to keep your book visible, and it gives you something to build on. Consistency is more important than doing everything at once.

Explore New Formats and Mediums

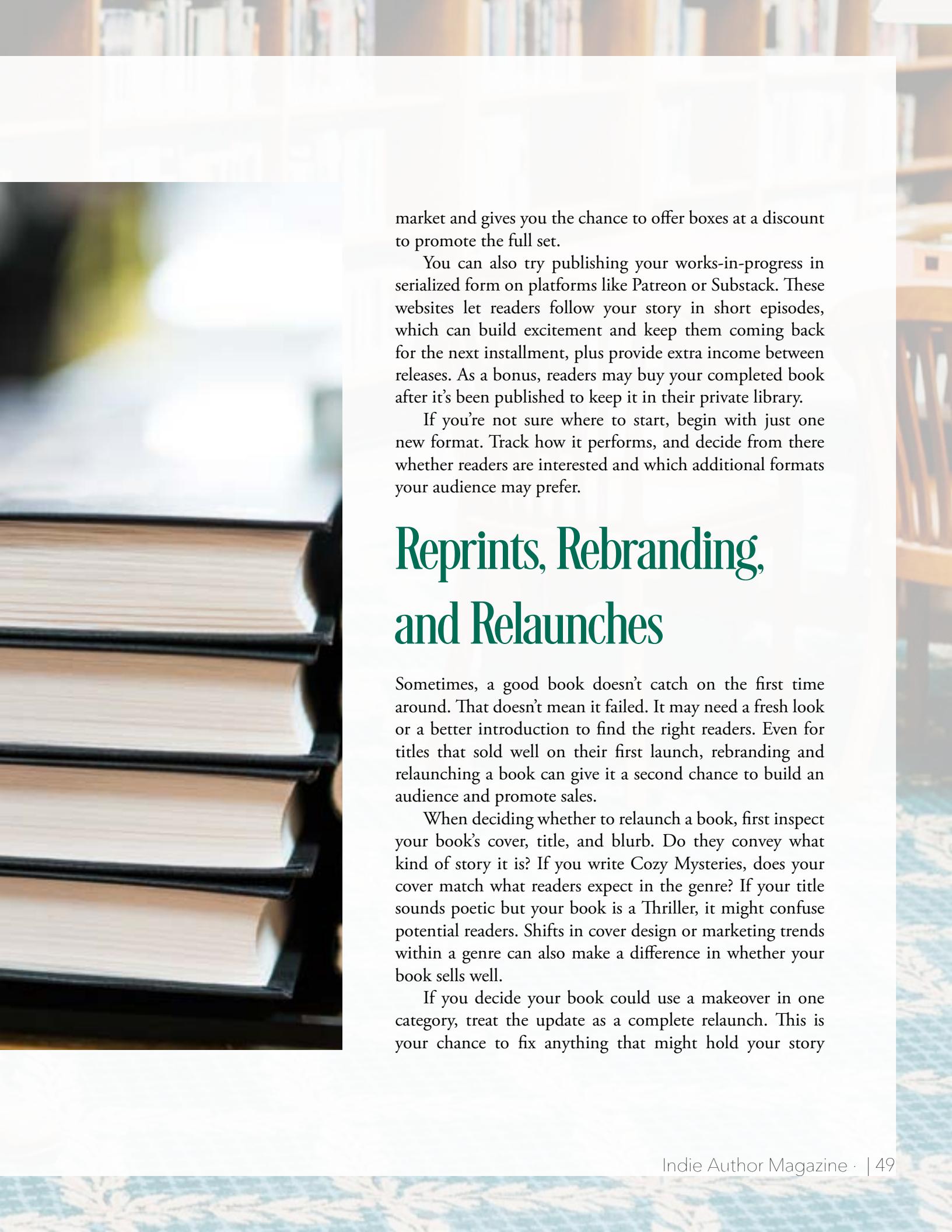
Online publishing platforms, such as Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP), Draft2Digital, or Lulu, give authors a range of options for publishing their books in either ebook or paperback formats. But readers have different preferences. Some enjoy listening to audiobooks while commuting. Others may need large print for easier reading. By offering your book in more than one format, you make it easier for readers to discover and enjoy your work.

Audiobooks are becoming more popular every year. A survey released by the Audiobook Publishers Association shows that audiobook sales grew by 13 percent in 2024, with 99 percent of the revenues generated by digital audiobooks. You can record your book yourself if you have the right setup or hire a narrator to bring your story to life. Audiobooks can also help you reach a different audience, especially those who are too busy to sit down and read.

Creating a large-print edition can be helpful for older readers or those with vision issues. The setup is simple and often very similar to that used for other print versions. To get a large print book template, download a standard book template from a self-publishing service like Lulu, KDP, or BookBaby, then increase the font size to size 18. You may also need to select a larger trim size, as larger fonts can significantly increase page count, which affects pricing and maximum book specifications.

If you've written a complete series, bundling your ebooks into an omnibus is another smart move. This encourages readers to buy more than one book at a time and can help you run special promotions. Some readers prefer box sets or to buy a group of books of a similar genre together to save overall. Having an omnibus available helps you capture that





market and gives you the chance to offer boxes at a discount to promote the full set.

You can also try publishing your works-in-progress in serialized form on platforms like Patreon or Substack. These websites let readers follow your story in short episodes, which can build excitement and keep them coming back for the next installment, plus provide extra income between releases. As a bonus, readers may buy your completed book after it's been published to keep it in their private library.

If you're not sure where to start, begin with just one new format. Track how it performs, and decide from there whether readers are interested and which additional formats your audience may prefer.

Reprints, Rebranding, and Relaunches

Sometimes, a good book doesn't catch on the first time around. That doesn't mean it failed. It may need a fresh look or a better introduction to find the right readers. Even for titles that sold well on their first launch, rebranding and relaunching a book can give it a second chance to build an audience and promote sales.

When deciding whether to relaunch a book, first inspect your book's cover, title, and blurb. Do they convey what kind of story it is? If you write Cozy Mysteries, does your cover match what readers expect in the genre? If your title sounds poetic but your book is a Thriller, it might confuse potential readers. Shifts in cover design or marketing trends within a genre can also make a difference in whether your book sells well.

If you decide your book could use a makeover in one category, treat the update as a complete relaunch. This is your chance to fix anything that might hold your story

back. Maybe you've gotten reader feedback that your blurb is confusing. Maybe the cover art looks dated or doesn't match the genre anymore. Perhaps you would like to make minor changes to the text. Consider each piece of your book closely to decide whether it's still the best way to present your book to audiences.

A relaunch often works best when paired with a goal. Do you want more reviews? Do you want to reach a new group of readers? Plan your book's relaunch with this in mind, and promote it with all the excitement and energy you would a new title. Consider planning a small event around it, like a social media campaign or a free book giveaway. That way, your relaunch has a reason to get people's attention. Readers will still get excited about a book that feels new or is new to them, even if the first edition is a few years old.

Pro Tip: If your book hasn't gained traction after a year, line it up next to the top ten sellers in your genre. Ask yourself whether your book looks like it belongs with the other books in the genre. If it doesn't, it may be time for an update to help it stand out but still fit in.

New Markets, New Audiences

Your book doesn't have to stay in one place. There are many ways to introduce your work to new readers, even long after it's been published.

Some literary magazines, online journals, and anthologies accept published work. This is a chance to give a scene, chapter, or short story from your book a second life and put it in front of a new audience. Be sure to check the rights you hold. If you're self-published, you have full control and can reprint at will. If you've worked with a publisher, check your contract to find out whether you can publish excerpts with other outlets.



Pro Tip: I prefer to use Medium as a platform for reprints. If you qualify as a partner, you can earn money on your reprinted work by the view, but even if you don't qualify, you can still share your work and place a link to your book at no cost.

If your book has appeal in other cultures, you may have an opportunity to sell the foreign rights for a translated version. You can research foreign publishers or work with an agent who specializes in rights sales. Another option is to hire a translator and publish the foreign language editions as an indie author. Book distributors such as Draft2Digital can easily distribute your translated book to markets all over the world.

Pro Tip: Do not rely on automated translations; hire a human translator who understands the nuances of the language you wish to target. Otherwise, you risk having inadvertent meanings or mistranslations crop into your work. The additional steps can take time and add to your expenses, but the extra care you take allows you to open the door to new income and new fans with confidence.

You can also reach new audiences for your books by utilizing your smaller writing projects. If you write poetry or short stories on the side, you can use those to lead readers back to your book. Publishing in themed anthologies or popular

blogs gives you more exposure and builds your name in different circles. Add information about your other titles to your byline to let new readers know where they can find more of your work.

Pro Tip: Start small by submitting a short story, poem, or book excerpt to a magazine that accepts reprints. Use tools like Duotrope or Submission Grinder to find matches. Every new publication can guide fresh readers back to your principal work, one piece at a time.

Your Book Still Matters

Not every book takes off the moment it's published. That does not mean your story failed. Sometimes it just needs more time or the right reader to discover it.

Publishing is an ongoing relationship between you, your work, and the people for whom it was written. It's okay to return to a book months or even years later to improve it, relaunch it, or introduce it to a new audience. Your book can grow with you, and you can grow with your book. The most important thing you can do as an author is to stay open to new opportunities and remember your book still matters. ■



Wendy Van Camp

Wendy Van Camp, Anaheim's Poet Laureate Emerita, is a dynamic voice in speculative poetry, blending cutting-edge technology, astronomy, and daydreams. Her talent has earned her nominations for the Elgin Award, Pushcart Prize, and Dwarf Stars Award. Wendy's poems, stories, and articles grace journals worldwide such as "Star*Line," "Scifaikuest," and "San Diego Poetry Annual." You can hear Wendy as a rotating radio host of "Poets Cafe" on KPFK 90.7 FM Los Angeles or on her own audio podcast "No Wasted Ink Ramblecast." As a member of SFWA, SFPA, and IBPA, Wendy is a passionate advocate for the speculative community. Her debut poetry collection, "The Planets," was nominated for the Elgin Award. Discover more at wendyvancamp.com.

Authoring, Automated

Automation Workflows Give Authors More Time, More Space for Creativity

For many indie authors, running a publishing business can feel like an endless list of microtasks that quietly eat away at creative time. There's the writing, editing, and publishing, but there's also the marketing, social media posts, newsletters, and email management.

That's where automation steps in. In its simplest form, automation means setting up rules, templates, or workflows that manage repeatable tasks without constant hands-on effort. You don't need technical skills to benefit from automation, and it doesn't have to start with artificial intelligence. Many of the tools authors already use—like email platforms, content schedulers, and even Google Drive—have built-in automation features that can save hours each month.

Last year, when our team at *Indie Author Magazine* would produce an issue, we would spend five days on post-production work alone—formatting articles, uploading them to the site, queuing emails, and double-checking links. Exploring automation helped us cut that multiday process down to two or three hours. We didn't reinvent the wheel; we simply let the tools do their jobs better.

In this article, we'll explore the types of automation useful for authors, the tools to consider, and most importantly, how to identify the tasks in your workflow that are worth automating.

Start with the Problem, Not the Tool

Before you dive into new software, take a step back. Automation isn't meant to be tech for tech's sake—to be successful, it requires carefully choosing tools and platforms that can help solve specific problems. Otherwise, you risk setting up a fancy system you don't actually need.

The first step is to identify what isn't working in your current workflow. Do you forget to post consistently on social media? Do you dread formatting your newsletter every week? Are you constantly searching for the same files or copying and pasting the same email responses? These are pain points, and they are the best candidates for automation.

A few examples of common author pain points that automation can address are

- manually scheduling the same promotional posts for each platform,
- sending a welcome email to every new subscriber,
- backing up files to cloud storage, or
- tracking editorial timelines and reminding collaborators of deadlines.

When you identify these bottlenecks, you'll find opportunities to streamline. Then—and only then—is it time to look at what tool might help you automate that task.

Pro Tip:

Rather than starting with, “What can I automate?” start with, “What do I keep doing over and over?” or “What’s eating up my time that doesn’t really need my brain involved?” This reframes automation as a solution, not a novelty.



What Can You Automate?

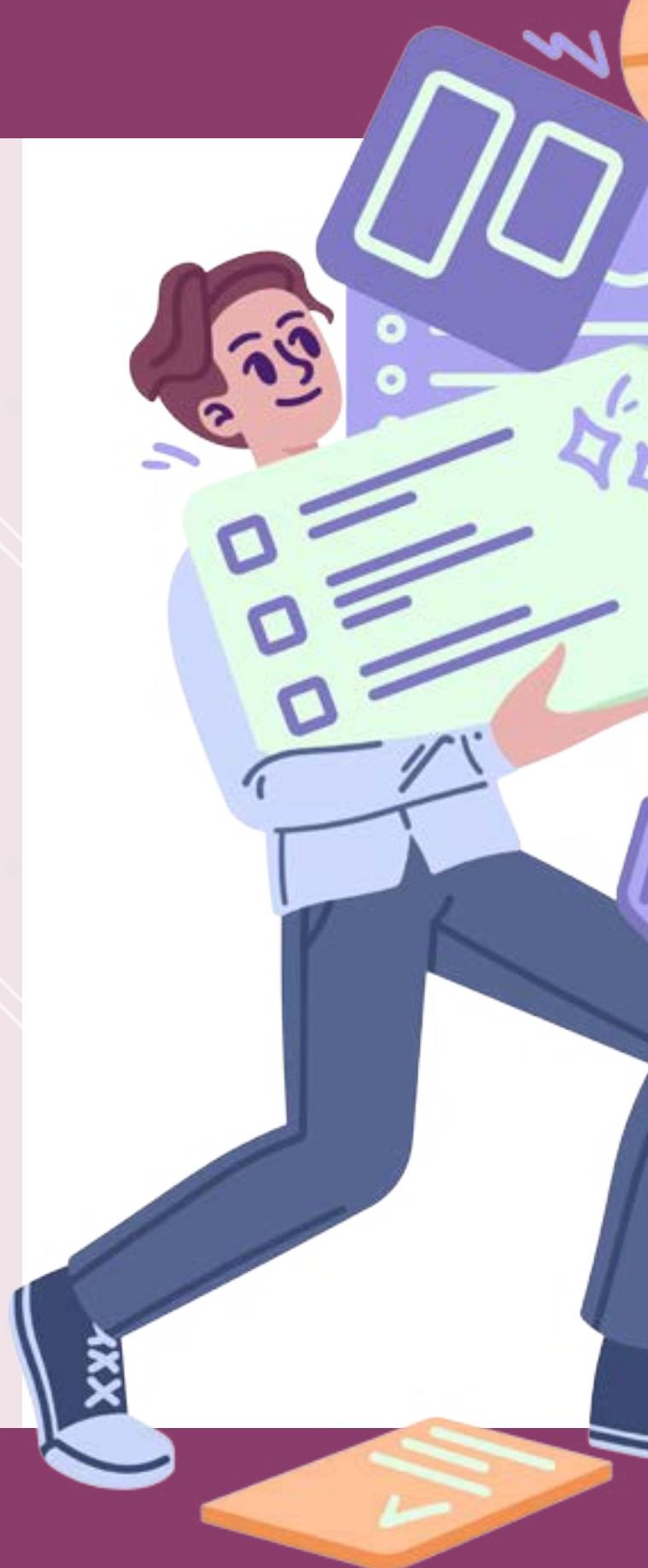
In theory, anything can be automated. If a task is repeatable, happens on a schedule, or follows a predictable set of steps, there's probably a way to streamline it.

But the better question is: What should be automated?

For authors, automation works best when it supports their business and creative goals without removing the personal touch their readers value. Look for high-effort, low-creativity tasks—the things you have to do but don't necessarily need to do manually. If a task doesn't require your creative brain, it might be a candidate for automation.

Here are a few examples that make sense for most indie authors:

- **Email newsletters:** Many email platforms can pull content from your blog's RSS feed and turn it into a formatted email. Write once; publish twice.
- **Social media scheduling:** Tools like Buffer, Later, or Metricool let you pre-schedule posts across platforms, often with reusable templates and analytics.
- **File backups:** Set up automation to save your Scrivener or Word drafts to Dropbox or Google Drive every time you hit save—or on a regular schedule you set.
- **Task creation:** When you finish one step in your publishing process, such as uploading your manuscript, automation can trigger the next task on your list, such as notifying your ARC team.
- **Reader onboarding:** Automatically tag new subscribers based on how they joined your list, and send a welcome sequence tailored to their interests.





Automation without AI: Rules, Templates, and Triggers

People often think automation has to involve artificial intelligence or machine learning. But some of the most effective automations don't require AI at all.

At its core, automation is about creating rules that follow a specific structure: When this happens, do that. These rules are built around triggers—the starting event—and actions—what you want to happen next. If you've ever set up a vacation responder or used a calendar invite template, congratulations—you're already automating without AI.

Authors already use non-AI automations every day to complete a variety of tasks.

- Rules in Gmail auto-label, archive, or forward emails from editors or beta readers.
- Calendar automations send reminders before deadlines or automatically block out writing time each week.
- Templates in tools like Notion or Trello create a full checklist every time you start a new book project.
- Airtable forms collect blurbs or testimonials and immediately organize them into a sortable database.

These types of automations don't try to guess what you want; they just follow instructions you set, which makes them more predictable and often more reliable than their AI counterparts.

The Bridges of Automation

Plenty of apps authors use, such as Google Docs, MailerLite, Notion, or Instagram, weren't designed to talk to one another. To simplify tasks that cross platforms, automation platforms can act as bridges between tools that otherwise wouldn't connect. Zapier and Make are two common platforms, and each has specific use cases in which it works best.

Make.com: Visual, Powerful, and Great for Complex Systems

Make, formerly Integromat, uses a visual editor that looks like a flowchart, which can be helpful if you're managing more intricate workflows. Unlike Zapier, Make can handle branches, loops, and multiple conditions—ideal for authors running multiplatform marketing or managing multiple pen names.

An automation on Make may look like this: You publish a new blog post, and Make formats the post for your newsletter, schedules social posts for different platforms, adds it to a “published content” archive in Airtable, and creates a follow-up task to repurpose the content later.

Pricing for Make is determined by the number of operations the user's automations complete. As of August 27, each operation costs users “credits” based on the complexity of the task. Free accounts receive up to one thousand credits per month, and paid tiers, which start at \$9 per month, offer ten thousand credits per month, along with other features.

Zapier: Simple, Linear, and Author Friendly

Zapier uses a structure called a “Zap,” which follows the same basic trigger-and-action logic. It's designed to be easy to use, even if you've never built a workflow before.

Authors can use Zapier to automate a number of different tasks. When someone fills out your contact form, for example, Zapier can trigger automations to add the new information to a Google Sheet, send you a Slack or email notification, and trigger a welcome email from your newsletter platform. When you publish a new blog post, you can trigger a chain of Zaps to share the post automatically to Facebook or X, add the post to your newsletter draft via MailerLite or ConvertKit, and create a task in Notion to promote it.

Zapier's free plan offers two-step automations. Paid tiers, which start at \$19.99 per month for the Pro plan, unlock multi-step workflows, filters, delays, and more complex logic.

Which Platform Should You Use?

Zapier works best for authors who want something simple that's quick to set up and has support for common tools. Make works best for those who need more control, manage a lot of moving pieces, or enjoy visual planning.

Both offer free plans and have growing libraries of templates to get started.

Case Study: Automating Magazine Publication

Last year, as *Indie Author Magazine* grew, the complexity of publishing each issue grew with it. The process involved manually formatting articles, uploading them to the website, organizing images, preparing newsletters, and coordinating promotional content. Each step required multiple handoffs, and completing it all took five full days of work per issue.

To solve this, we examined each task to identify which parts followed a consistent pattern and could be streamlined. Once we recognized the recurring steps, we implemented automation across the workflow.

Now, everything begins in Airtable. When an article's status is changed to "Ready to Publish," a chain of automations begins. The article is pulled from Google Docs, and its content is used to generate formatted versions for our website and mobile app, complete with categories and author bylines. At the same time, automation tools generate a full month's worth of social media content from the article, including copy, links, calls-to-action, and images.

We do not use AI-generated imagery, but we have automated the process of sourcing stock photography from Pexels to accompany social posts when necessary. These images are pulled based on relevant keywords from the article and paired with the appropriate platform formats. Our newsletter platform receives the content as well, and the issue's highlights are compiled and queued for scheduled email delivery.

Zapier plays a key role in coordinating systems, syncing updates across platforms, notifying team members, and maintaining task visibility at every stage of production.

By automating this workflow, we reduced the publication process from five days to just two or three hours. The creative work—writing, editing, and design—still requires human attention, but the logistical burden has been reduced. This allows the team to focus on quality while the systems handle the repetition.



Keep the Human Touch

Although automation can save time and reduce busywork, not every task should be handed off to a system. Tasks that involve personal expression, decision-making, or direct reader interaction are better left untouched by automation. Writing your newsletter, for example, may benefit from a scheduled send time or automated formatting, but the content itself should still come from you. Readers want to hear your voice, not a generic template.

The same applies to social media. Automating your posts is a smart way to stay consistent, but it's important to monitor comments, reply to messages, and stay present in the conversation. Scheduling a month of content does not replace the value of real-time engagement.

As a general rule, consider automating tasks that are administrative, repetitive, or time-sensitive—but keep a manual touch on anything that builds trust, expresses your personality, or invites interaction. Automation is a support tool, not a replacement for authentic connection.

Getting Started

If automation feels intimidating, the good news is you don't have to overhaul your entire system overnight. Start small, with one task that takes up more time than it should. Once you see the results, it becomes easier to spot other areas you can streamline.

Here's a simple way to get started:

- **Pick one task you repeat often.** This could be sending a welcome email, backing up files, or sharing your blog post on social media.
- **Map out the steps.** Write down what you do manually, in order. This helps you see where automation can take over.
- **Check your existing tools.** Automation features may already be built into the programs. Email services, project managers, and even Google Workspace offer triggers and workflows that don't require extra software.
- **Try a no-code platform.** Explore beginner-friendly tools like Zapier or Make. Both offer free plans and templates to help you get started.
- **Test before scaling.** Run a few trials to make sure your automation works as expected. Once it does, you can expand the system or build others.

For more guidance and advice on creating automations in your author workflow, visit AuthorAutomations.com and subscribe to the weekly newsletter. Author Automations is a sister site to *Indie Author Magazine*.

Automation doesn't require technical skills—just a willingness to improve your systems one step at a time.

Pro Tip:

Popular starting points for authors include connecting blog posts to your newsletter, automatically saving writing drafts to cloud storage, scheduling recurring social media posts, or creating to-do lists for new book projects.

The Empowered Author

Automation isn't about replacing your creativity—it's about protecting it. By offloading routine, repetitive tasks, you create more space for the work that truly matters: writing books, connecting with readers, and building a sustainable author business.

You don't need to become a tech expert to benefit. With the right mindset and a few simple tools, you can start small and build systems that work for you, not the other way around. In the end, automation is about doing less of what drains your time—so you can do more of what you love. ■



Chelle Honiker

Chelle Honiker is an advocate for the empowerment of authorpreneurs, recognizing the importance of authors taking charge of both their craft and careers. In response to this need, she has founded a media and training company dedicated to supporting these creative professionals. As the co-founder and publisher of Indie Author Magazine, IndieAuthorTraining, Indie Author Tools, and Direct2Readers.com, Chelle's team of more than 80 writers, editors, trainers, and support staff provides resources

and insights that help authors navigate the complexities of self-publishing. Her role as the programming director for Author Nation, an annual conference in Las Vegas, further exemplifies her commitment to fostering a community where authors can grow and succeed. With a career spanning over two decades in executive operations and leadership, Chelle has honed her skills in managing complex projects and delivering impactful training programs. Her experience as a speaker and TEDx Organizer has taken her to many countries, where she has shared her insights with diverse audiences.

Author Booths 101

Authors at Reader Events Stand up and Stand out to Sell More Books

For authors who enjoy connecting with readers in person—making a sale, signing a book, and sharing the story behind the story—author-hosted booths at a reader event or conference can be a thrill. They can also provide a boost to your business, giving you a chance to speak directly to target audiences and spark more sales for both your front-list and backlist titles. But hosting an author booth requires planning and preparation in order to truly succeed.

Before I became an author, I spent two decades producing technology trade shows and conferences—and though it was a different field than publishing, the face-to-face sales skills I learned have carried into the book world at in-person events and conferences. When I became president of the Writers & Publishers Network (WPN) in 2014, the group had long participated in *The Los Angeles Times* Festival of Books with a small booth. Authors typically had two-hour time slots, just like many other groups at the event. But when the festival moved from the University of California—Los Angeles (UCLA) to the University of Southern California (USC) in 2016—making the layout more walkable and visitor-friendly—we expanded the booth to give authors an entire day to sell.



Roselyn Teukolsky with her simple but effective table display.

Why the Change?

Many authors are intimidated by the idea of pitching their work or have little experience in sales. It can take time—and space—to get comfortable. And with more than one hundred fifty thousand book lovers attending the festival, the opportunity it presents for attracting new readers is huge.

The first year at USC, I observed everything. The authors who stood in front of their tables, smiled, and engaged passersby made

sales. Those who sat behind the table all day, barely making eye contact? Not so much.

Selling your book doesn't require you to be pushy, but it does ask you to share your passion. If you're proud of your work—and willing to tell people why—it shows. If you're not excited, why should anyone else be?

The same could be said about authors' table displays. Posters, decorations, and any other materials need to be eye-catching enough to stand out from the other booths in the area, but they also should match the genre and tone of your work in order to pull in the right readers. Finding a balance between an effective use of space and overcrowding your displays is a must.

After a decade of refining this approach, I've watched hundreds of authors go from hesitant to confident—and from sitting to selling.

The Display: Less Clutter, More Impact

Fine-tuning your physical display can make the difference in being stood up or standing out at an author event. Your table should feel welcoming, not overwhelming. To start, consider including these elements to fill out your display.

Pro Tip:

Don't build a wall of books" and sit behind it. That's intimidating and acts as a barrier. Plus, it signals to readers that no one is buying them. Keep the table open and friendly. Remember, readers may be shy, too, and they come to meet authors, not stare at piles of unsold stock.

Books: Have no more than six or seven copies of the primary book you are selling visible. If you have backlist titles, keep only three of each on the table. Display one upright in a stand, and keep extras under the table to replenish as needed—this subtly signals to customers that your books are selling.

Table sign: Include a table sign with your cover image, a brief description, standout reviews, and award icons. Add a QR code for your ebook and/or website. If you're building a mailing list, include a sign-up sheet. If you have multiple books, highlight the newest, and add the others with cover images in the lower half of the sign.

Handouts: Stick to compact formats, such as bookmarks or postcards—avoid full-size flyers. Make these eye-catching and easy to slip into a purse; even if a reader doesn't buy your book now, this increases the chance they'll look it up when they get home.



Candy bowl: Yes, really. A small treat can pull customers in and start a conversation. Offer some to those who linger.

Retractable banner: Invest in a tall retractable banner—at least seventy-eight inches. Think of this as a beacon: It can be seen from over one hundred feet away and can echo the key info from your table sign, including title, genre, cover, reviews, and QR code to your ebook. This type of visibility attracts curious readers, and most online printers offer these for under \$100.



Approaching People: Start the Conversation

Here's the hard truth: No matter how attention-grabbing your table is, most people will walk right by your display if you don't engage. It doesn't take much, and in many cases, you can follow a simple script to get the conversation started. Smile. Say hello. Ask a simple question, like whether they like to read your genre. This immediately invites the right readers.

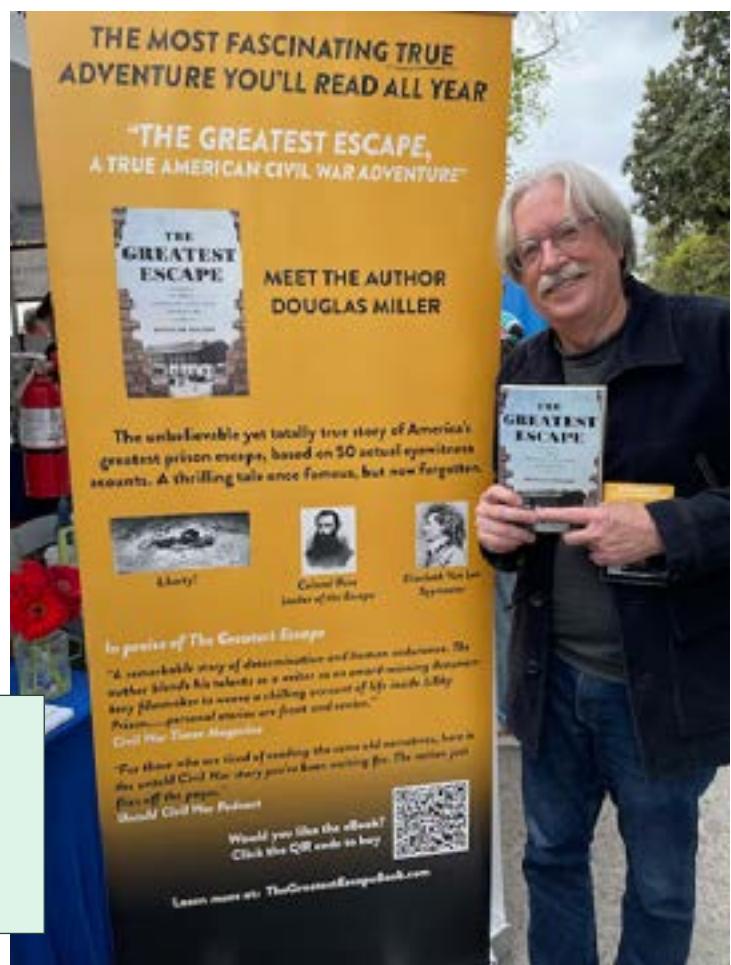
From there, ask what authors they enjoy. If their taste aligns with your book, tell them they're in luck. If not, hand them a copy and say, "Well, you might like my book" anyway. As they look it over or read the back, deliver your fifteen- to twenty-second pitch. Don't memorize the blurb; this is your chance to offer some extra detail that may spark their interest. As the day unfolds, notice what resonates with people, and adjust your pitch accordingly.

Debut author Roselyn Teukolsky put this into practice at her first WPN event. "I asked if they liked mysteries or thrillers," Teukolsky writes. "When someone said yes, I handed the book to her. 'Read the back cover,' I said, 'and page through it.' The matte cover, the feel of 350 pages—it all mattered. She stroked the cover, tentatively flipped pages, and then said, 'I'll take it.' That day I sold 39 books, even though it rained all morning."

"This is a rare chance to meet actual readers," writes Peter Blaisdell, another WPN author. "Don't be a wallflower. Invite people to explore your books. Sure, some won't respond—but some will. Those are potential lifelong readers."

Top: RosaLinda Diaz with a table displaying two different titles.

Right: Douglas Miller, with his retractable sign, displays all the correct information.



The Formula for Booth Success

Create an attractive, uncluttered display.

Include upright books, a brief sign with essential info, a few handouts, and a tall retractable banner.

Greet and engage.

Smile. Ask genre-related opening questions. Offer the book to hold. Adjust your pitch based on feedback.

Be present, not hidden.

Stand; don't sit behind a fortress of books. Show enthusiasm. Listen. Let your passion for your work shine. If mobility is a problem, have your display on one side of the table, and sit with nothing in front of you. Say hello to everyone who stops to look or ask what type of books they like to read.

Take notes and learn.

Every interaction is a data point. What questions do people ask? What parts of your pitch light them up? Use this to improve your next interaction with a reader, your next event—and your next book.

Final Word

Selling books in person is a celebration of your work and your best chance to meet readers who might become lifelong fans. "Greet everyone," writes Lisa Diane Kastner, founder of Running Wild Press. "Give away postcards featuring your books. Slip them into every book you sell. Ask attendees what stories excite them. They're here because they love books—so talk to them."

Show up. Smile. Speak with heart. And whatever you do, don't hide behind your books.

People won't bite—promise. ■



Kathleen Kaiser

Kathleen Kaiser's five-decade career spans music, technology, and the arts. She began her career as a rock journalist in the late 1960s, later transitioning into PR and into tech during the digital revolution. Today, she is President of the Writers & Publishers Network, a national literary nonprofit. Kathleen is the author of five books—four on the music industry, plus a novel and a collection of plays. Her writing has appeared in publications across the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, and Italy, as well as regional Southern California publications. A sought-after speaker and producer of writing events, she creates educational webinars and co-hosts the podcast Talking Book Publishing with poet and book marketer Adanna Moriarty. She is the co-founder of ProBookLaunch.com, a book marketing assistant. Learn more at KathleenKaiser.com



HistRom Authors Stay Afloat by Keeping an Open Mind

Writers of the Genre Navigate a Decline in Historical Romance Readership

Romance is often praised as the backbone of book publishing.

In 2009, *Publishers Weekly* deemed the Romance genre recession-proof. The same outlet reported in 2024 that Romance and Romantasy pushed print sales into the positive. In June, the Circana mid-year report said the volume for Romance books has more than doubled compared with four years ago. Screen adaptations, books flying off the shelves, and stores dedicated solely to Romance—the appetite for Romance is seemingly unending. Unlike Dark Romance, Sports Romance, and Romantasy, however, one subset of the Romance genre is seeing a decline in readership.

Even with fans eager to devour TV adaptations of Historical Romance titles such as Netflix's *Bridgerton* or spin-offs like *Outlander: Blood of my Blood*, Historical Romance, also known as HistRom, is not experiencing the same steady rise in readership as other Romance subgenres, according to authors who write it.

Data collected by Elizabeth Held, co-host of *Really Reading Romance*, found that just seven of more than eighty Romances acquired by leading publishers in 2024 were Historicals. She connected the data to statements from popular traditional publishing authors Harper St. George, Liana De La Rosa, and Elizabeth Everett announcing their respective publishers' refusal to accept additional Historical Romances.

The decline has reached independently published authors, too. HistRom author Celeste Barclay says that after COVID-19, she noticed a drop in the number of older longtime readers picking up books in the genre, and the numbers haven't bounced back. Authors need to tackle marketing to a younger audience; the trouble, Barclay says, is the stigma attached to the genre. "There's sort of this assumption that all they're going to get is women as chattel, misogyny, patriarchy, and bodice rippers," Barclay says. "They're not realizing that there's an entire generation of authors writing what they want because that is what we want."

Susie Dumond, a senior contributor at Book Riot and bookseller at Loyalty Books in Washington, DC, says she's noticed fewer customers asking for historicals.

A Romance reader herself, Dumond is drawn to diverse storytelling. With Historical Romance heavily associated with Regency England, however, she says the books often pigeonhole instead of exploring other eras and regions of the world.

"Even if authors are trying to do things to subvert it, especially if they're just not confronting it at all, I can't really put that aside in my head when I'm reading it," Dumond says. "It's hard for me to relax into the story. I would rather them confront the realities of the time period."

Andrea Martucci on her Substack, Shelf Love, published a blog post exploring the conflict between historicals and inconvenient truths. She writes that the reshaping of the Regency period by Historical Romance fans is disingenuous. The sanitization of the Regency period shields readers from the truth of how closely colonialism, capitalism, and white supremacy enable the lifestyles of the dukes, earls, and barons the heroine inevitably falls for.

"Regency England as presented in a romance, via collective and evolving world-building across romance texts, is a colonial project that displaces the original inconvenient histories by occupying the space with sanitized fantasies that can be exploited for modern audiences' comfort," Martucci writes. She states that Regencies focus on gender inequality as a substitute for an intersectional understanding of oppression.

"So many suffragettes, so few abolitionists," she writes.

Despite the criticism of the genre, there are voices in Historical Romance centering BIPOC and LGBTQ+ stories. Author Beverly Jenkins is known for historical Black Romances. Her books create space for Black joy instead of reducing the Black experience to enslavement. Meanwhile, Abigail Aaronson debuted *Lavender & Gin: A Sapphic Historical Romance* in July. In the Prohibition-era Romance, the period-typical homophobia doesn't overshadow a thriving queer community.



 There's sort of this assumption that all they're going to get is women as chattel, misogyny, patriarchy, and bodice rippers. They're not realizing that there's an entire generation of authors writing what they want because that is what we want.

— Celeste Barclay
HistRom author



Bringing Readers Back

To strengthen her Historical Romance readership, Barclay plans on marketing her Historicals to her Mafia Romance fans. Cross-pollinating her genres by reminding them of her author alter egos will mean posting more shortform content to entice readers from other Romance subgenres—"changing the aesthetic of my posts to move them toward what you see on the contemporary side," she says.

"I do write very steamy Historicals, so they do lend themselves to the same sorts of tones as my Mafia," Barclay says.

Dumond theorizes readers were embarrassed reading in public when the book cover art aligned with traditional Historical Romances. Readers and publishers prefer the illustrated cover art because it's tamer in a public setting. "The decline in Historical Romance is less about what readers want and more about what the book world thinks readers want and is pushing them towards other things," Dumond says. "I think if they packaged Historical Romances in a way that felt contemporary and fresh like that, that they would probably also do well."

Dumond encourages independent Historical Romance authors to rely on local bookstores. As

 The decline in Historical Romance is less about what readers want and more about what the book world thinks readers want and is pushing them towards other things.

— Susie Dumond
bookseller, Loyalty Books
(Washington, D.C.)



a bookseller, she is enthusiastic to recommend local authors to customers seeking to broaden their reading list.

Barclay advocates for Historical Romance authors to intentionally incorporate new periods and experiences into their writing. She is certain there will always be readers interested in Historical Romance as long as they're ready to seek historicals outside of the classics.

“Nowadays we have more information readily available, societal norms and expectations have changed, and authors are meeting that,” Barclay says. “It would be great if readers were more open minded to exploring Historical Romance with a copyright after 2000. Even if they see the nostalgia throwback covers, that doesn’t mean the stories are what their grandmothers and mothers read. The stories are what they want.” ■

Samantha Margot



Curious by trade, Samantha Margot is a passionate people-person with experience in the newsroom and behind the microscope. If she's not writing her latest story, Samantha can be found tending to her plants or using any excuse to ride her bike.



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Better than Competitive Intelligence



How Authors Can Expand Their Horizons Beyond the Publishing Industry for Golden Business Lessons

Although independent authors aren't all wired the same, it's often true that many of us revel in figuring out things on our own, from the craft of writing to the business of publishing and sales. We're fiercely independent, known for our readiness to take initiative and for being unafraid to take the path less traveled, even if that sometimes seems like the hard way.

But there's also immense value in learning from others: saving time, money, and effort, all while advancing more quickly. And the opportunities for learning don't only come from our fellow publishers, traditional or indie; they can also come from other industries and businesses.

Take any industry, and you'll find best practices that could be applied to your writing business, especially if you're trying something new or cutting-edge, like launching stories by mail or expanding your IP into a more physical, product-based business. Here are a few examples of where you can study other businesses' practices and adapt the lessons to your situation.

Foundational Learning:

Business Shows and Reality Television

This might be the least intuitive thing to do to improve your writing business, but in some ways, it's also the easiest. Pick a favorite business show, even if it seems like the industry portrayed has nothing to do with publishing, and take notes. For example, one of the most consistent lessons learned from the show *Bar Rescue* is the need for business owners to develop thorough, solid, easily reproducible systems for every single aspect of the business. Consider one lesson from each episode that you could apply to your work as a publisher. For example, have you developed an efficient and standardized system for writing your book? What about a system to prepare your book for publication?

Intermediate Learning:

Kickstarter Campaigns

Although many authors are already studying other Kickstarter campaigns in order to create their own, those campaigns don't need to be from the publishing category. Consider examining those in other categories, such as art, comics, or music. What elements are exciting backers and earning support? What unique tiers and rewards do they offer that you could apply to your own campaign?

Even if you don't apply what you learn directly to a crowdfunding campaign, you could apply it to many other means of selling. For example, consider early ordering bonuses for direct sales orders on your website, upgraded packages for readers who order signed copies, and share campaigns to build buzz for your launch.

Advanced Learning:

Digital Products

Digital products are already a staple in the online sales space, and their popularity keeps growing as more people share their creations and become adept at reaching their target audiences. Once you've overcome the biggest challenge here—resisting the temptation to abandon fiction writing and change your entire focus to creating your own journals, planners, and workbooks—you'll find there's so much to learn about leaning into your best-selling product and using it to draw your ideal readers into sales funnels. One of your titles can become a chance to upsell bundles, special editions, signed copies, swag, and more. This sector can also demonstrate how to use flash sales, usually offering a limited-time discount, to generate fast, liquid cash for your business when you need it most.

Applied Mastery:

Physical Products

Although selling physical products is not the same as selling books in a variety of formats, there's still a wealth of gold nuggets to mine from the way physical products are packaged, presented, and sold. Many authors are already learning from other creators at in-person sales events or from the sales successes of major brands, smaller brands, and independent artists and musicians. Examine their pricing, packaging, marketing, copywriting, and sales, or gather ideas for how you can expand the variety of title-related products available to your readers. Developing a successful IP-related product line can take significant time and dedication.



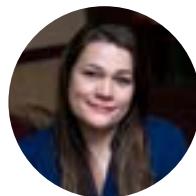
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Try Something New

Regardless of what you choose, take even a little time to study other sectors and find something to apply to your business as an author. You might be surprised how those lessons can be a catalyst for lasting, meaningful change in the results you see as an independent publisher. ■

Audrey Hughey



Audrey Hughey designs planners, writes fiction, and works diligently to help her fellow authors. Although she currently writes horror and thrillers, she's as eclectic in her writing tastes as in her reading. When she's not submerged in the worlds of fiction and nonfiction, she's caring for her family, enjoying nature, or finding more ways to bring a little more light into the world.

reedsy studio

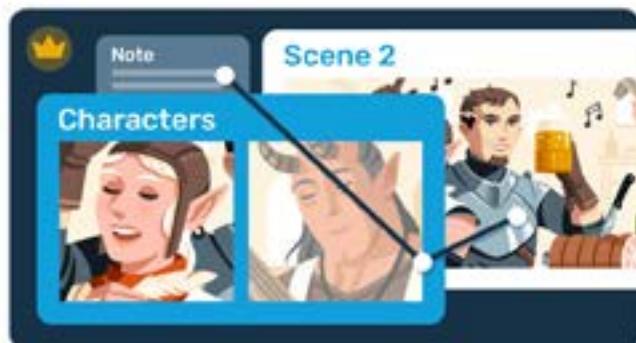
Every writer needs a Studio

A **FREE** place to plan, draft, edit,
and typeset your book

The Reedsy manuscript editing interface is shown. On the left, the sidebar includes 'Manuscript' (with an 'Add' button), 'Front matter' (with an 'edit' button), 'Copyright', 'Table of Contents' (with 'Drag chapters here'), 'Body' (with an 'edit' button), 'Chapter 1' (selected, with '1' and 'Edit' buttons), 'Back matter' (with an 'edit' button), and 'Drag chapters here'. The word count is 12,340 words. The 'reedsy' logo is at the bottom left. The main content area shows the chapter title 'Rocket Bride' with a checkmark icon, the chapter number '1', and the chapter title 'The Rehearsal D'. The text of the chapter is as follows:

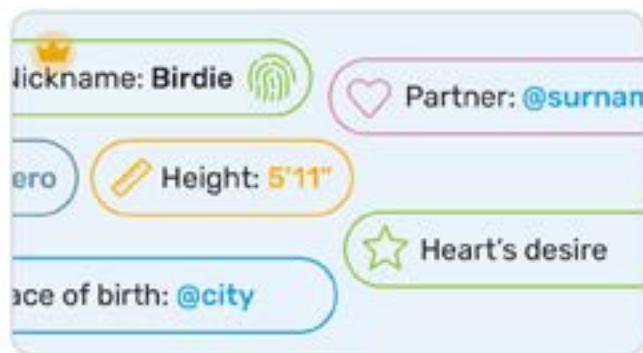
“Are you ready, Princess?” Bria placed the delicate silver crown “I don’t know.” Ximara pressed temples, just below where the ci bit of a headache. Maybe it’s the braids?”

Below the text is a toolbar with icons for bold (B), italic (I), underline (U), strikethrough (S), and other styling options. To the right of the text is a 'Goals & insights' sidebar. It shows a profile picture, a word count increase of +1000, and a total word count of 1123. It also shows a weekly progress bar from Saturday to Wednesday, with a green bar for Saturday and a grey bar for Sunday through Wednesday. The manuscript goal is 12,079 words, due by 30 Nov. A note says to write 1,117 words/day to finish on time. The bottom right shows a character list with 'Main characters' and three character cards: 'Princess Andromeda' (red hair), 'Aether Lefield' (elf-like), and 'Captain Perseus' (purple hair).



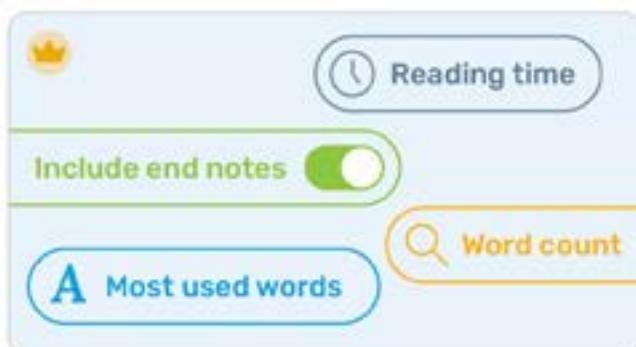
Unlimited boards

Get unlimited access and full customization of boards to plan your characters, plot, and more.



Unlimited attributes

Define important character attributes and link notes together with dynamic relationships.



Advanced stats

Unlock new insights into your writing to help you polish your prose.



Dark mode

For late-night inspiration and distraction-free writing.

Custom goals

Set daily or weekly goals to keep yourself motivated.



Export

Files ready for instant distribution to retailers, distributors, and POD services.

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