



INDIE AUTHOR MAGAZINE

**10 TIPS FOR
HOLIDAY
MARKETING**

**ONLINE WRITING
GROUP ROUND-UP**

*Which Digital
Writing Space Is
Right for You?*

**AI EMAIL SCAMS
TARGETS AUTHORS**

*How You Can
Protect Your
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**LOOKING AHEAD:
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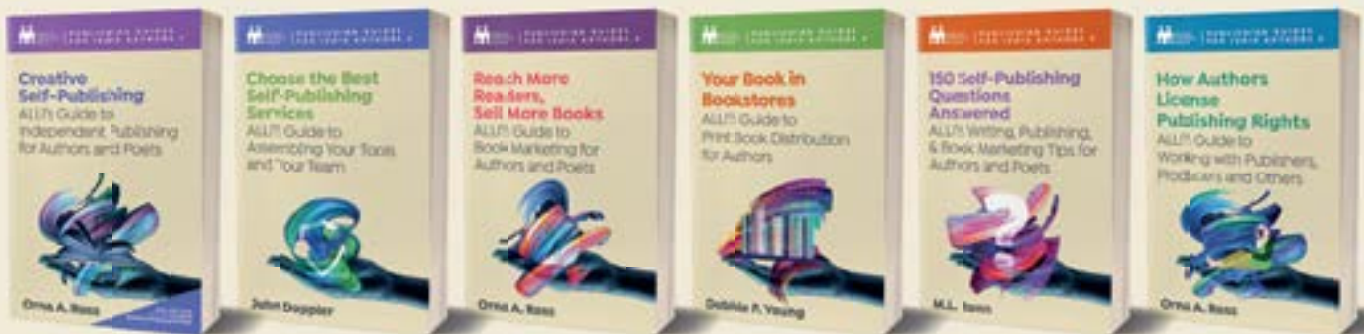
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ONLINE WRITING COMMUNITY
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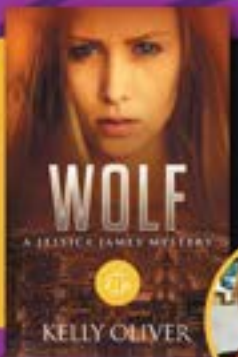
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Nicole Schroeder
Editor in Chief

From the EDITOR IN CHIEF

This past summer, I reunited with my online writing group of ten years for an in-person weekend retreat. We filled our time with laughter, books, and conversations about writing that stretched from late in the evening to early in the morning. I have to be honest; I didn't write nearly as many words as I'd planned. But I left feeling excited about my works-in-progress and with my creative well overflowing—and that was so much more important.

As much as authors' careers can be fueled by a love of storytelling, they also thrive on community, in any and every form. Starting November 1, both published and aspiring authors will take on ProWritingAid's fifty-thousand-word Novel November writing challenge and encourage one another over the finish line. Later this month, authors and publishing professionals throughout the industry will convene in Las Vegas for the 2025 Author Nation conference, the largest indie author conference in the world. Throughout the remainder of 2025 and beyond, authors will forge friendships and business collaborations through virtual publishing communities or connect with writers locally or at in-person events, finding spaces for inspiration, encouragement, and connection wherever they can.

No matter what form they take, the partnerships and creative spaces we foster as indie authors are essential. They won't always directly increase our sales or grow our businesses—though some do, as those authors who participate in multi-author series or collaborative projects can tell you. They will always fuel us as creatives, however, giving us space to celebrate or commiserate. Community helps us work through the challenges of publishing, continue creating when inspiration wanes or burnout looms, and adapt our businesses to changes in the industry.

This month, as authors of every experience level come together in so many different arenas, we're celebrating the connections formed within the industry—the same kind that inspired this magazine in 2019. We're also sharing how *Indie Author Magazine* will grow its support for authors in the coming year, with new publications and avenues for supporting authors at every stage. Writing can often feel like a solo venture, but publishing? In my experience, it's far from lonely. And I am so excited to be there beside you all for the journey.

Nicole Schroeder

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Attending writers' conferences offers invaluable opportunities for authors; from learning the basics of self-publishing to mastering advanced marketing strategies, conferences provide a platform for growth, networking, and inspiration. And attending in-person conferences not only provides educational benefits but can build your community of fellow writers and publishers as well.

In this article, ALLi ambassadors and advisors share how attendance at writers' conferences changed their lives, and how you can tap into those same opportunities.

"When I attended 20Books Vegas, now Author Nation, in November 2023, I knew it would help my longtime indie author career," says ALLi ambassador Dina Santorelli. "But I didn't know it would completely upend it ... in a good way. I made very big decisions at that conference—decisions that I don't think I would have made otherwise: to start a new genre, to create a pen name, to pull back on my in-person appearances, to focus on financials. Why did I make these decisions? Because I learned. A lot. Conferences are the only places I can think of where indie authors can immerse themselves in the business for an extended period of time and have access to experts in a semi-relaxed atmosphere with no distractions. I think about that conference often. It truly changed my life and helped me to discover what was important to me and where I should be spending my time as an indie author. And that has made all the difference."

How can you best take advantage of these opportunities depending on the stage of your indie publishing business?

For Beginning Authors: Prepare to Connect

For beginning authors, the learning opportunities offered by conferences can be the initial draw. You'll be able to benefit from the knowledge and experience of a vetted group of subject matter experts to hone your craft and develop your publishing business.

But perhaps an even more valuable benefit is the opportunity to form personal connections not only with these experts but also with your fellow attendees. The idea of reaching out to these people might seem intimidating, but ALLi Crowdfunding Advisor Russell Nohelty shares how to pave the way to those interactions. "Instead of focusing on that first introduction, project forward to the second or third interaction, when everything is relaxed and comfortable," he says. "The awkward bit is only a means to that fun end."

Attend conferences prepared to connect to get the most value.

For Emerging Authors: Develop a Strategy

Once you have a few conferences under your belt, you can strategize about how to optimize your conference-attending approach.

"I've recently begun attending what I call 'not-my-genre in not-my-town' conferences," says ALLi Advisor Anna Featherstone. "As a nonfiction author, I get energy from learning from and bouncing around ideas with Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Crime, and Romance writers. And being

in a new town is challenging, invigorating, and turns all the receptors on. There's a sharing of creative and business brilliance when you step outside your comfort zone."

What is your strategy for deciding the conferences in which you will and won't invest your time and money to attend? Consider whether the approach of stepping outside your comfort zone appeals to you, or whether you prefer to





dive deep into a particular topic that directly impacts your writing and your business. Does reducing stress by traveling to a known venue pay you back in your ability to concentrate on the conference topics? Whatever your answer, it isn't a decision you make once and permanently—it's one you should assess regularly to best meet your evolving educational and networking needs.

As a nonfiction author, I get energy from learning from and bouncing around ideas with Fantasy, Sci-Fi, Crime, and Romance writers.

Anna Featherstone
ALLi Advisor

For Experienced Authors:

Continue Engaging and Sharing

Once you have invested in honing your craft and have a well-established and efficiently operating publishing business, you may feel conferences have less to offer you—after all, you’re now the subject matter expert.

But the publishing landscape is continually evolving, and conferences can provide up-to-the-minute updates on new technologies, platforms, and market shifts.

“In 2017, I went to my first-ever live author event, and it was not just career changing; it changed the trajectory of my life,” says ALLi Business Advisor Joe Solari. “But most of that stuff I learned isn’t relevant today. We need to be investing time to keep sharpening the saw. You’re going to need to keep your professional training going, and certainly with the innovations that are happening, being in a place where you can see what’s happening sooner than later means you have a better opportunity of becoming an early adopter. And those learnings are as likely to happen in a hallway conversation as from the speakers on the stage.”

As an experienced author, you can share your expertise in both scenarios as a conference speaker. Attending conferences as a speaker not only builds your resume and your standing in the community, but it also can bring other benefits, including compensation for event tickets, coverage for travel and living, and speaker fees. And it will continue to provide the boost of creative energy that you experienced at your very first conference.

“Wherever you are in your career, attending writing conferences will leave you more

energized and motivated than ever to pursue your passion. More importantly, conferences are the places where you build long-lasting friendships,” says ALLi Marketing Advisor Ricardo Fayet. “They say writing is a solitary profession, but conferences have always proved just the opposite to me.”

ALLi Editor-in-Chief Roz Morris echoes this sentiment. “The atmosphere of exploration and creativity is invigorating—the sense that you’re among other people who are your tribe, who are doing the things you do, and networking, the unexpected new friendships, the meetings with people you’ve known in forums or online groups,” Morris says. “I’ll never forget my first London Book Fair as an indie author. It was like a big party where we were all recognizing names and pictures from our online world.”

Santorelli advises that, regardless of your experience level, what you don’t do at a conference is as important as what you do. “I find that less is more, both in the number of conferences I attend and also the sessions I go to,” she says. “Taking time out from a conference while there, to relax or explore, is beneficial, as it gives you the time and space to digest what you’re hearing.”

Don’t forget to reserve time for when you return home from your conference, both to recover from what will doubtless have been an exhausting yet exhilarating experience and to plan how you will incorporate everything you’ve learned into your own writing and publishing work.



Looking for more great conference attendance tips? You can check out Santorelli's full write-up on her experience at 20Books Vegas, the precursor to Author Nation, at <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/20booksto50kvegas-2023-part-two-alli-out-and-about-with-dina-santorelli>.

Want more on why live events are worth it? Check out this article from Solari: <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/live-events>. ■



Matty Dalrymple,
ALLi Campaigns Manager



The Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi) is a global membership association for self-publishing authors. A non-profit, our mission is ethics and excellence in self-publishing. Everyone on our team is a working indie author and we offer advice and advocacy for self-publishing authors within the literary, publishing and creative industries around the world. www.allianceindependentauthors.org



Author Inkling

No Writer Is an Island

Hello again, my pretties!

When people imagine the writer's life, they picture a lone figure at a desk, quill in hand, feverishly scribbling into the night. The myth of the solitary genius is romantic, isn't it? Except it's also complete rubbish.

Here's the truth: Writing may happen in solitude, but surviving as an author takes community. Without it, you're a message in a bottle, bobbing about in a sea of millions of books, hoping someone—anyone—will notice. With it, you're a flotilla, stronger, safer, and far more likely to reach your destination with your sanity intact.

Yet many authors resist the idea of community. "I'm an introvert," they say. "I don't need a tribe." To which I reply: Introverts invented online groups. We thrive in quiet corners, but we still need connection. Community matters more than ever in the indie author world; here's how you can find—or build—the one that's right for you.

Community: The Indie Author Superpower

Indie publishing is exhilarating, but it's also overwhelming. You're not just the writer. You're the publisher, marketer, designer, accountant, chief tea-maker, and head of IT support when your laptop throws a tantrum. No wonder so many of us feel stretched thin.

Community steps in to fill the gaps. You don't need to outsource all your problems, but you can shoulder more when you are no longer carrying the weight alone.

Here's what the right community gives you:

- **Accountability:** There's nothing like announcing your word count goals in a group chat to stop you scrolling TikTok for three hours.
- **Knowledge-Sharing:** Don't know how to set up BookBub ads? Someone in your circle does. Can't figure out Vellum formatting? Ask your community.

- **Moral Support:** Negative review crushed your soul? Bad launch week? Someone out there knows exactly how you feel and will remind you that you're not a failure.
- **Opportunities:** Anthologies, cross-promotions, shared booths at conventions—community multiplies your reach.

Indie publishing is competitive, yes. But here's the dirty little secret: Readers are not a finite resource. When one author succeeds, it lifts the genre for everyone. Community turns rivals into allies.

But I Don't Have a Community ...

Some of you may be nodding along, but others are whispering, "That's great, but where do I find my people?"

The good news? Communities are everywhere. The trick is choosing the right ones.

- **Online Groups:** Facebook groups, Discord servers, Slack chats—pick the platform where you feel comfortable. Lurk a little, then contribute.
- **Writing Sprints:** Accountability groups on Zoom can be magic. The collective silence of people typing together is strangely motivating.
- **Local Meetups:** Indie authors exist in the wild! Try your library, bookshops, or writing festivals. Yes, you may have to put on trousers. It's worth it.
- **Professional Networks:** Alliances like the Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi) or communities like those at Author Nation or similar conferences and events can connect you to mentors and collaborators.

If none of these communities feels right, you can also always build your own. Invite a handful of like-minded authors to a WhatsApp group. Keep it small, safe, and supportive. Sometimes, three trusted friends are more powerful than a thousand strangers.

The Dark Side of Community

Let's be real for a moment: Not every group is healthy. Some communities are more drama than support. As much as you'll find encouragement and uplifting messages, you'll also find egos, pyramid schemes disguised as marketing masterminds,

and people who treat others as competition rather than colleagues.

A good community should leave you feeling energized, not drained. If you consistently log off of your group feeling smaller, angrier, or more insecure, that's not your tribe. Leave quietly. No one needs the Facebook flounce.

How to Nurture Community (Without Losing Your Soul)

Once you have found your community, it's important that you nurture it. Maintain strong relationships through the following behaviors:

- **Give as much as you take.** Communities thrive on reciprocity. Celebrate others' wins, share your knowledge, and offer encouragement.
- **Set boundaries.** You don't need to be in ten groups, moderating three forums, and running a Discord server. Pick one or two spaces where you feel safe, and foster those.
- **Focus on authenticity.** Don't join groups just to promote your books. People can smell that from space. Be a human first and an author second. Remember that your community is a support network, not a marketplace.
- **Celebrate small wins together.** From hitting one thousand words to getting your first review, joy multiplies when shared.

My Community Story

When I started my author career, I wrote in isolation. I thought, as most people do, that the only way to get my books out there was through traditional publishing. Then my search algorithms pointed me to a Facebook group—20BooksTo50K®—and that discovery changed my life.

I plucked up the courage to buy tickets for the group's upcoming retreat and conference in Edinburgh in 2019, and there I found my tribe. I still meet regularly with people I met there for online sprints, and a group of us have convened every year since at The Self Publishing Show in London.

It was this connection that led to my gig as Indie Annie, answering reader questions in disguise. Although I felt like an imposter behind the scenes, over the years and with the support of my tribe and other authors, I grew my business and my confidence.

I wasn't a member of some glamorous mastermind. We were simply writers on Zoom, sipping tea, commiserating over plot holes, and cheering each other on. But they kept me going when I would have quit. They made me laugh when I cried over sales dashboards. They reminded me I wasn't alone.

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!



Now, years later, community is still my lifeline. Writing may be solitary, but publishing is a team sport.

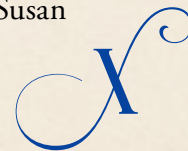
Final Thoughts (or the Bit where I Get Philosophical Again)

The myth of the lone author dies hard. But here's the truth: No writer is an island. We are archipelagos—scattered, yes, but connected by bridges of shared struggle and triumph.

If you've been writing in isolation, I invite you to reach out. Find your tribe. Build your village. In this noisy, ever-changing publishing world, community isn't just nice to have; it's the very thing that keeps us afloat.

Happy writing (together),

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.

The background is a dark green surface decorated with small gold stars. In the top left corner, there are three pinecones. In the bottom left, there are two gifts wrapped in brown paper, tied with red and white striped string. In the top right, there is a white cup of coffee with a brown, frothy top. A person's arm is visible on the right side of the image.

10 Tips for

Marketing
During the
Holiday
Season



With a crowded advertising environment and the overwhelming amount of noise surrounding products and consumption as the holidays approach, many indie authors question the wisdom of marketing their books during the gifting season. But many top-selling authors take advantage of special holiday-season conditions, such as gift cards, gift subscriptions, and reading subscription trial periods with new devices, to boost sales throughout the end of the fourth quarter and into the first quarter of the next year. Despite the advertising buzz over the next couple of months, this could be your way to end the year strong and find new superfans.

Here are ten solid holiday marketing tips for indie authors you could consider implementing.

01

Prepare

Assess Your Resources.

Before anything else, it's critical to assess the levels of time, energy, and money you'll have to dedicate before and during the holidays to make seasonal promotions stick. Some authors have sufficient resources in all three areas to conduct multi-pronged marketing campaigns that include social media, advertising, and other forms of outreach, but others may have more resources in one area than in others.

If you have time and energy but limited funds, focusing on organic promotion and social media outreach may be a great fit for you. However, if you have limited time and more financial resources, then advertising may be a better fit. A thoughtful assessment of your situation and resources over the holiday season is essential before deciding on your campaign strategy and tactics.

02

Do Your Research.

Regardless of which types of promotion and/or advertising you decide to pursue, you'll need to define your target audience. Where are your genre's readers hanging out? How do they prefer to make purchases? What motivates their purchase decisions: price, limited offers, box sets, or bundles?

If your audience is large enough, you can create reader surveys to help you conduct market research. Regardless of your audience size, it's also always a good idea to study the bestsellers in your genre and categories. Where are they spending their advertising dollars? On which platforms have they established long-term ad campaigns? See if they're pushing primarily for direct sales, audiobooks, or exclusive programs, such as Kindle Unlimited.

"Where does that audience interact, and how do they interact there?" asks L.T. Ryan, author and owner of Liquid Mind Media, a publishing and advertising company that also offers consulting services for indie authors. "My preference is Amazon ads, as people seeing those ads are on Amazon, so they are in a product purchase or research mode."

Understanding where and how your readers prefer to buy books allows you to focus your advertising efforts meaningfully.

03

Prepare to Advertise.

Although costs for advertising may rise during the holidays, many authors stand by the effectiveness of running ads throughout the season as well. Ryan says his company's advertising cadence doesn't change much during the year—the company maintains a steady pace, continually directing traffic to their books, even during the holidays. Just as with other forms of outreach, however, understanding your target readers is fundamental to the success of your ads.

“Platforms like Meta and Amazon know their audiences so well,” Ryan explains. “And for some genres and demographics, there is a huge difference between clickers and buyers, so when all you can do is target ‘traffic,’ you get the clickers.”

Knowing the difference is crucial to understanding where to focus your resources on promotions and advertising.

04

Plan Your Outreach Campaigns.

If your holiday marketing strategy involves social media, newsletters, guest blogging, or interviews, develop a clear and detailed plan for your outreach, complete with dates and timelines. Without care, it's easy to feel overwhelmed and lose steam quickly—which can lead to a loss of consistency. For organic reach, it's important to establish a consistent presence, engage with your audience, and build brand awareness before launching your holiday promotions. Batch-creating and scheduling content can help you stay ahead of any unforeseen events or delays.

05

Grow Your Newsletter.

To maximize your holiday promotions, create a newsletter builder, such as a reader magnet, first chapters, or a giveaway, to increase the number of recipients you'll have when you launch your holiday promotion email series. This can be a great way to attract new subscribers while also connecting readers to the rest of your marketing ecosystem—linking your social media posts, profiles, website, and sales pages. Ideally, you'd work on this in the second or third quarter, but it can still work when implemented at the beginning of the fourth quarter.

Build

06

Warm up Your Audience.

Utilize your outreach and social media calendars to stay on track with your content plan, enhancing your reach, increasing engagement, and fostering stronger brand awareness. During a pre-promotion period, focus less on “buy my book” posts and more on posts that encourage interaction, comments, tagging, and sharing. Increasing engagement boosts your visibility among followers before you post hard calls-to-action (CTAs).

07

Consider Options for Direct Sales.

If you're an author who sells direct, the holidays can be an excellent time to promote the books for sale on your website. Ahead of the holidays, consider giftable items, such as premium book boxes with autographed copies for fans, and how this would shape your marketing campaign—in this case, one centered on special editions and signed copies.

Prepare your funnels to highlight gift-ability, include upsells, and feature images to set buyer expectations. Then, develop a standout packaging plan to maximize the wow factor for recipients.

“Always give freebies and goodies with every sale and, while you can, batch-sign books,” says Sacha Black, author and founder of *The Rebel Author* podcast. If you take this approach, be sure to educate readers about ordering deadlines. “With direct, we try to make sure that we release shipping dates for any major holidays,” Black says. She's also careful not to release too close to the holidays, so readers can order with enough time for books to be delivered.

Preorder bonuses can make gift purchases even more exciting. “We did exclusive art, an exclusive sticker, and a bookmark for readers. Plus, we deliver early. So no matter what Amazon or any other store's release date is, they [readers who preorder directly on the website] will get it from me early and usually [with] enough time for them to have read the book and feel smug when everyone else is getting it on release day.” Black also includes a custom stamp to prove a gift has come from her store.

Black recommends keeping sales and discounts limited. “We tend to do limited ones [sales], and usually only 10 percent to 25 percent, and often on stock we want to shift rather than on bestsellers,” Black says. Encourage multiple purchases as well. “Bundles are gold dust. Give readers a small discount for buying the bundle so that they're getting a better deal than buying separately.”

Promote

08

Determine Your Timeline for Promotions.

Don't shy away from longer timeframes that precede the holidays and continue through the end of the year. "I always run box set promos from Black Friday through December 31, with emphasis on December 26," says Craig Martelle, author and founder of the Successful Indie Author group.

For those who have books exclusive as part of the Kindle Unlimited (KU) program, consider that many recipients of gifted Kindle devices often receive KU trial subscription offers that could benefit your books. "People with gift cards and a new Kindle are looking for the biggest bang for their gift bucks," Martelle says. "I sell a lot of box sets and build a huge amount of page reads during that time when, traditionally, the KENP payout rate is the highest."

Ryan shares a similar sentiment. "The week between Christmas and New Year is a great opportunity to run a promotion." During the holidays, Ryan suggests using "countdown deals during that time, preferably on first in series and box sets," combined with "ads pointing to the promoted book."

09

Swap with Other Authors.

Don't forget to reach out to fellow authors in your genre to propose shared promotions, newsletter swaps, and social media shout-outs. Swaps and shout-outs help fill out gaps in your content and newsletter plans and help cross-pollinate authors' audiences, keeping your readers satisfied longer with a refreshed to-be-read list until your next title release.

When scheduling your swaps and shout-outs, ensure that you're clear on the promotional needs of your partners and share their work with your audience at key times. Build your calendar based on both your and your partner's timelines. You can alternate newsletter broadcasts or social media posts to build excitement for your books or promos with content meant to hype and share your partners'.

10

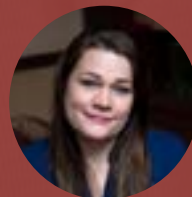
Don't Skimp on Social Media.

During the designated promotion period, focus on fostering meaningful engagement, responding to comments, and interacting authentically for the highest quality outcomes. Create posts or videos where you ask questions that are easy or fun for readers to answer, and strive to be their escape from the stress and hectic nature of the season. The quality of your interactions holds greater long-term impact than the quantity. On platforms such as Instagram and TikTok, try responding with Reels to answer questions, follow up on comments, and thank your favorite fans for their support. Goodwill and gratitude always pay out the best dividends.

Final Thoughts

There are many paths to promoting your books during the holidays, and with thoughtful preparation, you can build a winning plan. Be sure to focus your research on what works for bestsellers in your genre, compare your observations to your available resources, and craft a plan that will maximize your reach while minimizing additional stress. As other authors demonstrate, you don't have to do it all to be successful during the holidays—or the rest of the year. Pick something that works for you and your genre, and stick with it.

One thing is clear: The holidays are an excellent time to promote your books, grow your readership, and boost your sales. ■



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.

The essential tool for your author business



bookfunnel

What can BookFunnel deliver?



READER MAGNETS

*You found the readers,
let BookFunnel handle
the ebook delivery.*



Secure Review Copies

*Advanced Review
Copies, ARCs, or Betas...
whatever you call them,
we'll deliver them*



Direct Sales

*You sell, we deliver.
Sell ebooks through
your online store and
BookFunnel will deliver
to your buyers.*

BookFunnel.com





From the Stacks

Course

Kickstarter for Indie Authors

<https://indieauthortraining.com/courses/kickstarter-for-indie-authors>

Let instructor Amy Wolf show you how Kickstarter can be a viable platform for direct sales of your books. From how to set up your page to what to do after the countdown clock reaches zero, Wolf teaches you everything you need to know to ensure your campaign is successful.

Product Tour

ProWritingAid

Learn about the ProWritingAid platform:

<https://indie-author-training-product-tours.heysummit.com/talks/pro-writing-aid>

Learn about ProWritingAid's Manuscript Analysis tool:

<https://indie-author-training-product-tours.heysummit.com/talks/pro-writing-aid-manuscript-analysis-product-tour>



November means Novel November, or NovNov—ProWritingAid's new challenge to write fifty thousand words in thirty days, sponsored by *Indie Author Magazine*. But what happens next month? Check out these two product tours to see how the writing assistance platform can help you once you've written your way to the finish line. From taking your work through a rigorous editing process to a full manuscript analysis, ProWritingAid's features have you covered at every stage of the writing journey.

Webinar

“Do You Really Need a Website? Yes. When? Right Now.”

<https://webinars.indieauthortraining.com/talks/do-you-really-need-a-website-yes-when-right-now>

You know you need an author website, but do you know today's best practices? Are you fed up having to troubleshoot every time you need to update your current site? Watch this webinar to find out how online bookseller Tertulia can help you create a beautiful site specifically for authors in minutes. From optimizing mailing lists to perfecting your site's SEO, this webinar shows you everything you need to know about how your website should be working. Check out the code at the bottom of the replay page to sign up for a free trial.



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:

“Beyond Competitive Pricing: The Art of Genre-Based Book Pricing for Indie Authors”

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/2J6FyTgO82ez9uv4zSETb4>

In 2024, *IAM*'s Jenn Lessmann investigated how a book's genre could affect its pricing thanks to factors such as book length and reader expectations. In this episode, dive into the topic yet again to see what strategies you can use to determine your pricing “sweet spot.”

“Locking Out Distraction with Apps and Devices Authors Swear By”

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/0hQd2fQV6xI3EKxz4WVvVC>

Distraction is the bane of nearly every author's productivity, and with social media and internet algorithms designed to keep you scrolling, protecting your writing time is more essential than ever. In this episode, hear about the psychology behind your “golden window” of focus, plus explore tools and platforms authors use to keep theirs on the page.

“Note Taking Deep Dive: Seven Proven Methods”

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/7au1d1DIQ4VDRdAFm4wlEi>

In this episode, head back to school to learn note-taking strategies that will ensure you get the most out of your next writing course, whether it's a session at Author Nation or a virtual course through Indie Author Training. Decide whether digital or analog notes will help you set the curve, plus hear tips for reviewing your notes and making the lessons stick. ■



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.

LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER:



Chelle Honiker
Publisher

How IAM Is Growing Thoughtfully in a Changing Landscape

When we founded *Indie Author Magazine* in 2021, the independent publishing world was a different place. Information flowed through established channels, and authors knew where to turn for guidance they could trust. Today, nearly five years later, we find ourselves in a dramatically different environment. AI-generated content floods social media. New “expert” platforms launch weekly. Every content creator seems to be pivoting to serve authors, and distinguishing signal from noise has become increasingly difficult.

In this cacophony, we’ve never been more committed to our founding principle: providing unbiased, reliable information researched and written by real human writers who earn a fair wage for their expertise. Although algorithms churn out generic advice and affiliate marketers disguise advertisements as recommendations, we remain steadfast in our commitment to editorial independence and thoroughly researched content.

But commitment alone isn’t enough. As we’ve grown, we’ve had to honestly assess what’s working and what needs to change. These past four years have taught us that sustainable growth means listening to our community, acknowledging our limitations, and having the courage to evolve.

The Cost of Monthly Perfection

Our monthly publication schedule, even with the automations we’ve built, has meant pushing our writers hard to meet relentless deadlines. Every article was edited well—we’re proud of that—but there were stories we wanted to explore more deeply, interviews we wanted to extend, and research that deserved more time to breathe. We found ourselves choosing between depth and deadline, and too often, the deadline won.

These compromises gnawed at us. We started this magazine to be the definitive resource for independent authors navigating an increasingly complex industry. At the same time, the economics of monthly print publication have become increasingly challenging. Printing and shipping costs have climbed substantially, and we’ve spent resources on logistics that we wanted to invest in content and community. Every month, we were choosing between adding pages and keeping subscription costs reasonable.

A New Rhythm: Quarterly Print, Deeper Stories

Starting in 2026, we’re moving to a quarterly print schedule—and we’re doing it right. These won’t be skinny magazines padded with ads. We’re expanding article length significantly, giving our writers the space to explore topics with the depth they deserve. That distribution strategy analysis? Now it gets the word count it truly needs. That author interview? We can tell the complete story.

But moving to quarterly print doesn’t mean you’ll hear from us less—quite the opposite. Instead, we’re embracing a digital-first mindset that will allow us to publish breaking news, timely analysis, and author spotlights online as they happen, not months later, when a print issue goes to press. Some features will live exclusively online, and we’ll release them more frequently to keep pace with this rapidly evolving industry.

For our subscribers who love getting the magazine in the mail—and we know many of you do—nothing changes except the frequency and the value. We’ll still mail the print version to your home or office quarterly, and our pricing is changing to reflect this new schedule, for the better. You’ll pay less annually while receiving more content per issue, as well as some perks we’re still fleshing out. We’d rather have a subscriber base that finds real val-

ue in what we produce than maintain a monthly schedule that compromises quality.

Quarterly publication also allows us to focus on what worked remarkably well in 2025: our conference partnerships. Last year, we partnered with sixteen conferences and delivered over five thousand copies of the magazine directly to authors. The conversations that happened around those magazines—in conference hallways, at coffee shops, in author lounges—reminded us why we do this work. There's something powerful about handing an author a magazine in person, seeing them flip through it immediately, and watching their face light up when they find an article that addresses exactly what they're struggling with. This year, we're expanding that program significantly, targeting conferences where independent authors gather to learn, network, and grow their careers.

Beyond the Page: Apps that Connect

Our iOS and Google Play apps have served as excellent readers, but we've always known they could be more. In 2026, we're transforming them into connection platforms. We're introducing a chatbot with full access to more than one thousand articles, podcast episodes, and videos from our archive.

Have a question about rights management at 2 a.m.? Want to find every piece we've published about BookBub ads? Need to hear what multiple experts have said about newsletter strategy? The knowledge is there, now more accessible than ever. But more importantly, the chatbot will synthesize information across multiple sources, giving you comprehensive answers drawn from years of expert insights.

You've always had access to these articles, but finding the right one at the right moment was challenging. Now, the information from our archive will find you when you need it.

Growing Pains and Platform Changes

The growth of our sister site, Indie Author Training, has been both exhilarating and humbling. In 2025, we welcomed over one hundred new instructors to the platform, creating an Etsy-like marketplace of expertise. Our webinars and product tours that once saw five to ten attendees suddenly drew three hundred or more. It was a wonderful problem to have, but our WordPress tech stack simply wasn't designed for this scale.

So we decided to migrate to a new platform built for growth. This new site launches November 1 with courses on a variety of topics, and we're confident it will serve both our instructors and the growing indie author community for years to come.

Our popular weekly speaker series, featuring subject matter experts from around the world, continues without interruption. These sessions remain free, accessible, and focused on bringing you the cutting-edge insights you need to stay competitive. We're also expanding our product tours. These deep-dive sessions offer an objective, transparent look at the tools and technology from our publishing partners—companies such as ElevenLabs, Curios, ProWritingAid, Reedsy, Terutulia, BookBub, and SoundBooth, among others.

These tours aren't typical demos; in them, we aim to act as a proxy for the average indie author during these conversations. When a tool has a learning curve, we tell you. When a service is expensive but worth it, we explain why.

New webinars, product tours, and courses are added weekly to Indie Author Training, giving you a constant stream of fresh insights and practical knowledge. The new platform launches November 1, still at <https://indieauthortraining.com>. Current subscribers will receive migration instructions via email, and new members will be able to create an account and browse our growing catalog of courses starting on launch day. Wheth-

er you're looking for the weekly speaker series, in-depth product tours, or comprehensive courses from our instructor marketplace, you'll find everything in one place.

Direct2Readers: Solving the Discoverability Crisis

Let's talk about the elephant in the room: Readers can't find your books.

It's not because your books aren't good. It's not because your covers are wrong or your blurbs need work, though those things matter, too. It's because the fundamental architecture of online discoverability is changing, and most authors are still optimizing for a world that no longer exists.

Traditional search engines are being disrupted by AI. Readers are asking ChatGPT, Claude, and Perplexity for book recommendations instead of scrolling through Amazon's recommendation engine. Social media algorithms have made organic reach nearly impossible. And the old playbook—nail your keywords, get reviews, pray the algorithm notices you—is increasingly ineffective.

This is where Direct2Readers comes in.

Direct2Readers is a discoverability engine designed specifically for the emerging AI-driven search landscape. Upload your book's metadata—title, description, genre, and anything else that helps describe what you've written—and our system optimizes this information to be maximally discoverable by large language models and AI search tools.

When a reader asks an AI chatbot, "What's a good Science Fiction Romance with a slow burn and strong world-building?" and your book fits that description, Direct2Readers helps ensure you're in that conversation. When someone searches for "books like *Red Rising* but with a female protagonist," we help you surface if you've written that book.

Direct2Readers is getting a full refresh in 2026, with a more powerful chat interface that will help you craft book descriptions optimized for AI discoverability. But the biggest change will be our new bulk upload feature. You will be able to upload your entire backlist without stress, without spending hours on tedious data entry for

The IAM Family of Sites

Indie Author Magazine:

<https://indieauthormagazine.com>

Your go-to source for news and information on the business of indie publishing

Indie Author Training:

<https://indieauthortraining.com>

A marketplace of courses, webinars, and training videos catered to the working indie author

Indie Author Tools:

<https://indieauthortools.com>

A database of resources, productivity tools, and recommended author services

Direct2Readers.com:

<https://direct2readers.com>

A direct sales directory to connect readers with authors' websites and other sales platforms

Storyteller Showcase:

<https://storytellersshowcase.com>

Our reader-facing magazine delivering in-depth reviews, curated reading lists, and features about the indie world

Author Automations:

<https://authorautomations.com>

Technology and automation hacks for storytellers, written by IAM publisher Chelle Honiker

each individual title.

Why should you care about this? Because the authors who adapt to AI-driven discovery now will have a massive advantage over those who

wait. This isn't speculative; traffic patterns show that readers are increasingly using AI tools as their first stop for recommendations, and traditional SEO tactics don't work in these environments.

Direct2Readers is designed to get you in front of readers in this new world, so that when AI tools analyze what readers are asking for, your book appears as a genuine, relevant match.



Storyteller Showcase: Connecting Readers and Authors

While *Indie Author Magazine* serves the writer community, we've also recognized a gap in the market. Readers searching for their next book need a trusted guide through the overwhelming world of indie publishing. That's why we launched *Storyteller Showcase*, our reader-facing magazine designed to bridge the gap between discerning readers and talented independent authors.

With *Storyteller Showcase*, we've created genre-specific editions that speak directly to passionate readers, with issue themes already slated such as Romance & Romantasy, Sci-Fi/Fantasy, and Mystery/Thriller/Suspense. Each edition features author interviews, book recommendations, reading lists, and insights into the creative process—all curated for readers who love these genres.

We plan to distribute *Storyteller Showcase* at reader conferences nationwide, placing it directly in the hands of engaged, book-hungry audiences actively looking for their next read, who are already dedicated enough to attend conferences, join book clubs, and share their discoveries with their communities.

The response has been overwhelming, and we're already planning additional genre editions for 2027 and 2028.

Here's where it gets exciting for authors: If you write in one of our featured genres, you can be included in *Storyteller Showcase*. Visit <https://storytellershowcase.com> to submit your information. Authors who create a listing at <https://Direct2Readers.com> by December 31 will also automatically receive a featured listing in *Storyteller Showcase*, giving you visibility on both the AI-driven discovery platform and in our print magazine, which will be distributed to thousands of readers at conferences across the country.



The Unexpected Journey of Author Automations

Author Automations was never supposed to be part of the IAM family. Honestly, it started as my personal documentation project—a way to record the automations and workflows I was building so I could spend my summers running through Scotland without everything falling apart back home. Selfish motivations, transparent results.

I started documenting how I automated our publications' social media scheduling, how I built workflows to track article deadlines, and how I created systems that let our team work asynchronously across time zones. I shared these automations thinking maybe a handful of authors would find them useful.

But something unexpected happened. That little side project now has more than two thousand subscribers and is growing at 10 percent per week. Authors were hungry for this information—not the theoretical possibilities of automation but the practical, proven workflows they could implement today.

In October, after a few weeks of what I can only describe as “vibe coding” with Claude—where I’d describe what I wanted and Claude would help me build it—I launched the Hub at <https://hub.authorautomations.com>—a central place to learn about Make.com, Zapier, N8N, and AI prompting.

The Hub is a resource library where you can learn to build the automations that will save you time and mental energy. Here’s the truth: The authors who thrive in the next five years won’t be the ones working harder; they’ll be the ones working smarter, leveraging technology to handle repetitive tasks so they can focus on creativity and connection.

What This All Means

Change can be uncomfortable, even when it's positive. But here's what isn't changing: We're still committed to real human writers who earn fair wages. We're still committed to unbiased, thoroughly researched journalism. We're still committed to serving independent authors with practical, actionable information. We're still the same team that founded this magazine in 2021 with a simple mission: to help independent authors navigate this industry with reliable information.

What is changing is our capacity to serve you better. Quarterly print means deeper, more substantial content. Enhanced apps mean our archive becomes more useful. Platform upgrades mean we can handle growth without compromising experience. Direct2Readers means you have tools to adapt to the changing discoverability landscape. And Author Automations means you can build the systems that free you to do your best work.

These changes are strategic decisions designed to ensure we're still here, still valuable, and still independent in 2030 and beyond.

What changes are you most excited about? What questions do you have about Direct2Readers, Author Automations, or our quarterly schedule? I'd love to hear from you. Email me directly at chelle@indieauthormagazine.com, or join the conversation in our app community.

Moving Forward Together

The landscape is changing rapidly. We're changing with it but not compromising the values that got us here. We're still the same team, still committed to human expertise, and still focused on your success.

Thank you for four years of trust. Here's to what we'll build together in 2026. ■



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.



Friends Don't Let Friends Kickstarter Alone

Author Nation
Cohort Proves
Crowdfunding
Campaigns Thrive
on, Succeed with
Community

KICKSTART

Many authors may have missed the surge of interest in Kickstarter and other crowdfunding options amid the independent publishing industry in recent years. For those who've watched publishing through Kickstarter, though, there's a lot of excitement.

It wasn't just Brandon Sanderson's breakout multimillion-dollar campaigns that put this option on the map. By the time he'd announced his four secret novels, indie authors and small publishers had already started to pay attention to the platforms and explore how they could use them.

Over the past five years, many best practices in running Kickstarter campaigns for publishing projects have risen to the surface. Perhaps the most notable has been the emphasis on the community and collaboration during a campaign's lifespan. From active Facebook groups offering advice and support to others running Kickstarter campaigns to multi-author collections and short story anthologies funded on the platform, accountability teams to campaign swaps shared in backer update messages, authors at all levels are working together to bring greater success to their campaigns.

This year, I joined about fifty other authors from the Author Nation community in regular bimonthly cohort Zoom calls. We analyzed best practices, reviewed campaign pages, and promoted each other's projects. Here's what we learned.

What Is Crowdfunding?

Crowdfunding is a process where businesses and individuals reach out, usually through various online platforms and communities, to raise money for a specific project or cause. Authors commonly use crowdfunding to raise money for special editions, to cover launch and production costs, to turn books into graphic novels, or to support audiobook production.

Kickstarter is a crowdfunding platform focused on supporting creative projects. The platform doesn't allow charitable or generic fundraising projects, focusing instead on connecting creators with people who are interested in supporting creative projects. Although it isn't the only crowdfunding platform available to authors, it is one of the most popular and easily recognized within the author community and beyond.

Kickstarter also stands out from most platforms in that campaigns only collect funds from backers if their creators meet or exceed the minimum funding goal they set at the start of a campaign. This helps ensure, though doesn't guarantee, that creators will provide the promised products and services to backers at the various funding levels for their campaigns.

KICKSTARTER

The Author Nation/Kickstarter Cohort

The Author Nation conference team, headed up by managing director Joe Solari, connected this year with Kickstarter's Head of Publishing, Oriana Leckert, to form the Author Nation/Kickstarter Cohort. This first annual collection of authors, open to anyone in the Author Nation community, was set up to provide best practices in constructing campaigns and to help overcome the learning curve for setting up a campaign, especially for those creating and managing campaigns for the first time.

The cohort held bimonthly webinars starting in April 2025 and question-and-answer sessions for cohort members to walk through their campaigns and talk through strategies for ensuring their campaigns funded successfully. The calls were also recorded for all who couldn't attend live.

Over the course of the cohort, more than thirty members of the group also published a Romance short story anthology via Kickstarter. The *Love Me in Vegas: A Collection of Romance* project raised over \$23,000 on the platform. Backers were given the option to pick up their physical copies at the Author Nation reader event, Reader Nation, later this month. Several of the anthology's authors

plan to be in attendance to sign copies of the book.

Overall, of the campaigns run by cohort members, over 90 percent successfully funded their projects. When compared to a 56 percent funding rate for publishing projects on Kickstarter, the Author Nation Cohort programs were a huge success and demonstrated the value of this kind of community collaboration.

In addition to the anthology, several smaller groups popped up from within the cohort over the course of the sessions. Small mastermind and accountability groups for people at various stages of campaign development and completion set up regular meetings with one another to encourage one another, set accountable weekly goals, and answer one another's Kickstarter questions.

These small groups ran weekly Zoom calls that resulted in experienced Kickstarter authors working alongside authors who had never run campaigns before. This dynamic offered opportunities for education and support beyond what the larger cohort meetings could offer. It also encouraged authors without previous campaigns to move forward, setting up their pages under the watchful eyes of the more experienced members of each group.

Kickstarter Groups on Facebook

The Author Nation cohort grew into a community-focused, collaborative experience, but it's far from the only one available to authors wanting to learn crowdfunding strategies. As the platforms have become more popular, several Facebook groups have sprung up to support authors running Kickstarter campaigns, including the Kickstarter for Authors group, founded by author Anthea Sharp.

Sharp created her group in 2022 after looking for support for her own initial campaign but struggling to find advice that wasn't attached to a paywall. The Kickstarter for Authors Facebook group now has more than eight thousand members and offers a multitude of free resources and guides in its posts. Sharp has also collected her expertise from studying several successful publishing campaigns on the platform over the years into a second edition of her Kickstarter guidebook, *Kickstarter for Authors 2025*.

Although self-promotion is forbidden in Sharp's Facebook group, authors with pending campaigns may post a preview link in the group and ask for advice and suggestions for improvement. The advice given is both candid and on point, and the expectation is that the author has done their homework and utilized the best practices found in the group's suggested posts as a starting point when constructing their Kickstarter pages.

After projects are completed, authors in the group are encouraged to post an after-action report about their campaign's success or failure so that others may learn from what worked and didn't work for these projects.

Kickstarter Project Collaborations

Collaboration and community—both among authors and among authors and their readers—are key aspects of any successful campaign. However, some authors have taken that collaboration to the next level. The *Love Me in Vegas* anthology created by the Author Nation cohort showcased one of the more advanced partnerships authors have created on crowdfunding sites.

Anthologies, book collections, and shared backer promotion pages all require a steady hand in the leadership position and promotional buy-in from the associated writers in the campaigns. However, these collaborations offer opportunities not just to increase sales and grow readerships. They also allow authors to establish themselves as a leader in their genre and to build close relationships with other writers.

Anthologies

Kickstarter anthology projects are short story collections organized around a central theme or genre. A project leader typically collects and reviews short stories to be included in the project, as well as organizes the layout and special edition details related to the book's production. Other contributors are expected, at a minimum, to share the campaign in various ways during the process and encourage their readers to back the project while the campaign is live.



Book Collections

In Kickstarter book collections, a group of authors each contribute a single book to a collection presented in one campaign. This variety of books is often arranged around a central theme or genre. For example, these can be first-in-series for each author's primary series, where backers can get multiple books from different authors, all focused around their favorite types of books. Once again, the organizer typically takes on the lion's share of the project, assigning tasks such as graphic design, campaign copy writing, and scheduling group promotions as needed. All contributing authors are expected to promote the campaign while it is active to their readers. The better the coordination of promotion, the more successful the campaign.

Shared Backer Promotion Pages

Kickstarter shared backer promotion pages work best for authors who will be running separate campaigns around a central theme or genre focus concurrently. The group creates a centralized landing page for all their campaigns, where interested backers can find the links to each. Each author then promotes the central landing page to both their backers and readers at large.

These landing pages are not hosted through Kickstarter, but they might be created on the lead author's website or using another site, such as BookFunnel.com's sales landing pages.

Backer Swaps

Backer swaps—both parties mentioning each other's campaigns either in their update messages to backers or via their author newsletters—are usually what creators think of most often when considering collaboration on a crowdfunding project. It's considered by both Sharp and Leckert to be one of the most successful options for promoting one's campaign.

Newsletter campaign mentions may present opportunities to reach the most reader eyeballs in raw numbers, though authors' general experience shows they are often the least successful in converting viewers to backers. Email subscribers are often not familiar with Kickstarter and are reluctant to enter a new platform. They are also retail buyers and not specifically people interested in supporting creators for creativity's sake. Although newsletter mentions are worth doing to nab the occasional Kickstarter backer lurking in an author's list, conversion will not be the same as it would be for a conventional newsletter promotional sale swap.

According to Sharp, trading mentions in a Kickstarter campaign's regular updates has proven to be the more successful tactic. The Kickstarter for Authors group has created a separate, dedicated group page just for coordinating backer swaps in campaign updates. During a Kickstarter campaign, creators have the opportunity to put out updates regularly over the course of the project to announce new perks, stretch goals, and funding levels. After the campaign successfully funds, these updates are used to announce delivery and fulfillment progress.



There can be many of these backer updates during a twenty- to thirty-day campaign and even more to follow after the campaign ends. In these updates, the creator includes their message to backers and mentions related or similar campaigns that might be of interest. People receiving these messages will already be familiar with Kickstarter and predisposed to supporting creatives in their endeavors since they've already backed at least one campaign.

Authors can arrange backer swaps in several ways. During your campaign, search the Kickstarter publish-

ing project pages for campaigns with books or projects similar to yours. As you find campaigns that are running at the same time as yours or overlapping your campaign's time frame, reach out to the creator and offer to share their campaign with your backers, and ask if they'll share yours with their backers, too.

As mentioned earlier, Sharp also created an "(Experienced) Kickstarter for Authors Cross-Promotion" group. In this group, members link to a spreadsheet where others can search for campaigns running concurrently to their own.

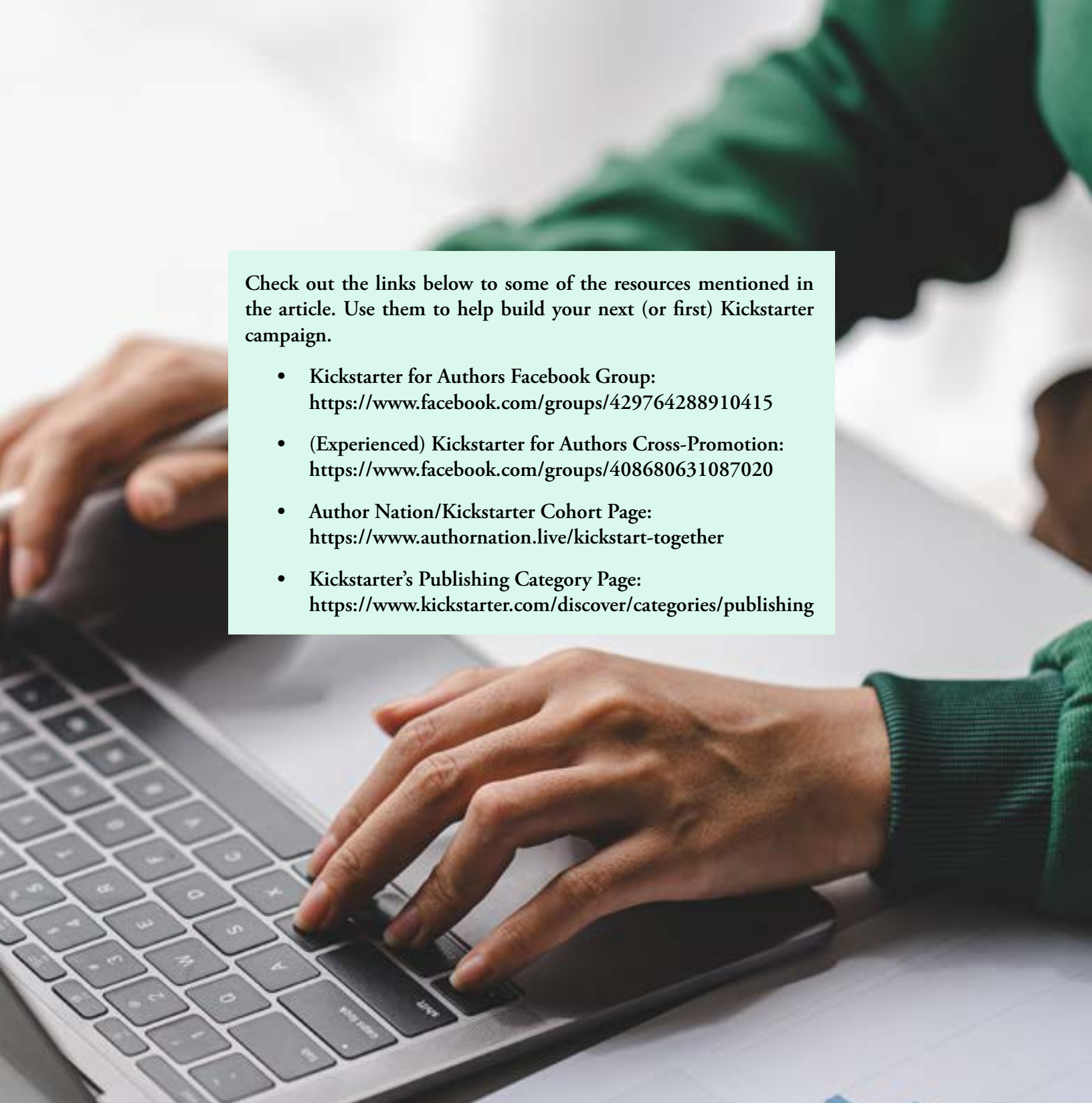
Pro Tip:

If you use groups like this to do swaps, make sure you follow the rules that have been set up. This ensures maximum opportunity for sharing and swaps with many campaigns.

Don't Kickstarter Alone

The Author Nation/Kickstarter Cohort will continue into the next year, and at least one new genre anthology is already in the planning stages. Community members should watch for information about the cohort's new season early next year in the Author Nation community online and on the Author Nation Facebook group. Announcements will also be emailed to Author Nation community members.

Starting and running a Kickstarter campaign doesn't have to be a lonely endeavor. Whether you join a Facebook group or community cohort, create or jump into an accountability mastermind group, or organize or join an anthology project, working as a team can make the process much less daunting. Beyond that, sharing the load can often result in greater success for your campaign in the end. ■



Check out the links below to some of the resources mentioned in the article. Use them to help build your next (or first) Kickstarter campaign.

- Kickstarter for Authors Facebook Group:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/429764288910415>
- (Experienced) Kickstarter for Authors Cross-Promotion:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/408680631087020>
- Author Nation/Kickstarter Cohort Page:
<https://www.authornation.live/kickstart-together>
- Kickstarter's Publishing Category Page:
<https://www.kickstarter.com/discover/categories/publishing>



Jamie Davis

Jamie Davis writes stories where magic meets heart and family saves the day. A nurse, retired paramedic, and lifelong gamer, Jamie brings a deep love of sci-fi, fantasy, and found family to every tale he tells—whether it's an enchanted road trip, a demon-possessed soccer ball, or a suburban uncle navigating fae politics with a toddler in tow. His books mix real-world emotion with wild, magical twists, and always leave room for a laugh (or a heartfelt tear). Visit JamieDavisBooks.com for new releases, free stories, and more chances to escape into adventure.

New Marketing Scams Use AI to Target Authors

How To Spot the
Threat and
Protect Your
Business





Receiving a single email filled with glowing praise for a book used to be a benchmark worth celebrating in an author's career. Receiving several a week? That felt like a dream almost too big to admit out loud. But in the past several months, some authors have received nearly one of these emails a day—and have sent them to the trash.

"The email reads straight from ChatGPT," wrote *IAM* publisher Chelle Honiker in a Facebook post about an email she received in September. Honiker's email, like those other authors have received, began with praise for Honiker's book, which included the book's title and key details about the topics it covered. The sender then introduced herself as Avery Janet, an "international book marketing partner," and offered marketing services that would provide Amazon reviews and a boost to the book's sales on the platform. The signature even included links to a Gravatar portfolio, a WordPress site, and a photo, allegedly of the sender.

However, reading the email's content and looking at the websites from the email's signature, all were likely AI generated. Although the photo in the email signature was real, a reverse-image search revealed it was a photo of Mary David, the operations manager at Lockheed Martin—not Avery Janet.

Honiker's email, and those that many authors are now receiving, according to posts in author groups on social media, was a marketing scam, similar to others that have targeted indie authors for years, says Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi) Outreach Manager Michael La Ronn. But the emails authors are receiving today could pose more of a challenge for authors trying to identify them.

"In the past, these emails would usually have pretty terrible typos. They wouldn't be very well written," La Ronn says. "But now they're written so that it feels like the person has read the author's book, and in some cases, emails that I've received personally, it even references things in the book, like character names or things that might be in the book description—things like that that really make it feel personalized."

Yet La Ronn offers the same assessment of the text as Honiker: "If you read the text, it's very clearly written by an AI—copied straight out of ChatGPT."



Spot the Scam

Unlike with previous scams, authors have noted that their email service providers have not reliably marked these marketing emails as spam, making them harder to separate from messages sent by real readers. There's also still no foolproof way to identify works that have been AI generated; however, some authors have suggested the fraudulent emails they've encountered have felt overly enthusiastic or wordy, or they've flagged the message because of how intensely the sender promoted their services.

In addition, searching social media posts on the topic highlights some common errors authors have noted to help identify the suspicious emails.

- **Odd or Flipped Names:** The first name and last name of the sender can often appear swapped in the AI-generated messages. An odd word also sometimes replaces the first or last name, or the sender addresses the author the wrong way, such as by their last name alone.
- **Strange Emails:** Does the sender's email make sense, or is it a random combination of numbers and letters? Although not all scam emails are identifiable this way, many come from randomly generated addresses that are unintelligible.
- **Only One Book:** Established authors with multiple books published have noted emails that refer to a book as if it is the only one the author has published. Senders often frame their emails as if they are messaging a new author.
- **Straight from the Blurb:** The fraudulent emails often include several details from an author's book in the first paragraph and praise the author's work, making the sender seem more trustworthy. However, in many cases, these details mirror the information included in the book's blurb or marketing copy, without going deeper.
- **Sender Does Not Exist:** When in doubt, Google the name, email address, or any other identifying information listed in the email, La Ronn says. "Usually, you're able to tell that these are problematic because you can look at the email, you can look at the name of the person, and when you go to Google them, they don't exist, or there's no website. There's no presence at all."

“The tried-and-true basics of avoiding scams still apply: Be cautious, do your homework and thoroughly vet any provider you want to work with, and use author communities and your personal network to verify if a provider is legitimate.

— Michael La Ronn
Outreach Manager,
Alliance of Independent Authors



“It’s important to make a distinction that readers generally reach out to give you praise on a book or to point something out in a book. Rarely do they reach out with a marketing service,” La Ronn says. “And generally, there will be context clues in a reader’s email that won’t exist in an AI-written email that hasn’t read your book.” He recommends authors always proceed with caution regarding unsolicited tools or services. Paid book reviews are also often against retailers’ terms of service, and can include heavy penalties against the author if caught.

“The tried-and-true basics of avoiding scams still apply: Be cautious, do your homework and thoroughly vet any provider you want to work with, and use author communities and your personal network to verify if a provider is legitimate,” La Ronn advises. “If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.”

Author, Beware

The marketing scam, while common, is not the only one targeting authors. La Ronn warns of another AI-related scam affecting the industry in which a service provider, such as a copywriter, editor, or cover designer, falsely markets a service as if it is being completed by a human but primarily uses AI to complete the work. He recommends asking any service provider upfront about whether they use AI in their final product and, if they do, how it is used. He also encourages authors to ask for a written contract from any hired service provider in case any issues arise. “Ultimately, the author is responsible for anything they publish under their name, but having something in writing can help, and simply asking about this at all may deter bad actors,” he writes.

Pro Tip:

Paul Austin Ardoin analyzed other common cybersecurity threats targeting indie authors in the January 2024 issue of *IAM*. Read more about these, and how to avoid them, at <https://indieauthormagazine.com/more-scams-are-targeting-authors-how-you-can-avoid-them-from-a-cybersecurity-expert>.

La Ronn suggests authors review the ALLi service ratings directory and ask other authors for advice if something they encounter in their business seems suspicious. The ALLi Watchdog Desk maintains the organization’s service ratings directory, a database of author-related organizations, platforms, and service providers that have been reviewed by ALLi’s team. The database is available at <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/best-self-publishing-services>; a more detailed version of the database is available to ALLi members on the ALLi dashboard. Additionally, authors can submit information about a specific service provider for ALLi to review—though La Ronn asks authors to avoid submitting information from the email scams to the directory, as the names and contact information across emails change frequently.



“Scammers always evolve,” La Ronn says. Although he first noticed the marketing emails in the spring of this year, he expects they will have shifted formats by this time next year, once senders realize authors are no longer falling victim to the current tactic. In the meantime, he encourages authors to remain vigilant, and to reach out to local law enforcement if they believe they may have fallen victim to a scam.

“Sunlight is the best disinfectant,” La Ronn says. “Just like before the age of AI, we would always encourage people to use your best judgment. Use your network. If something doesn’t make sense or you’re not quite sure, there are lots of different author communities out there [where] you can ask your question, and I’m sure you can probably get an answer really quickly from other people on whether something is suspicious or not. Let’s lean on each other and use the community as well for these sorts of things.” ■





Nicole Schroeder

Nicole Schroeder is a storyteller at heart. As the editor in chief of Indie Author Magazine, she brings nearly a decade of journalism and editorial experience to the publication, delighting in any opportunity to tell true stories and help others do the same. She holds a bachelor's degree from the Missouri School of Journalism and minors in English and Spanish. Her previous work includes editorial roles at local publications, and she's helped edit and produce numerous fiction and nonfiction books, including a Holocaust survivor's memoir, alongside independent publishers. Her own creative writing has been published in national literary magazines. When she's not at her writing desk, Nicole is usually in the saddle, cuddling her guinea pigs, or spending time with family. She loves any excuse to talk about Marvel movies and considers National Novel Writing Month its own holiday.



Self, Published

Marginalized Authors Find Freedom to Share Their Stories Authentically in Indie Publishing

In 2009, author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie delivered a TED Talk that would be echoed in public schools across the United States. Titled “The Danger of a Single Story,” she began her presentation with a story about herself—a child in Nigeria reading Eurocentric children’s books that were absent of her culture and her perspective.

According to a 2020 *New York Times* analysis, 90 percent of American-published fiction books between 1950 and 2018 were written by white authors. During the same year, the National Endowment of the Arts released a report that indicated approximately a quarter of regular readers are people of color. After the murder of George Floyd in 2020, many American institutions vowed to confront racial inequity, including several in the publishing industry. According to PEN America, traditional publishing houses pledged to invest in people of color’s stories and examine policies supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Although the *New York Times* report does not distinguish between self-publishing and traditional publishing, historically, the financial disparity in authorship has favored those with the availability to write and the resources to publish. With existing biases present across the publishing ecosystem, marginalized writers have found greater creative autonomy as self-publishers and indie authors to explore identity on the page.

Bringing Southern Comfort to a Fantasy World

Deston Munden, Fantasy and Sci-Fi author of *Tavern*, writes with authenticity and accessibility. Both of his genres tend to use formal language or words that aren't easily understood by the layperson, he says; he seeks to change that.

Munden's values as a Black author from Outerbanks, North Carolina, have guided his journey through indie authorship. Munden was initially rejected by traditional publishing houses that told him they were unsure how to market him, even though today he's often told by fans that his writing is emotional and easy to connect with. "It's harder ... to market when you're a minority because people already have expectations of you," Munden says. "Even the people within your minority have expectations of what you should be doing, and that is probably one of the biggest uphill battles with being a minority indie publisher."

Munden seeks to reflect his lived experiences in his writing—even though his stories take place far beyond our reality. "You don't see a lot of Black Southern Fantasy writers. You don't see them at all, really," Munden says. "Usually they're in the Midwest or the North. I'm in a weird space where a lot of people are like, 'Your accent don't feel right.'"

Munden's observations have been made by others in the industry. The Southern Review of Books, an independent press in North Carolina, released a statement in 2020 about the challenges of bringing attention to regional Southern voices. "In publishing, as in politics, money has a voice, and the continued consolidation of publishing companies and the money behind them will widen the chasm between the haves and have-nots." The statement reaffirmed their dedication to celebrating the chance for greater representation of the South in literature.

Munden's second novel, *Dusk Mountain Blues*, centers a self-proclaimed hillbilly family, the Caldwells, who live on a backwater planet. The term hillbilly is often thrown at rural Americans condescendingly, implying poverty, ignorance, and violence. So when a beta reader made an offhand comment about space hillbillies, Munden felt strongly about including the wording in the final print to emphasize that the rural South is a place of positivity, empathy, and knowledge.

Munden's fans have expressed surprise at how accepting his worlds

“You don’t see a lot of Black Southern Fantasy writers. You don’t see them at all, really. ... I’m in a weird space where a lot of people are like, “Your accent don’t feel right.”

— Deston Munden
Fantasy and Sci-Fi author

are. To this, Munden again expresses his desire for accessible storytelling.

“I want to be the change I want to see in the world,” Munden says. “There’s not a lot of people like me, so I want to change that by presenting it in a way that you can come to me as much as I can come to you.”

Stoking Imagination by Diversifying

Falencia Jean-Francois, who uses she/her and they/them pronouns, planned on marketing to a traditional publishing house until she discovered an easier path through self-publishing. After publishing her first two Romantasy books, Jean-Francois, who lives with their partner in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, self-published *Devil of the Deep*, a Haitian-inspired Fantasy novel set on the high seas, featuring queer romance, pirates, and religious conflict. That was when Bindery Books, an independent press, reached out to Jean-Francois about republishing as an opportunity to deepen the story.

“I was also going through a hard time and having a hard year, and kind of finding myself in different ways, and so it felt right to showcase my identities,” Jean-Francois says. “I wanted to see more representation of Haitians in the publishing world. I wanted to see more representations of queer folks in the publishing world. Those two identities together are significant.”

Jean-Francois also makes an effort to incorporate the languages she speaks into her texts, with an emphasis on Haitian Creole. “I really want to showcase Haitian Creole for the beautiful language that it is and raise more awareness of its status as one of Haiti’s official languages,” Jean-Francois says.

Other indie authors have sought to incorporate their native languages into their books, despite messaging from traditional publishers that this can make the book harder to market. Gloria Anzaldúa, author of *How to Tame a Wild Tongue*, received criticism throughout her career for her mixed use of

English, Spanish, and Chicano dialects in her writing. She coined the effort to stifle her and other language speakers “linguistic terrorism” and purposely left passages untranslated in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*.

The United States has consistently low representation of translated works, cited at 3 percent of all published books. There is no precise data about the number of bilingual books in the United States, nor regarding bilingual LGBTQ+ stories.

Jean-Francois sees a mirror between traditional publishing and the independent publishing ecosystem and calls out indie and self-publishers for emulating the traditional publishing world as a method for achieving success.

“There’s room for a little bit more imagination as to what self-publishing can truly be,” Jean-Francois says. “That is where the inclusivity would come in. That being said, I still think that both indie and traditional publishing exist within the systems and structures that are overwhelmingly non-diverse.”



Balancing Perception and Identity

Illustrator and author Elaine Ho is wary of assigning herself a genre based on her identity. Having grown up in Singapore, having graduated with a degree in psychology, and now as an illustrator by trade, Ho navigates independent publishing through many lenses.

Her latest book, *Cry, Voidbringer*, is a dark political novel exploring postcolonial societies repeating the crimes of their oppressors. She doesn't want the book described as an Asian Fantasy novel; the setting is a fictional country, where fictional languages are spoken.

"I didn't want to pigeonhole this book as an Asian Fantasy," Ho says. "I wanted it to be taken as a Fantasy, a political Fantasy, on its own merits, and not to be pulled out on TikTok or whatever, saying, 'It's Asian Appreciation Month. Here's a bunch of Asian authors that you should read.'"

Her experience as an illustrator drives her understanding of how books are marketed and shelved. As such, the cover for *Cry, Voidbringer* is minimal, with a gray background, simple lettering, and a white void expanding from the text. The halo effect, or "judging a book by its cover," is a cognitive bias a reader develops when they see a book cover. There they can decide the book's genre and quality. Ho took this into account when designing the cover for her book.

"I can see the importance of highlighting diverse authors, and I fully agree with that," Ho said. "But at the same time, I also think that it creates a pigeonhole for authors of color to be writing in a particular way that reflects their particular culture, and then that stifles them."

Ho believes that it's too early to know if representation in the publishing workforce and the expansion of the indie author ecosystem will change the identity tokenization. At the same time,

Jean-Francois says change won't come from greater content representation but from representation in the decision-making process. To enact it, she encourages readers to support marginalized authors by buying books, reading them, and discussing them.

At the end of her TED Talk, Ngozi Adichie warned that empowering one narrative reduces lived experiences and complex communities to one dimension, leading to greater misinformation and stereotyping. Munden echoes her sentiments—and views it as a mindset shift that can happen among authors, too.

"We tend to forget that we're people, not problems. And we need to start accepting that people want to write and be who they are," Munden says. "That's one of the biggest things that I had to learn as an author, is to just let myself be myself. I can't be anyone else, and what I bring to the table is going to be unique if I know how to present it to someone." ■

"I didn't want to pigeonhole this book as an Asian Fantasy. I wanted it to be taken as a Fantasy, a political Fantasy, on its own merits ..."

— Elaine Ho
illustrator, Fantasy author



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.



The Swiss Army Knife of Book Marketing

Universal Book Links Connect Readers with Your Titles—and Do So Much More

You've written the book, edited it, designed a beautiful cover, and hit publish. But how do you get readers to the right place to buy it? Particularly for authors who publish wide, discoverability can be even more challenging; multiple storefronts means multiple listings to advertise and promote to readers.

That's where universal book links (UBLs) come in. A UBL is a shareable link that directs readers to your book across multiple retailers and formats. Instead of pasting a cluttered list of retailer logos or multiple URLs, you share a single link. There, readers are presented with a simple menu of all available storefront options, so they can choose the store they prefer.

This small tool can make a big difference in how professional your marketing looks and how easily readers can purchase your books. Some also make it easier to track engagement and sales across platforms, so you can determine which sites are more popular among your audience. But like every tool in publishing, UBLs come with both benefits and drawbacks, and choosing the right one depends on your individual author business.

The Pros of Using UBLs

UBLs streamline your marketing. Instead of cluttering your website, Facebook ads, or newsletters with five different buttons, they allow you to use a single link and make your calls-to-action look sharper and more professional.

If you're publishing widely, UBLs reinforce the fact that your book isn't just on Amazon. This can broaden your audience beyond Kindle readers and help you reach fans who prefer Kobo in Canada, Tolino in Germany, or Apple Books in the US. Even for authors who are exclusive to one platform or sell directly on their website, UBLs provide a way to link readers to multiple local stores at once.

Most UBL providers offer services beyond link consolidation. Several platforms let you customize your link with a short, memorable tag, making it easier for readers to type or recall later, or for authors to share in an interview or on promotional materials.

UBLs also often include built-in tracking. Books2Read, for example, lets users see which retailers get the most clicks, from which countries readers are coming, and which devices they're using. This data can

be used to fine-tune your marketing spend and make decisions about additional formats, such as translations, in the future.

Finally, UBLs provide flexibility and can simplify the work needed to update metadata or marketing materials over time. If your retailer links change or release additional formats or listings on new platforms, UBLs allow you to forgo tracking down every blog post or newsletter where you dropped a link. You can update the destinations behind your UBL, and the front-facing link stays the same.

Pro Tip:

UBLs aren't just for ebooks. Many services allow you to add links to your print and audiobook editions as well, so readers can choose the format they prefer from a single entry point.



The Cons of Using UBLs

UBLs are a useful marketing and promotional tool for authors to consider, though they aren't universally beneficial. Before choosing a UBL service, consider potential challenges UBLs may pose within your business as well as their benefits.

1

Extra Click for Readers:

UBLs add an extra step for readers to find your book: A reader clicks your link, then must click again to select their store. In marketing terms, this is called “friction.” Even one extra click can reduce conversions, especially for impulse buys.

Pro Tip:

If your readership is overwhelmingly Kindle- or KU-focused, sending them through a UBL may feel unnecessary. In some scenarios, such as with targeted Amazon ads, a direct Amazon link can actually outperform a UBL and may be a better option.

2

Limited Branding Control:

Some services lock you into using their domain in your UBL. Although you can customize the tail end of the link, the overall look is branded to the provider, not you. Authors who want everything under their own domain may prefer to create a custom redirect link on their website instead.

3

Data Ownership:

Using a UBL service to create your links often means the analytics are hosted by the service as well. If that company ever shuts down or changes its terms of service, you could lose both your data and the functionality of your links. Although this is unlikely for established providers, it's a risk worth noting any time you rely on an outside service provider within your business.

4

Not Always Ad-Friendly:

Certain ad platforms, such as Amazon Ads, don't allow UBLs. Others may permit them but perform less effectively with them. Whenever you're running paid advertising, test whether a direct retailer link gives you stronger results.

How to Create a Universal Book Link

Several platforms offer UBL creation services. Books2Read, from Draft2Digital, is among the most popular platforms for wide authors, and Booklinker is among the most popular platforms for authors selling on Amazon but who want to direct readers to the appropriate local storefront. Other platforms, such as PublishDrive's link generator or Author Helper Suite's ReaderLinks, offer similar functionality with additional customization or analytics.

When deciding on a UBL service, some factors to consider are compatibility with your existing website, security, cost, and additional tools or features offered as a part of the service or as available add-ons.

Platform	Cost	Customization and Link Control	Analytics and Tracking	Affiliate Support	Special Capabilities	Limitations
Books2Read	Free	Custom slug, manual link edits, preferred store	Clicks, store breakdowns, localized link per device	Yes (for supported stores)	Reading lists, rescan, multi-format	Locked to Books2Read.com domain; simpler feature set
Booklinker/Geniuslink	Free (Booklinker); starting at \$6 per month (Geniuslink)	Vanity landing pages, geo-targeting, routing rules (Geniuslink only)	Geniuslink offers more robust tracking of affiliate links and retargeting abilities	Yes (for Amazon and other supported stores)	Advanced routing, campaign control	More complexity; cost scales with use
BookFunnel	Tiered starting at \$1.67 per month	Full landing pages, formatting, image, layout, expiry	Page analytics, exports, pixel data	Yes	"Read now" links, free giveaway pages, domain mapping	Private landing pages (not SEO); plan-based limitations for certain features
Author Helper Suite (ReaderLinks)	\$24.99 per month (\$239 per year)	Geo-links, custom links, QR codes, MyBooks catalog	Integrated link and marketing analytics	Yes	Full author tool suite (links, planning, and analytics)	Robust suite of tools may be overly costly for those looking for stand-alone link service; subscription dependency
Linktree (Book Links)	Free, or tiers starting at \$6 per month, if paying yearly	Basic layout; some Book Links customization	Basic click metrics; advanced analytics in Pro tier	Yes (via affiliate token in Pro tier)	Central "hub" link with book listings	Not a full landing-page tool (link-in-bio format); limited design

Where to Use UBLs (and Where to Avoid Them)

Even if you choose to use a UBL, the links aren't a one-size-fits-all solution. They work brilliantly in some contexts and less so in others.

Use UBLs in places such as

- on your author website, which is clean, central, and easy to update;
- in your newsletter, where you're writing to fans who may shop at different stores;
- in social media bios, where space is limited and you want one memorable link; or
- in cross-promotion swaps with other wide authors.

Avoid UBLs

- in ads targeting readers on a specific platform, such as Amazon. These readers want the fastest route possible, and the extra click could hurt conversions.
- in time-sensitive promos, such as flash sales, where speed matters more than optionality.
- in promotions or marketing campaigns in which a discount or sale is exclusive to a particular platform and not available through every storefront. In these cases, direct readers solely to the listings that are part of the promotion rather than to every store where a book is available.

Tips for Making the Most of Your UBLs

When using UBLs as part of your marketing strategy, consider these additional steps and best practices around the links.

- **Always Customize Your Links.** A branded tail (e.g., /distilledmagic) looks far more professional than a random string of letters and numbers.
- **Group Series Together.** Books2Read allows you to create reading lists or a single UBL for your whole series. Investigate whether you can group books or series under one link using your UBL platform.
- **Test in Ads.** Run A/B tests with a UBL versus a direct Amazon link and track which converts better in your business's marketing strategies. Don't assume one will always outperform the other.
- **Use QR Codes.** Create QR codes for your UBLs for print marketing, such as on business cards, bookmarks, or swag. Readers can scan the code, and they'll be taken to your retailer list.

UBLs are a simple but powerful tool in an indie author's marketing toolkit. They clean up your calls-to-action, support wide distribution, and provide valuable insights about where your readers are buying. They also keep your marketing future-proof by providing one stable link you can use across all channels.

For those wanting more control, an alternative to UBLs is to create a page on your site that lists all retailer links, then promote that page link instead of relying solely on a third-party provider.

That said, UBLs aren't always the best choice, especially if your audience is primarily based on Amazon or if you're running conversion-sensitive ads. Like any tool, they work best when used strategically.

Think of UBLs as the Swiss Army knife of author marketing: flexible, reliable, and incredibly handy when you need one tool that does it all. Sometimes, a single-purpose screwdriver, like a direct Amazon link, is the sharper choice. But when used wisely, UBLs can help you and your marketing look more professional, sell more books across multiple platforms, and make your readers' buying experience smoother. That's what every indie author wants: more books in more readers' hands, with as little friction as possible. ■

Jenn Mitchell



Jenn Mitchell writes Urban Fantasy and Weird West, as well as culinary cozy mysteries under the pen name, J Lee Mitchell. She writes, cooks, and gardens in the heart of South Central Pennsylvania's Amish Country. When she's not doing these things, she dreams of training llama riding ninjas. She enjoys traveling, quilting, hoarding cookbooks, Sanntangling, and spending time with the World's most patient and loving significant other.



Ebook. Paperback. Hardcover.
Easy Formatting. On your own.



INDIE AUTHOR MAGAZINE

YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Behind the Scenes Author
Interviews, How-To Tech
Tutorials, and Tips for
New Storytellers!


SUBSCRIBE



[YOUTUBE.COM/@INDIEAUTHORMAGAZINE](https://youtube.com/@indieauthormagazine)



Online Writing Community Round-Up



There's A Digital Writing Space for Everyone. Which Is Right for You?

Conferences and author events spark connections, but the real magic often happens when you carry those relationships back home. A digital writing community suited to your interests awaits—and you don't even need to leave your home or change out of your cozy slippers.

With a few pecks at your keyboard, you can enter a realm of kindred spirits to spark your creativity, hold you accountable, and discuss publishing trends. Launched by writers for writers, the writing communities on this list give you a buffet of choices from which to choose—and though most of these author communities are hosted on Facebook, a few host community spaces outside of social media channels as well, so you can connect with your community from anywhere.



20BooksTo50K®

Before Author Nation took over the Las Vegas event, 20BooksTo50K® hosted the largest annual indie author conference in the world. The Facebook-based group that spawned the event is also one of the largest online writing communities on social media. Founded by Michael Anderle, the group's name comes from Anderle's goal to publish twenty books or more in his career, a number he determined could earn \$50,000 annually based on his average sales. Today, the group provides a space for indie authors to learn and share winning strategies for self-publishing multiple books.

Best for: Authors focused on building or expanding their self-published book catalog and generating sustainable income; authors looking for ideas on how to market their work

Members: Around 81,400

Find it at:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/g/16wkZDJ1uj>

Successful Indie Author

Think of this Facebook-based group, founded by former 20BooksTo50K® co-founder Craig Martelle, as a writing community water cooler, but instead of trading thoughts on last Sunday's game, members instead trade insights and strategies to help one another develop their businesses. Along with member posts, Martelle also frequently posts advice and musings from his own author career.

Best for: Authors who are looking for mutual support, encouragement, goal-sharing, and advice on marketing and writing

Members: Around 8,000

Find it at:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/g/1WFH13XAdG>



Write Fast, Sustainably

Accountability is a good thing—especially when it helps you reach your publishing goals. Sci-Fi author Kevin McLaughlin's Write Fast, Sustainably Facebook group is the community to help hold those fingers to the heat of your computer's central processing unit, keeping you on productivity track without asking you to burn the candle on both ends—and burn yourself out in the process. The group encourages members to set a weekly goal and then check in either daily or weekly—whatever will keep you on track to The End.

Best for: Authors who want to finish and release books consistently but also build long-term, healthy habits that won't lead to burnout

Members: 158

Find it at:

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Indie Inspiration® with Elana Johnson Discussion Group

Author Elana Johnson leads a Facebook-based, ongoing group discussion for indie authors with a focus on inspiring one another and learning self-publishing strategies, such as marketing systems and managing multiple genres and pen names—all topics for which Johnson herself is known. Go there to share your own wins and glean wisdom from others. The focus here is on keeping the vibe upbeat and sharing the reality of self-publishing while avoiding self-promotion and doom-and-gloom commiserating.

Best for: Authors who want an upbeat, supportive community to share wins, stay inspired, and learn practical self-publishing strategies without the noise of self-promotion or negativity

Members: Around 6,200

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Wide for the Win

Author Erin Wright's online community includes indie and hybrid authors and offers a space to collaborate and hobnob with other authors about the industry. The focus of the group is on "wide" publishing topics, meaning distributing your books beyond Amazon KDP's exclusivity model—discussing Kindle Unlimited or KDP Select goes against the group's rules. In addition to a group page on Facebook, Wide for the Win also has a website-hosted community space for members.

Best for: Authors who want a larger publishing reach beyond Amazon exclusivity and the ability to connect with other indie and hybrid authors to share strategies, industry insights, and support

Members: Around 18,700

Find it at: <https://wideforthewin.com>;
[https://www.facebook.com/groups/
wideforthewin](https://www.facebook.com/groups/wideforthewin)



Heart Breathings

Author Sarra Cannon's Heart Breathings writing community sprints together, though don't worry about dusting off your running shoes. The community offers the opportunity for members to share writing advice and hosts regular writing sessions and monthly events, such as Double Down Day, a monthly challenge to write twice your normal word count. Additionally, the group hosts online writing courses several times a year for a fee.

Best for: Authors who want structured writing sprints, regular challenges, and a supportive community to share advice and boost their productivity

Members: Around 5,000

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com/share/g/19kuKqc2Mp](https://www.facebook.com/share/g/19kuKqc2Mp)



Self Publishing Formula

The best-selling self-publisher of more than twenty books, Mark Dawson hosts the Self Publishing Formula (SPF) for other authors, which offers a range of resources, including courses, a podcast, and free books. Through SPF, members can also get access to the closed Facebook group, the SPF Community, which offers discussions on marketing and promoting your work and community support.

Best for: Authors who want comprehensive resources and community support for self-publishing, including marketing strategies, promotion tips, and guidance from an experienced, best-selling indie author

Members: Around 54,000

Where to Find It: Sign up for SPF at <https://selfpublishingformula.com/start-here>. If you have an SPF account, connect with the private online community at <https://www.facebook.com/selfpublishingformula>.



Internet Writing Workshop



Write - Critique - Learn

Would you like the benefit of fellow writer critiques without having to run out to a coffee shop or gussy up for a Zoom call every week? The Internet Writing Workshop, hosted entirely via email, may appeal. Members can join an array of genre-specific email lists, as well as discussion lists and a blog, all focused on writing craft and critique exchanges. All communications are done via email, and minimum participating requirements ensure that give and take are balanced.

Best for: Authors who want thoughtful, genre-specific critiques and writing discussions entirely via email, without the need for in-person or video meetings

Members: Unknown; works through a forum and email-based mailing lists and groups

Find it at: <https://internetwritingworkshop.org> ■



Desiree Smith-Daughety

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.



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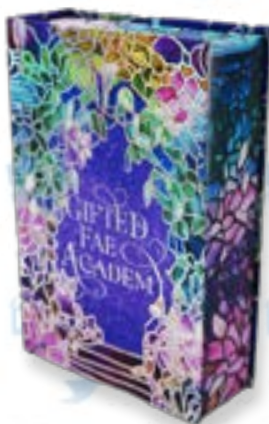
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Dear Reader

The Secret to Epistolary Writing that Sells

No story is out of reach for an author with a tale to tell. From screenplays to comic books, graphic novels to epics, often the story told is crafted for the style it's written in. One storytelling format in particular has grown more popular in recent years, especially within indie publishing: epistolary writing, or a story told through letters.

Epistolary writing is not a narrative novel chopped into letter-length chapters or reframed as personal communication between characters. Although epistolary novels are most often stories told exclusively between characters in letter format, journal entries, newspaper articles, police reports, and anything outside the typical narrative format can be considered epistolary writing. Notable epistolary novels include *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker and *Lady Susan* by Jane Austen; in each, the characters' use of letters is inherent to the story and creates a uniquely immersive experience for the reader.

Stoker's *Dracula* is told through a collection of diary entries, letters, telegrams, newspaper clippings, and ship logs, all of which add elements of authenticity and realism to the story. The fragmented style makes the story feel like a collection of evidence, and readers are positioned as investigators rather than flies on the wall.





In *The Color Purple*, Walker's Celie, an African American woman living in the rural South in the early twentieth century, writes letters to God and later to her sister Nettie. The story follows Celie's journey as she grows beyond oppression and abuse to self-discovery, independence, and empowerment; Walker uses the epistolary format to deepen the already intimate details of the story, letting the reader peek into Celie's mind and hear the story strictly through her voice.

Austen's *Lady Susan* is a sharp, satirical novel that follows Lady Susan Vernon, a recently widowed and manipulative character. The story is a series of letters exchanged between Lady Susan, her confidante Mrs. Johnson, the De Courcy family and others as she lays out an ambitious plan to secure advantageous marriages for herself and her daughter, Frederica. Ultimately her plans collapse, and readers can better

see Lady Susan's psychological insight and multiple perspectives on a story through her communication with other characters.

From the haunted halls of a Transylvanian castle to the rural South in the twentieth century, these three titles demonstrate that every genre has an opportunity to use the epistolary format. Each showcases a deepening connection between the reader and the characters; as epistolary writing focuses on personal communication between a character and someone else, the reader receives unique insights that might otherwise only be reserved for internal monologues or reveals throughout the story. Because letters and journal entries are typically intimate and personal by nature, epistolary stories grant readers a unique opportunity to better understand a character's perspective and even to feel like they have become part of the story themselves.



How to Write Epistolary Novels

Keeping the basics of what epistolary writing is above, there are commonalities among almost all epistolary stories and several tropes within the format to consider when crafting your own.

● **Brevity Is Commonplace:** Letters are shorter and to the point, and as such, the writer is limited on space and must keep the details to those most important—and those that the character has observed and written down.

● **More than One Character:** Most epistolary novels include more than one character; the story then becomes a back-and-forth communication between multiple characters as each fills the other in on what they're thinking or what they thought, what they're doing or what they did.

● **Let the Character Speak:** The unique voice of each character should be clear in each stanza, chapter, or letter in an epistolary story. The writer can use this opportunity to contrast the character's differences in personality and writing style.

● **Non-Letter Elements:** Although not required of an epistolary story, the use of non-letter elements can flesh out a story outside of the traditional format for an epistolary novel, filling out the world around the character. Ship logs, recipes, journal entries, and newspaper articles are all common.

Bringing It Together

Epistolary novels aren't a new concept, but they present a unique form of storytelling for the author who might want to add deeper, more immersive layers to their stories and their characters. Like a novella, a trilogy, or an epic, an epistolary novel is another format for authors to expand their comfort zone to explore—and a way to deliver a story to readers in a much more immersive and intimate way. ■

Pro Tip:

The strongest epistolary stories make it clear why, within the characters' world, they are collecting the documents or writing the letters that make up the novel. Consider reading a few of the books above to see why those stories had to be told in the epistolary format. Then, ask yourself the same question about your own project.



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.

reedsy**studio**

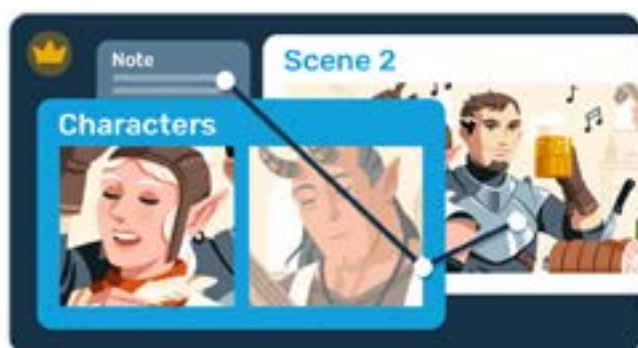
Every writer needs a Studio

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The screenshot displays the reedsy studio interface, which is designed for writers to manage their manuscripts. The interface is divided into several sections:

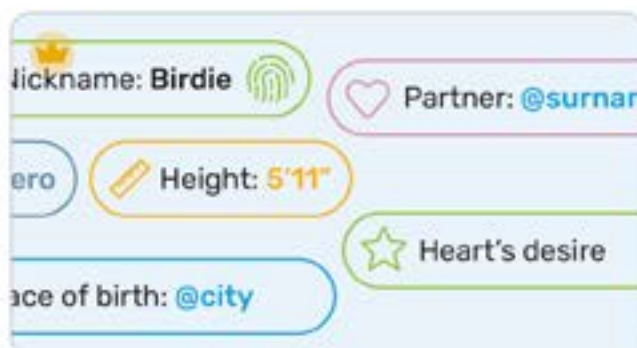
- Manuscript Sidebar:** Located on the left, it includes a 'Manuscript' header with an 'Add +' button. Below it are sections for 'Front matter' (with an 'edit' link), 'Copyright', 'Table of Contents', and 'Body' (with an 'edit' link). The 'Body' section is expanded, showing '1 Chapter 1' and 'Back matter' (also with an 'edit' link). A '12,340 words' counter is visible at the bottom of the sidebar.
- Main Editor:** The central area shows a manuscript titled 'Rocket Bride'. The chapter title is 'The Rehearsal D'. The text reads: "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?"
- Goals & Insights Panel:** Located on the right, it shows a 'Today' summary with a word count of +1000 and a goal of +1123. Below this is a calendar view for the week of October 23rd to 27th. A 'Manuscript goal' section shows a progress bar at 30% (12,079 words) towards a target of 40,000 words, with a due date of 30 Nov. A note indicates 'Write 1,117 words/day to finish on time'.
- Main Characters Panel:** At the bottom, a 'Main characters' section displays three character cards: 'Princess Andromeda', 'Aether Lefield', and 'Captain Perseus', each with a corresponding illustration.

The interface also features a 'Settings' button in the top right corner and a 'Jump to today' link. A 'reedsy' logo is visible in the bottom left corner of the manuscript editor area.



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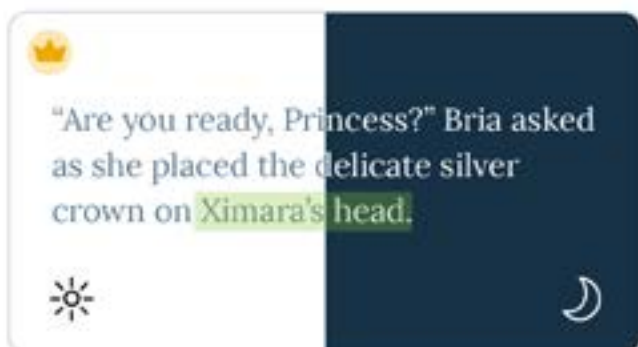
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