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a professional organization
of writers of popular fiction

 **novelists,
inc.**

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President's Voice

By Lisa Hughey



The next two issues of *Nink* are jam-packed with articles from all the workshops presented at this year's conference. A huge thank you to Harper St. George and Trish Milburn for organizing and managing the member volunteers. Big thanks to everyone who took notes and reported on the sessions. This is an invaluable benefit of NINC membership, especially relevant to those unable to attend the conference. However, the sheer amount of information can be overwhelming.

We're all on a hamster wheel of "shoulds" and "have tos" to keep up with the demands of an author career these days. Both indie and trad authors are required to shoulder more of the marketing and reader/fan building than ever before.

The conference covered many different options for growing our business, but it's good to remember to take a step back and consider what will work for you rather than chasing the next social media, genre, or marketing trend. This is a good time to start planning for next year, figuring out what to keep doing, and what to cull. I've edited out some noise—out of necessity—and returned my focus to the story, searching for the joy in my work.

As a reminder, **NINC membership renewal starts Nov. 15**. Please remember to fill out the **ACA survey** regarding what you write and what is in print. NINC receives monies from the Author's Coalition based on our member responses.

Happy fall!

~ Lisa

USA Today bestselling author [Lisa Hughey](#) writes about strong heroines who are perfectly capable of rescuing themselves and the heroes who love both their strength and their vulnerability. She pens romances of all types—suspense, paranormal, and contemporary—but at their heart, her books celebrate the power of love. She lives in Cape Ann, Massachusetts, with her fabulously supportive husband, two out of three awesome mostly grown kids, and one somewhat grumpy cat.

About NINC

NINC is committed to welcoming a diverse and inclusive membership to our organization and serving all members. No author will ever be discriminated against on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual beliefs if any, ability, nationality, or age. It is NINC's desire and goal to make sure that every author member feels welcomed and accepted and heard.

About *Nink*

Nink's goal is to provide our readers with high-quality articles that offer critical business advice, marketing how-tos, advanced craft coaching, or strategy to continue building a career, all geared to established authors. All members should feel confident that *Nink* provides something for them. We welcome pitches and submissions from all members; [propose an article](#) or submit a [letter to the editor](#).

NINC Member Benefits

Don't forget to sign up for the [email loop](#), [critique/brainstorming group](#), [traditionally published group](#), and the members-only [Facebook group](#) if you haven't already. The [Pro Services Directory](#), member [discount page](#), and [sample letters](#) are also great resources.

Missing a newsletter? Past issues can be found [here](#).

Accessing the NINC Website

Not sure how to log in to the NINC website? Visit the login page here: <https://ninc.com/membership-overview/login-to-ninc/>

From the Editor

By Harper St. George



Welcome to the first of two conference issues of *Nink*. It was great to see so many of you in St. Pete Beach this year. This is the first year where things are feeling back to conference normal and better than ever. As such, you'll notice that the conference issues are bigger than last year.

For those of you who are new to NINC, the NINC conference is unique in that we try to have a reporter in every session taking notes. Our reporters then transcribe their notes into a full report. This means that members who were unable to attend can still benefit from the great workshops. It's even a great benefit for those of you who were able to attend the conference because it's impossible to go to every single session.

This issue of *Nink* includes the sessions on Thursday and Friday morning. The December issue will include the Friday afternoon and Saturday sessions. We do not cover any of the other NINC activities, including the roundtable sessions. Please remember that our reporters—while fabulous!—are not infallible, so please excuse any mistakes or incomplete information. Join me in thanking our dedicated reporters for doing such a great job. These conference issues wouldn't be possible without their conscientiousness and dedication.

We will return to our regular content in January 2023.

All my best,
~Harper

Harper St. George writes historical romance set in various time periods from the Viking Era to the Gilded Age. Her latest series is *The Gilded Age Heiresses*. She lives in the Atlanta area with her family.



Conference Reports

Anatomy of a Bestselling Book Launch

Presented by Skye Warren

Reported by Ines Johnson

Skye Warren is a New York Times bestselling author with over 2 million books sold. Investing in marketing and Facebook ads transformed her business into a seven-figure business, working only four hours per day.

Whether you've done a new release launch before, or you're on the cusp of your first one, this deep dive is going to be for you.

With over 50 novels of dangerous romance, Skye Warren turned her five-figure business into a seven-figure business with consistent profits. She did this by focusing on marketing and Facebook ads. She has had 18 full-priced, new release books hit the *USA Today* list, not counting discounted sales or boxed sets.

The notion that you can't control book sales is a lie. There are two pillars of a bestselling book launch. They are **visibility** and **conversion**. Take the number of readers you can reach and multiply it by the percentage of them who actually buy the book. If you can start improving this by 10%, you will grow.

There is a myth about hard work. You don't have to work overly hard in order to sell books, you just need to do the one thing that sells books. A good book does not sell itself. There are strategies behind a bestseller. If you only do the things that you like, you might miss what actually works. Just putting in the long hours doesn't mean you're making progress. The hard work will have you being really uncomfortable, but being uncomfortable is how you grow.

Here is a sample marketing plan created by a publisher that was shared with Warren:

- Send a newsletter.
- Post on Facebook.
- Post on Twitter.
- Share on Instagram.
- Write a blog post.

The problem with this marketing plan is that it only reaches current readers. And, likely, it will only reach a percentage of them, not all of the author's/publisher's readers. If you're only telling your existing readers about your new release, your sales will show attrition because readers fall off. You need to find new readers in order to grow.

The reason new readers aren't buying your book is because they don't know it exists. Marketing's purpose is to show readers that your book exists.

Here is a new marketing plan that you should adopt:

- Tell your existing readers.
- Find new readers.
- More of them.
- Even more.
- MORE.

For her latest release, Warren decided to write her passion project—a retelling of *Jane Eyre*. She found an exclusive image that perfectly portrayed a scene from the book she was writing (a handsome man walking on a pastoral moor). Unfortunately, when she put this image up against the current genre comps already available for sale on retailers, the image was clearly all wrong.

Warren's original cover image didn't pass the second pillar of a bestselling book launch, the conversion test, because it didn't meet the following milestones:

- It wasn't *very* clicky.
- It wasn't something new and fresh.
- It didn't match her author branding.
- It wasn't her aesthetic.
- It didn't represent the themes and tropes in the book.

Paying close attention to the comps that were currently on the bestsellers list, Warren changed her cover to reflect what readers were buying, even though the new scene (which depicted a lock and a key) was not a scene in her book. The new scene evoked the milestones that would get readers to understand this was the type of book they were looking for and would therefore one-click.

There are four cornerstones that Warren relies on to hit her release and baseline goals. They are influencers, advertising, fan base, and back matter.

Influencers

An influencer is a reader who loves books like yours and they've built a community around them. To find book influencers, look on blogs, Goodreads, YouTube, Instagram, and BookTok. The best way to engage an influencer is to interact with them before you do the ask.

List three comparable bestselling titles to your new release—that are selling—and let the influencer know that your book compares to these titles. People do not like to read things that are unlike something they've read before. Reach out for blurb requests from these influencers, including the comparable authors you listed.

You could also look on Goodreads for reviewers of comparable titles. Once you find them, Warren suggests looking for the reviewers who are posting five-star reviews. The high reviews could be an indication that the readers truly enjoy the genre. Visit their blog or website and search out contact info to message them with a request.

Advertising

Marketing is getting your books in front of the readers who are looking for them. Warren recommends using what she calls the “advertising core story” to let readers know that your book is their catnip.

There are three parts to the advertising core story. Every ad needs to have social proof, a “why now?,” and character and conflict.

The new release answers “why now?”

The social proof is quotes and blurbs you got from the influencers you reached out to, including author blurbs, as well as highly starred reader reviews.

Character and conflict are the genre and trope(s) of your story. For romance, it’s who he is, who she is, and why they can’t be together.

Warren admits that preorder ads are the single hardest way to get a reader to buy a book. The reason is because you’re trying to convince someone who hasn’t heard of you to complete an impulse buy for something they’ll get in the future. Still, Warren runs low-cost preorder ads for two weeks before release. She has found that these low-cost preorder ads prime the pump before the new release launches.

Fan base

You want to mobilize your fan base because you know they’ll like your book. One way to do this is with a new-release giveaway. In this form of advertising, the giveaway has readers selling the book with their excitement.

Warren sends out her regular newsletter during the new release time frame. She follows that regular newsletter with a plain text newsletter and finds that she gets a good response from this.

Back matter

Warren changes the back matter in her backlist catalog of books to point to the new release.

In her last release, *Overture*, she spent \$30,000 and made \$100,000. For the latest release, the Private Property Trilogy release, she spent \$100,000 in Facebook ads and made \$300,000 across the trilogy.

Warren goes into more depth in her [Author Ads Intensive course](#).



Lover of fairy tales, folklore, and mythology, [Ines Johnson](#) spends her days reimagining the stories of old in a modern world. She writes books where damsels cause the distress, princesses wield swords, and moms save the world.

The Future of Atticus: Formatting Just Got a Whole Lot Better

Presented by Dave Chesson

Reported by Jenna Kernan

Dave Chesson is the creator of Kindlepreneur.com and Publisher Rocket and co-founder of Atticus. Chesson is also a self-published author and self-described serial entrepreneur.

The future of Atticus

Atticus is the newest option for book formatting and much more. Dave Chesson, the creator of [Kindlepreneur](https://Kindlepreneur.com), began by saying that [Atticus](#) was crafted with the goal of creating the best software ever made for writing and easily creating professional books.

Chesson said that one of the problems facing authors is they often write in one program, then jump to another for collaborating, another for editing and then yet another for formatting. The Atticus program allows authors to control all three phases of book production, which are writing, collaborating, and formatting.

In the collaboration component, all interested people can work on the story in one place. A co-author, editor, formatter, and beta reader can use a link to access the manuscript and do their work, which looks like the Track Changes feature in Word. Once an editor's work is done, authors can delete their access. This also means that authors can have all their book files in one spot!

Atticus is always improving and this year alone they are adding 47 new features and users don't need to upload updates. They are automatic.

Support team

Atticus employs a [team](#), which includes tech specialists for developing and supporting the program and customer support. The customer-support personnel are all authors who understand what writers need and how to help them. The [tutorials](#) are on YouTube. There are overview videos explaining each capability and the steps to use them. Every Tuesday a team member does a live session on YouTube where you can ask questions.

Integrations

Do you use ProWritingAid or Grammarly? Often such programs are analyzing all the words you have open, including every open tab on your browser as well as your entire manuscript. As a result, these tools often slow, freeze, or cause system errors. Atticus has changed the code so that the program only searches and analyzes the section of the story you are working on, preventing those issues.

I'm a Book Brush user, so I was pleased to hear that Atticus is integrated with them. This means that once users know their trim size, they can create images inside their manuscript. Import an image from Book Brush, select the option to break the image into two, and it will fit perfectly inside a physical book. Look for the button that says *Create Image with Book Brush*. Not a Book Brush user? Book Brush will allow non-users to buy a certain number of images, so you don't even have to have an account to use this feature.

One of the Atticus features that made my eyes pop was the *Open on Page* feature. This means that *the author decides where the ebook will open*. Atticus users can choose for the reader to open to the dedication page or a lead magnate or a prologue, so readers won't skip the front matter! Just go to the formatting section and then set the *Start Page*.

Do you waste time creating custom pages and then dragging them or cutting and pasting them from previous books into your current ones? There are many parts of the front and back matter but some of those pages need frequent or occasional updating, like the "Also By" page. Atticus will allow special custom pages to *automatically update all books that use that page*! You can drag and drop these pages into new books, and when you update, Atticus will ask if you want to update every book that uses that page.

Atticus has both footnotes and endnotes. Sidenotes do not appear in ebooks, but Atticus has a special endnote insert.

Another great feature that Atticus delivers is special coding, provided by Amazon, to create the smallest possible file resulting in the lowest download cost. In other words, the cheapest possible cost for file delivery.

New features

As mentioned, Atticus is always adding new features that are available without updating. Here are some of the highlights that users can expect to see soon.

- Improved Universal Link Creation – new and improved Special Links: Amazon cuts the links they don't like so Atticus is teaming with [Booklinker](#) to create a link that you'll like. Just highlight the word you want to use to create a universal link that Amazon won't remove. Users can add a universal link to any of the book aggregators (Apple, Amazon, B&N, Google+). The program will also search for all the other places where your book is legitimately listed for sale. Then you can select the ones you wish to include in your back matter.

- Copyright Templates – Pick any one or more to use and then modify and customize them to your liking. Then keep your versions for future use. Templates include Fiction, Nonfiction, Public Domain, and General.
- Big News (Yes, Chesson buried the lead.) – **Atticus is partnering with Amazon.** Amazon decided that Atticus software is better suited to create ebooks and print books than their software. Atticus will precheck all your spelling trouble *before* uploading to Amazon, so you don't get those emails about problems. The program also tells you how many KU pages your book will qualify for. You can also see your digital delivery cost before uploading and know that their software is creating the lowest file size possible. Amazon also passes their metatags. Collaborative beta testing may be coming as early as December 2022.

Q&A

How hard is it to transfer files from another program into Atticus?

Chesson suggested that authors first try importing the pre-formatted ePub file. If that version looks wonky, they should then use the Word document.

Do you offer some training?

Yes! Begin with the Getting Started with Atticus tutorials, for example “How to Install Atticus” or “Editing Your Book Details.”

Can you format print versions?

“Our print is rock solid now,” said Chesson. He indicated that, for print versions, the program focuses on widows and orphans and getting that right. But you can opt to have it focus on page balancing. Finally, you can opt to have the program hug the middle ground between widows and orphans and page balancing.

If you have many, many books, what is the optimal way to drop books into Atticus?

Try dropping the ebook in first and see how it looks. The system will try to optimize it. But if the file has too many hang-ups from code from the old program, then upload a Word file. Each user can create their own template. They have 11 default themes and a copyright template.

I have teams that check galleys from all over the world. Will collaboration be possible for them?

Chesson said, “Collaboration will make your life incredibly easy.” Cowriters need to link to a shared account to access the program. Editors need only the link that users provide to work on the manuscript and don't need to have Atticus to edit with their type of Track Changes software.

Does Atticus have a dictionary for made-up/fantasy words?

The system default is what you use in your program. You can add words to your dictionary by right clicking. Atticus uses that. But they plan to improve this feature. Chesson also mentioned that you can use Atticus on your phone, but it doesn't yet look as responsive on the phone. They are working on a voice-to-text option so authors can dictate into the Atticus program. That way, authors can write anywhere.

Is there a dark mode for visually impaired users?

They are working on it. Check [Atticus.io/roadmap](https://atticus.io/roadmap) to see where this is in progress. They are also working on a distraction-free option.

With a universal link, what does the reader see?

The program puts in all the markets where the book is available. They are also geo-specific, and *you can add all your affiliate links*. You can do this because the affiliate link is not inside your book. It is a link that exists outside the ebook and so follows Amazon's guidelines.

Beyond Atticus, what is that glimmer in your eye?

Beyond individual authors, Chesson would like Atticus to appeal to publishers to provide a place where they can manage projects, collaborations, and uploading books to aggregators. In addition, "We are creating a free tool called Reader Scout that will alert authors when there is a price drop on their products."



Publishers Weekly bestselling author [Jenna Kernan](#) is the 2021 Florida Book Awards' bronze medal winner in Popular Fiction for her crime thriller, *A Killer's Daughter*. Look for her next book, *The Ex-Wives*, in October 2022.

The World's Your Market: Using Kobo Plus to Reach Global Readers

Presented by Rachel Wharton and Laura Granger

Reported by Cidney Swanson

Laura Granger is Kobo Writing Life's Author Engagement Manager. Rachel Wharton is the Promotions Specialist for KWL.

Kobo Writing Life (KWL) is celebrating its 10th birthday this year as the writer-facing branch of Rakuten Kobo, whose goal is providing accessibility for readers worldwide. In the past decade, KWL has debuted programs and opportunities including the KWL podcast, a promotions tab on the author dashboard, global pricing, the Kobo Plus subscription program, a distribution partnership with Overdrive, Live Q&A sessions with authors, and KWL Audio. Most recently, a new author dashboard has entered beta testing, and authors are encouraged to email the addresses at the bottom of this article to request the update if interested.

In addition to the dashboard in beta, Granger and Wharton offer the following updates for NINC authors using Kobo.

Kobo Plus

Kobo Plus is an optional monthly subscription service where readers can read as many books as they wish. The program is currently available in the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, Portugal, Italy, and France.

Authors can enroll their published titles in Kobo Plus to reach these super-readers. Kobo has no exclusivity requirements for enrolled titles. Additionally, authors can select all territories or only a specific territory depending on what they prefer. Each selection to opt into Kobo Plus is done on a per-book basis with no requirement to enroll an author's entire catalog. However, if an author wishes to enroll all their titles, this request can be sent to the Kobo Writing Life team, and the team will bulk-enroll titles on the author's behalf.

Previously, there was a requirement to keep entered titles in the program for 90 days. However, KWL discovered authors did not like this requirement and removed it. An author can now place their titles in Kobo Plus and then remove them at will.

While some authors worry about the subscription service cannibalizing sales, KWL's data suggests that this does not occur. Rather, having titles in Kobo Plus has been seen to increase

overall author revenue. This is because the reading and buying behaviors of subscribers and non-subscribers tend to be distinct and non-overlapping.

A typical Kobo Plus subscriber is among the most avid of readers. They love genre fiction, series, bundles, and boxes. They will read current titles and backlist indiscriminately, so authors can use the Kobo Plus program to create new interest in their backlist titles.

The program is extremely popular in France, Italy, and Portugal, making it ideal for those authors who have titles written in or translated into these languages.

The royalty payment model for authors with titles in Kobo Plus is complex. A full explanation can be found in the help center on the Writing Life website. In brief, however, total revenue for a title and total minutes consumed by reader creates a value per minute. A title's payout consists of minutes consumed times value per minute times author share (60%), which then equals the title's payout.

Promotional opportunities on Kobo Plus: There are a few limited promotional opportunities for Kobo Plus titles. If an author is adding their entire catalog to the program, KWL team members would love to hear about it, in case they are able to give the newly added titles a push. There is a possibility of being featured as an Author of the Month as well. Finally, based on the information an author provides, titles may be chosen for New Releases lists or to Genre lists on the Kobo retail website where they will be advertised to Kobo Plus subscribers.

Kobo tips and tricks for increasing sales

Pricing on Kobo: For all global pricing, KWL recommends manually adjusting prices so that they are attractive in each reader's home country. In most cases, the KWL dashboard will automatically convert pricing based on the first price an author enters. Thus, a 4.99 USD book might be automatically converted to 5.68 CAD. Since that 68-cent ending looks odd to Canadians, KWL recommends rounding it up (not down) to 5.99 CAD. Follow suit for every other country, using KWL recommendations when available. Since Canada is their largest market, Canadian prices in particular ought to look tidy.

Partner stores: KWL recommends targeting Kobo's partner stores directly in social media ads. For instance, target Booktopia for readers in Australia, la Feltrinelli for Italy, and so on. They suggest highlighting "In Kobo Plus" when relevant.

Book bundles: For authors with three or more books, KWL suggests creating bundles. Since there is no cap on pricing, KWL authors can find success charging prices well above 9.99 USD for a set of books. Authors will earn 70% whether the title costs \$8.99 or \$68.99. Authors should always create new, original covers for bundled books, and these should be flat covers rather than 3D covers, which Kobo readers do not respond well to. Lastly, be sure to create an easily navigable book file for a good reader experience.

Clean metadata: Authors will want to ensure that all metadata is entered carefully as this will affect promotional visibility. Check and double-check that the series title used on book one is the same as the series title used on book two. Introducing or leaving out "The" in front of the

series title will result in *two* different series that cannot be linked. Readers who search for a series won't be able to find all the books in the series.

Readers are prompted toward further books in series that they have begun, but *only if the metadata matches*. These prompts include customized prompts both onsite and via email. Readers receive "Find out what happens next" messaging to nudge them to buy the next-in-series.

Promotional opportunities: The Writing Life dashboard has a promotions tab for use by KWL authors. If an author doesn't see the promotions tab, they should email KWL and request it. Wharton updates the tab weekly, so authors are encouraged to check back regularly. There are promotions available for a variety of genres. These can include percentage-off promotions where no price change is needed, as well as other kinds of promo. In addition, authors can obtain custom promo codes by requesting them from the KWL team.

Rather than discouraging resubmission when a title is not chosen, Wharton recommends that authors submit titles again and again so that she can gain familiarity with an author's titles, which might be just right for another opportunity down the road.

Wharton's top tips for getting your titles chosen for promo include having a great cover, clean metadata, global pricing that looks attractive in each country, and reading the descriptions of each promotion carefully before applying. If a title has a BookBub featured deal or other high-profile exposure, KWL would appreciate hearing about it, and this can be noted in the "Additional Comments" box. Authors are also encouraged to add jokes to the comment box.

OverDrive: Authors can set library pricing when they opt in to distribution with OverDrive. There is no aggregator fee for this, and authors earn 50% of the sale price. Authors can participate in promotional opportunities to be added by emailing KWL. Authors are cautioned against adding titles to OverDrive using multiple vendors. (i.e., adding books to OverDrive both on Kobo and another website.)

Audiobooks: KWL authors can also upload audiobooks directly onto the KWL platform. They are published within 24 hours. Pre-orders are available without date limitations, and promotional opportunities may be available. If you are also uploading through a "wide" distributor of audiobooks, be sure to un-check the box for distribution to Kobo and then upload directly to Kobo yourself. Only titles uploaded directly to Kobo are eligible for audiobooks promotion. At this time, audiobooks are not part of Kobo Plus.

KWL community: Finally, with over 300 episodes, the KWL podcast is an excellent source for Kobo updates as well as industry news, tips on craft, and author interviews.

How to contact KWL:

writinglife@kobo.com

laura.granger@rakuten.com

rachel.wharton@rakuten.com



*[Sidney Swanson](#) is an award-winning author of young adult sci-fi and fantasy with 30 titles to her name. Her novel *Saving Mars* was named to Kirkus Reviews Best of 2012 and was an honor book for the SCBWI Spark Award 2014.*

Advanced Email Marketing

Presented by Nick Thacker

Reported by Harper St. George

Nick Thacker is a USA Today bestselling author of thrillers and action-adventure fiction. He helps authors reach the next level in their career by creating services like Author.Email, RadioWrite.com, and Book Career in a Year.

Nick Thacker began the presentation by posing the question: Why email? He answered that everyone emails. Email isn't going anywhere. Then he noted that growing an email list is often the most challenging task that we face as authors. How do we build our email list and our platform of readers?

This is the main takeaway of the workshop that Thacker wants attendees to take to heart: Strategy is the secret to massive list growth ... not tactics. It's not about the tactics, it's about the strategy. He reminded us that everyone uses different tactics, and they all work for some people but not all people. The tactics that don't work for some can work for others, but strategy can work for everyone.

He then led the group in an exercise by posing two questions and having each attendee turn to their neighbor to discuss their answers to the questions. The first question was: What is the best way you've found to find email leads? Attendees were given two minutes to discuss this with their neighbor. The second question was: What is the worst tactic you've ever used to find email leads? Attendees were given two minutes to discuss this with their neighbor. After the time was up, he called on people to tell him some of their answers.

Some answers to the best way to find leads were: bonus epilogues, free books, and links to sign up for the newsletter in the back of the book.

Some answers to the worst way to find leads were: group giveaways because it usually leads to a lot of unsubscribes, and running Facebook ads to a free book newsletter giveaway because readers are not engaged with the author or content.

But with all of these answers, we realized that some of the tactics that got results for some were terrible for others and vice versa. So Thacker asked, "What is the best tactic?" There is no best tactic, but there are four big secrets to growing your list.

The secrets

- Think strategy, not tactics.
- Strategy is the big picture.

- Tactics are about energy, money, and time.
- Strategy is about engagement.

Think about strategy as engagement. It is about realizing that if you used a Facebook ad to get new subscribers, people did not sign up for your newsletter because of a Facebook ad. They signed up because you engaged them in an attractive way on a platform they already like. It's not about the tactic you used, it's about the engagement.

Email is about your subscriber; it is *not* about you. We can't lose sight of who is reading our emails. For example, a tactic is when you send your newsletter. Ultimately, it doesn't matter when you send your newsletter, because it's about the reader. You should always be asking yourself: what's *in* this email for them? That being said, if you are struggling, one more freebie is (almost) always the answer to reestablishing engagement.

Growing a list is *not* easy. It does get more competitive and expensive over time and tactics do change. But don't change your strategy. Remember who you are sending emails to and what they want.

And it isn't a bad thing to think about tactics. There is a place for them in your newsletter strategy. You can try to combine tactics if you need to. Think of the tactics you already use and what has worked for you. He went over a few examples.

Combined tactic examples

- Facebook ads + Contests
- Print materials + QR Code: The example he gave that he's used is a printed coaster with a QR code on the other side.
- Traffic generation + "scraping" emails: General traffic generation means marketing that directs people to your website. Scraping emails means decoding email addresses of people who visit your website. Your website uses cookies, and you can send these cookies to a company that decodes the email address from the electronic information in the cookie. He acknowledges that this can be considered sketchy, so make sure you have an unsubscribe link at the bottom of the email you send them. This method is legal in the United States but may not be legal in other countries.

Engagement is the way

Engagement comes down to providing your subscribers with a piece of you. You're not really missing any tactics. He went on to discuss a few ways to use engagement in your marketing/emails and drew on examples from his own experience. He explained that negative pull is a way to get a reaction from your audience. For example, the copy on his best-producing ad is "Better than James Rollins?" James Rollins is a popular author in Thacker's genre. This gets a reaction from people because often they want to buy the book to prove him wrong. They like James Rollins and do not think Thacker's book could be better. Maybe they're right, maybe

they're wrong, and sometimes they'll email him to let him know. It doesn't matter to him, because this creates an engagement with the reader.

Another type of engagement is positive pull. The example he used is, "Can't get enough sexy thrills?" It makes the reader think and answer the question in their mind that, hopefully, leaves a positive impression.

This was the end of his presentation, because he wanted to leave a lot of time for questions from the audience to help guide the discussion.

Q&A

How do you reengage a list that you haven't nurtured in a while?

Send an email. Statistically, you get fewer unsubscribes when you send an email once a day than once a month. Unsubscribing is more complicated, so most people will delete the email. If they remember they have signed up for the email then they want to read it. So he doesn't worry too much about reengagement. Do you need to cull your list? No, because there is no mechanism that will make your list undeliverable if it isn't opened. There is no good way of tracking open rates, so they are not always accurate. We can have a list of only 20% open rates, but that rate isn't necessarily true. They could still be reading these emails. The answer is to get a cheaper list instead of culling. He noted that Author.Email is \$10.99 per month for less than 10,000 subscribers.

What frequency do you recommend for sending email? Is consistency important?

There are genre-specific recommendations with email. Thacker said he may not send an email every day all the time, but he might on a book release week. Don't worry about frequency as much. You can't send too much and hurt your sender reputation. The key is to send things that are not sales pitches. They want to hear about you.

Is it okay to include images in your newsletter?

He answered that's not as important as it was a few years ago. He noted that Gmail can put extra images in spam or promo folders. Remind readers to whitelist you in the first email you send them.

Will your sender reputation be hurt by sending emails to honeypot addresses?

Some will be affected, and some of the emails will simply do a soft bounce.

What is a honeypot address?

It's an email address used to trap spam. Sometimes people will use a separate email address only for newsletter signups.

What other information do you get out of scraping?

Only the email addresses; the company he uses doesn't keep other data as far as he knows. (He doesn't recommend you use it, he doesn't recommend you don't use it.)
(Someone noted Getemails.com for this service.)

Is it good to separate your list by inactive/active where inactives only get new release emails?

It's okay to separate your list like this. Don't get rid of inactives because you don't know if they were inactive. You can send them different emails to try to get them back on.

If someone unsubscribes from my list and then resubscribes, they can't get back on because they've already unsubscribed.

(Someone pointed out there is a toggle in your settings on your email platform that will allow people to resubscribe.)

He believes that it is not a good idea for companies to do this. They should let people come and go as they please. They may have implemented this because of their platform reputation. Author.Email does not have this problem.

Are there other features of Author.Email besides the cost uniquely suited to authors?

No, because he made it to be a replacement for another email platform at a lower cost. They don't have any additional features that authors won't need. They cater only to authors and their needs.

Does Author.Email work with GDPR?

GDPR is tricky and he isn't a lawyer. You can use Author.Email if you are outside of the U.S. There is a checkbox you can check to make sure you are abiding by non-U.S. laws.

Do you have a way to import lists from other email platforms?

Yes, a .csv dump will move your subscriber information over.

Are you connected to BookFunnel?

Yes, they are integrated to BookFunnel. Not the basic tier but integrations tier. Author.Email is also integrated with StoryOrigin.

What other ways are there to engage with your subscribers besides free books and content?

We associate value with price. From the beginning he put his thriller books at \$6.99 because he was competing with traditionally published books. He noted you can train your readers and over time they will value your work and they want to pay you. You will always have people who want a freebie and move on. But spend time building that relationship.

What specific things can you put in your emails to engage them?

He sends things about his own life. Information and photos about his daughters living their life. He was into woodworking so would send updates about that. You want readers to think, “I like this guy so whatever he sends me I want to buy.”

Does Author.Email have different email formats?

You can build a plain text email or use the fancy drag-and-drop editor. You can use BePro to design email and import them into Author.Email.

Someone in the audience suggested doing surveys in your newsletter. (Author.Email survey capability is in alpha.) Then you announce the results in the next email. Or solicit advice on how to do something. Getting a response from people, any response, is engagement.

Can Author.Email do automations?

Yes, but they’re not pretty. You can schedule email, and you can resend to people who didn’t open a previous email. You can sort by people who were imported or organic signups. You have the ability to do an “if, then.”

All emails are two categories: Campaigns are one-off emails. Automations are the autoresponders or pre-drip setups. He has a six-month-long automation.

What should we consider when creating our newsletter strategy or best practices?

Start with you, what do you want as a reader? What would be engaging for me to receive from an author who writes this type of book? Go from there and send that.

Is Author.Email similar to the design function of other email marketing platforms?

It is a different design. It’s in open beta. It’s working great and we focused on features. We are now working on the interface to make it easier to use.

The best thing about some other email marketing platforms is that their support people are there and responsive. How is Author.Email?

Thacker is the only customer support right now but they are working on building customer service.



Harper St. George writes historical fiction romance set in various time periods from the Viking Era to the Gilded Age. Her latest series is *The Gilded Age Heiresses*. She lives in the Atlanta area with her family.

When the Where is the Why: Taking Your Scene-Setting to the Next Level

Presented by Julia Spencer-Fleming

Reported by Lisa Verge Higgins

Julia Spencer-Fleming is a New York Times bestselling and Edgar- and Agatha-award-winning author of literary suspense. She has also taught creative writing courses at the MFA program of the University of Southern Maine.

Setting is an important aspect of fiction because people read novels for the feeling of being “swept away.” How an author handles the book’s setting contributes largely to that wonderful experience. But what is setting, and how can we use it to take our work to the next level?

Setting is not just background. It’s not a red barn on a hill. Setting is responsible for creating a reality that allows readers to surrender to what the writer and teacher John Gardner calls the “fictional dream.” This is done by allowing the reader to experience the fictional world through the five senses of the characters. Louise Penny, author of the Armand Gamache novels, is a master of this. She brings to life a world that readers want to live in. That’s the power of setting.

To illustrate the techniques of taking setting to the next level, Spencer-Fleming read an excerpt from her work in progress. The scene involves three characters: Russ, a chief of police in a small Adirondack town; Knox, a less experienced officer; and a park ranger named Terence. They are searching through the forest for clues of a recent crime.

How these characters interact with the world reveals their unique personalities. Russ knows these woods and is familiar with criminal searches. Knox is less experienced, unnerved, and asks a lot of questions. The park ranger isn’t a cop, but he understands how to orient and is more familiar with the flora and fauna. Because of these differences, their dialogue and reactions to the setting vary. In addition, the use of descriptive, short sentences during the passage sets a particular pace, giving the reader a sense that they, too, are picking their way through the woods.

With this example in mind, Ms. Spencer-Fleming offered some **Dos** and **Don’ts** to help elevate your setting to the next level.

Dos

Use facts and specific language. When the facts are right—about landmarks, procedures, flora and fauna, gear, etc.—the readers will trust the author more. She suggests using *specific*

language (such as having a forest ranger call a bird a “red-tailed hawk” rather than just a bird) which helps get the “feel” right. You don’t need to describe every aspect of the world. Focus on those details of setting that (1) illuminate the character, (2) move the plot forward, and/or (3) give you that “feel.”

Make emotional connections to the setting. Picture your grandmother’s house. Maybe it smells smoky, is run down, and still has ‘70s décor. Yet, if a grandchild is in this setting, her observations may ignore all that and focus on lovely memories, such as “there’s the butterscotch couch upon which she and her grandma sat and talked, or the laminate table where grandma would lay out the fresh cookies that they had baked together.”

Root characters deeply in the setting. Environment shapes character. It determines who your characters are, the jobs that they do, and the prospects of their future. Tony Hillerman’s mysteries are about two Navajo policemen living in the Four Corners region of the southwestern U.S. Everything that happens to the characters, including the crimes, arise from that distinct setting.

Plan the plot with the setting in mind. According to Lawrence Block, fiction is just “one damn thing after another.” Things have to keep on happening in the story world. Look to the fictional world for those things, and that will create an interesting variety. Think deeply about who is living there, who is stuck there, who got out of there, and what kind of things might happen in that specific setting.

Use setting details to send messages without having to spell it out. To illustrate this advanced technique, Spencer-Fleming described the use of it in a story entitled “Doors” by Eileen Griffin. The main character, a woman who grew up Catholic in a small city, describes being a young girl climbing the steps to the cathedral and trying to open the heavy doors. The doors are described in detail, as are the stone steps, and the brass handle. Further along in the story, the character describes the door to her grandmother’s house, how when she opened the white door there’d be a puff of her grandmother’s perfume. Later in life, she’s in a new city, having doubts about her faith. When she’s asked to join an organization at a Catholic church, she agrees and walks up to the modern glass door of the church, which has a big metal handle. She tries to open it, but becomes very conscious of the weight of it ... and eventually she lets go of the handle, symbolic of a choice the character makes to leave the church. The message is clear without being spelled out because of the setup and payoff, which only used details of the setting.

Use metaphors to expand setting descriptions into character. One of Spencer-Fleming’s novels, *Out of the Deep I Cry*, is set in March, which is a wet, watery, ice-melting time in the Adirondacks. When characters describe how they feel, she used language that was wet. People felt like they were “plunged into icy water,” for example. Her current work in progress is set during Christmas, so when the chief camps overnight and gets up the next day, he cracks his back and says, “Oh, my god, I feel like Old Man Winter.” Similarly, the younger characters are described as romping around like “woodland elves.”

Use all your senses. “Proust wrote a whole book because someone smelled a cookie.” She suggests not just using all five senses, but also try combining them, like synesthesia, as done in the opening line of William Gibson’s *Neuromancer*: “The sky above the port was the colour of television, tuned to a dead channel.” The description mixes sight and sound—a dead hissing, plus the color gray.

Don’ts

Don’t use omniscient description. Omniscient description leaves open the question of: Who is thinking this? Phrases like, “The ocean sparkled as the Florida sunshine hit it,” remove the character from the setting. Description is best used through the character’s eyes. Every person is going to observe different things from the environment in which they are in.

Don’t use clichés. Try to avoid clichés by describing the setting in a non-literal way. A description of the view out of an airplane window doesn’t have to be “the clouds are gray and the sky is blue.” You might describe clouds as “the gray of a sigh” or the sky as “the blue of breath.” It may take some time to think up descriptions that make people *feel*. Spencer-Fleming admits that she does more rewriting on her description than any part of her book.

Don’t overuse the thesaurus. The thesaurus is your friend but don’t overdo it!

Don’t write travelogue. You want readers to inhabit the world, not watch a YouTube video. Avoid walking and driving directions. If a character lives there, they’re not thinking of the beauty of the setting when they’re running late or trying to get the kids to school, etc. Also remember to make your setting a real place with splinters and sidewalk cracks and streets with potholes, etc.

Q&A

During the question period, Spencer-Fleming encouraged authors to visit the place you’re writing about (if possible) and put down the phone when you do. You need to be observing the world. If you can’t visit, try to go to an analogous place in terms of climate and biome. Also try Google Street View. She also collects nonfiction books about the area she writes about and uses them when searching for the specific details to bring her series of novels to life.



Lisa Verge Higgins is a critically acclaimed author of uplifting women’s fiction. Her alter ego Lisa Ann Verge writes historical and contemporary adventure romance.

Creating a Special Edition

Presented by Brad West

Reported by Laura Resnick

Brad West is one of the creators of Vellum, software to help create beautiful books.

For the purposes of Brad West's talk on creating special editions, a "regular" edition of a book comprises the content and packaging of the ebook, as well as the print edition which is more or less identical to the ebook version in terms of content and cover. By contrast, a "special" edition is a more elaborate print edition of the same title.

(West noted that [Vellum](#) includes tools for creating special editions, but he specified that you don't have to have Vellum to create them.)

A special edition is a version of the book that might be purchased as a keepsake, or as a collector's item, or as a cherished personal edition of a favorite book. Creating a special edition allows the author to revisit and elaborate on a favorite release and to delight their biggest fans. You can create special editions for a whole series or for just one title.

So what are the major aspects to consider when creating a special edition?

Cover

As with any edition of a book, the cover is extremely important. The main thing to keep in mind is that a special edition's cover must be *something different* from your regular edition's cover.

This example is *Twisted Beautiful Lies* by Kelleigh Clare. On the left is the regular cover; on the right is the cover of the special edition.



The regular edition's cover clearly conveys the book's genre: romance. The special edition cover is more subtle: it's romantic, but also hints at suspense. Both covers position the book accurately, but each emphasizes a different aspect of the story.

According to Clare: "I've found there's an audience for this novel with those who usually read in the thriller/suspense genre and wouldn't purchase a book with a traditional romance cover. BookTok influencers have been very clear about their preference for covers without people on them."

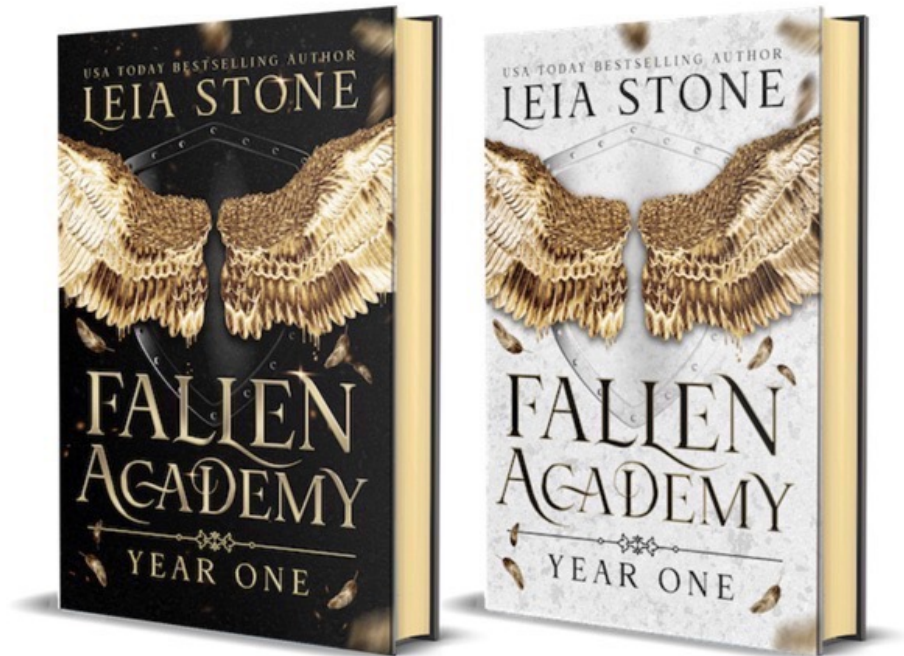
So in addition to clearly identifying the special edition of the book with different packaging, the author also reaches readers with this cover who might not pick up the regular edition.

West also discussed what's the same on the two covers. The typography of the title and the author's name, as well as the series logo (Hastings Brothers), are virtually identical. You'll recognize the elements if you know the book. This is design language that Clare applied to the whole series; the exact same image of flowers is used for each special edition in the series, with a different color palette for each title. This brands the special editions of the series as clearly as the regular covers brand the regular editions.

In another example West presented, the regular edition of *Throttle Me* by Chelle Bliss has a cover that portrays a shirtless man with a muscular torso wearing a leather jacket. This is a novel in the author's Men of Inked series, set mostly in a tattoo parlor and prominently featuring tattoos. The special edition cover of *Throttle Me* eliminates the male figure and brings

the tattoo theme to the forefront with bright, vibrant colors and beautiful illustrations. (See the whole set of special edition covers for this series [here](#).)

The special edition of *Shadow Angel* by Leia Stone essentially comes with two covers—it's got a reversible dust jacket.



Interiors

Another way to make your edition special is to elevate its interior pages with design and illustration.

To see an example that West highlighted, the special edition of *Pomegranate* by Nicole Scarano, go to the book's page on Amazon and use the "look inside" feature to scroll through the hardcover edition. The book's pages include beautiful interior illustrations of pomegranate fruits, seeds, and leaves, giving the book a rich feel.

Some illustrations go all the way to the edge of the page, which is called a full bleed. Not all POD vendors or aggregators can handle indie books with full-bleed pages, but improvements in this area are ongoing.

West cited IngramSpark as having a fairly automatic way to process such files. When uploading to Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP), you need to find the toggle/choice that says "bleed;" if you miss selecting it, KDP's system will insist that you're using the wrong trim size for your book. West said that Draft2Digital (D2D), which has its own POD formatting tools, has not so far been able to handle full-bleed files, but they expect to add this capability soon.

For the special edition of *Murder at Archly Manor*, a jazz-age cozy by Sara Rosett, the author brought the look of the era inside the book by adding a full-bleed art deco design (stock art) to the endpapers and to the facing page at the start of each chapter.

Clare's special edition of *Twisted Beautiful Lies* used portions of the cover image for interior full-bleed illustrations at the start of each chapter. This establishes a mood right as you open the book, with the mums reproduced in white and set against a black background. (This is a new Vellum feature you can use with their software.) To view a couple of these pages, go to Amazon and "look inside" the hardcover. For interior images like this, a POD vendor or distributor might require you to select premium paper, because the pages of thinner paper tend to curl when that much ink is applied. Thicker paper costs more and eats into your profit, but the book will look better. West also noted that because of the need for thicker paper, a book with this interior might not qualify for expanded distribution at KDP.

Use of premium paper was necessary for the special edition of Stone's *Shadow Angel*. The regular edition already had gorgeous full-bleed interior illustrations. So for the special edition, Stone added full-color illustrations for characters and settings, as well as gold leaf, allowing the reader to dive deeper into the world of the series.

Additional content

An **author's note** is a nice touch to make the special edition more personal. It's a letter to the reader, a place to discuss what this book means to you.

What about bonus stories? If you've created a whole series, you might have novellas or short stories related to the books—integrate some of those into the special edition.

Add your **signature** to make the book a bit more personal. You can include a simple digital signature as part of a digital file. Readers appreciate a hand-signed book, but keep in mind that means you have to have the books at your house at some point, and you're shouldering some of the fulfillment obligation.

Consider including some **merchandise**: stickers, bookmarks, and other relatively simple things. If you create a Kickstarter campaign for the book, you can increase those extras at various pledge levels.

Printing and fulfillment

If you upload the book to the same online vendors you usually deal with, there's not that much new for you to learn, so this is easy for the author, and readers can readily find the book. If you create the special edition as a hardcover, it can be added to the sale page with your regular editions of the same title.

Another possibility is to upload it as a totally separate title (ex. *My Book* and *My Book: Special Edition*). The sales copy can go into detail about the special features of this edition, and you don't risk confusing readers by having different covers for the same title on the same sale

page. The disadvantage is that a separate listing might make it easy for readers to miss seeing the special edition as a purchase option.

Bliss sells a full set of special editions of her *Men of Inked* series on her own website, discounted from the price on Amazon's site (but still within a reasonable profit margin), so she's on the hook for fulfilling those orders. According to Bliss: "The main issue is having enough space to keep paperbacks and the shipping supplies in stock. We use Shopify to make fulfillment seamless, which is a big help." (West recommended [this article](#) on using Shopify.)

For *Murder at Archly Manor's* special edition, Rosett created a Kickstarter campaign that included stretch goals which enhanced the book: at \$7,500, she would switch to full color for the interior map; at \$10,000, she would replace the digital signature with a hand signature on every copy; and so on. (Her campaign raised \$16,167 from 248 backers.) Rosett uses [Bookvault](#) as her POD printer: "The cost of Bookvault is better and the shipping has been good too. They also have express printing, something that Ingram has put on hold."

For *Shadow Angel* and other highly customized special editions, Stone uses a printer in China called [Shenzhen King Fu Color Printing](#), and she uses [Pirate Ship](#) for shipping.

West noted, "Obviously, turnaround time is something to consider when getting books printed in China. [Stone] said it's a ton of work, she probably could have written another book in the time it took to manage this project. But her Kickstarter campaign ended at \$111,305 with just 596 backers." Of course, now she'll have to hand-sign 3,500 books

Finally

Creating a special edition is a chance to come back to an older book, revisit a favorite project, and add some new touches. It's also a chance to experiment, to try some things you might not want to do for a big release—maybe make big changes to your cover that don't exactly match expectations for your genre.

It's also a way to reach out to readers, many of whom love special editions. All those personal touches in the book build a connection between you and readers.

And it can be a way to celebrate the success of a series or book, or to give a book some love and turn it into something you've always dreamed of doing with it.



[Laura Resnick](#) is a longtime NINC member who writes fiction, nonfiction, and short fiction.

Publishing and Marketing During Crises and Uncertain Times

Presented by Maria Connor

Reported by Jennifer Stevenson

Founder and chief concierge at My Author Concierge, Maria Connor has worked as a freelance writer, journalist, and author in print and digital media for more than 10 years.

Maria Connor opened with a story of driving across country to a conference and being stranded, in spite of all her preparations, when her car broke down. The experience made her feel panicked and overwhelmed. “That’s what this workshop is about” —how to get through times when we are stopped in our tracks.

Crises can cause critical disruption of our productivity and business operations. Connor offered some practical tips to manage uncertain times and identify opportunities for growth.

What resources can we put in place now to minimize the impact of crisis? Connor suggested, don’t focus on negativity. All these things happen to everyone. Planning ahead makes crises less disruptive and less frightening. For each area of planning, Connor included “Do it now” suggestions.

She invited listeners to jot down their three top concerns to worry about during a crisis.

Physical and emotional spaces

The physical and emotional spaces where we connect with ourselves include peers and readers. In crisis, the lines between us and others can change organically, or we may need to change them deliberately.

To manage our personal space, we need self-awareness. We need time to react and to process our emotions and reactions. We must protect our resources. Part of self-care means leaning into your support system.

Do it now: Cultivate a healthy work/life balance. This habit helps you triage the day’s list at all times, including crises. Build in time to “press pause.”

Do it now: Learn to say, “No.” You may need to rehearse saying no. You can say, “I’m not available at this time,” or you can delay making a decision on the spot, when you are asked, and then email them the no.

Do it now: Identify your triggers, know what’s going to push you over the edge, and give yourself grace. Connor quoted Theodore Roosevelt: “Do what you can, with what you have, where you are.”

Do it now: Maintain professional boundaries. What can we do to renegotiate our professional boundaries? Perhaps step back? We can communicate honestly in a timely manner. We can offer options and alternatives when we can't meet commitments. We can identify opportunities for innovation. We can avoid oversharing. (Facebook is not your therapist.) And we can remember to commit conservatively when we are ready to get back to writing. It's too easy to underestimate the cost of a crisis.

Do these factors give you new ideas on how to manage your top three concerns?

Communications

Communications during a crisis are key to keeping calm. It's important to manage inward- and outward-bound communications. When in crisis, shut down or commit to moderating your social media engagement. Our professional communications also include newsletters, email, and in-person connection. However, communicating during a crisis can also deepen relationships, strengthen reader loyalty, and create new communication streams.

Social media and social media management

We need to be sensitive to how our books, themes, subject matter, and digital marketing relate to current events. If you have to address a public tragedy in your newsletter, decide how you're going to do that before you do it. If a personal crisis disrupts your reader connection, be sure to share without apologizing or making excuses. This helps manage reader expectations.

Email management

Keep up with email. If you can delegate it to someone who will help, you need to give them directions about how to share on your behalf. Create a detailed document with passwords, links, and content for your newsletter, social media, and website so a helper can handle it for you. Provide instructions for your helper.

Inward- and outward-bound communication is one area of operation we can problem-solve before a crisis hits.

Do it now: Make a master list of all your online accounts and profiles.

Do it now: Collaborate with your team or staff so that someone else always knows what comes next.

Do it now: Organize your content and assets.

Do it now: Redirect users of your less-used social media to your most-used social media.

Brand and messaging

Brand is our promise to our readers. What have we promised them? We can be predictable, nurture our community, and take a chance.

Do it now: Identify your promise to readers (brand).

Do it now: Ensure that your platform is firmly established: who you are and to whom.

Being predictable can make our job easier. We know our brand and we know how our stories go, so our brand can be a refuge for us and for our audience, and not a source of stress.

Book production and marketing

Book production and marketing can become business-*not-as-usual* in a crisis. There will be work flow interruptions. We need to be prepared to pivot, scale back, and respond to market fluctuations. Business may get better during a crisis—or not. Even vendors, service providers, and retailers can let us down. The best way to prepare for that is to have backup providers. If you can, build financial reserves to reduce stress against possible future crises. Communicate to your team about delays and holdups, and turn to trusted peers for advice.

It's important to be okay with doing what you can. The most important thing is getting words on the page. It may be a good idea to write ahead—stockpile manuscripts for rapid release—instead of writing to preorder deadlines.

Marketing-not-as-usual

What's within our control during times of crisis? Writing good books that exceed reader expectation, our social media presence, our newsletter content, our investment and expenditure, and decisions for pivoting or scaling back.

What's outside our control? This is a chance to put spending under a microscope, create spreadsheets, and become aware of what's being done. It can be important to maintain current advertising protocols. Who manages that for you?

Maintain marketing activities

Cut back and make time for outsourcing. You can outsource ad stacking, for example. It's harder to handle this work when we're reacting to a crisis. Decide what's minimum for maintaining your business. Quantify, confront, and evaluate how much you can tolerate sales tied to marketing slipping during a crisis.

Crisis planning

Before a crisis hits, then, do crisis planning. Connor quoted Cardinal Richard Cushing: "It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark."

Business/career assessment

If there are vulnerabilities in our business, these will be amplified during a crisis. Do we have a clear, consistent brand message? Should we improve newsletter open rates? Boost our BookBub followers to the 1,000 needed to tap into free marketing resources? Are we talking to a dead audience on a social media channel?

Financial performance

Where do we sell the most books? Are sales going up? Flatlining? What series or genre performs best for us? Do we have money banked for a rainy day? What's our advertising and outsourcing budget?

Market position

Are we watching trend reports in our genre? Are we aware of whether we are writing to market?

Business goals

If we are already structured for success, it's easier to shift into problem-solving mode, to handle crises.

When planning for what if... *Do it now*

Be you a plotter or a pantser, there are huge benefits to organizing information, creating systems, relying on checklists, or whatever your particular vision of "managing operations" looks like.

Create documentation that fully informs someone who might have to take over your business today. This should cover procedures and processes, the organization of digital and hard-copy files and assets. Standardize your work flow and processes so you don't have to reinvent the wheel with each book launch, backlist promotion, or ARC mailing. Collect contact information for people we routinely interact with like retailers, team members, cross-promo partners, and advertisers.

Automate and delegate routine tasks. Even a checklist can lighten your workload.

Create a WTSHTF (when the shit hits the fan) plan. Identify nonnegotiable priorities, and divide the list into critical, important, and not-urgent tasks. It might be helpful to consult with a lawyer, accountant, or other professional on how to legally implement a plan if we're completely unavailable or, worst-case scenario, deceased.

Author team

Prepare support for your author team. Share priorities with them. Identify who will get the sensitive information like banking and log-ons. Give the team written instructions on how to catch your business when you fall. Buy software if the team will need it. Determine what the team's untapped skills may be. This is your chance to anticipate and prepare for the future.

Plan to dump your content on an aggregator site, or to hand over formatting, ads, and marketing to outside services. That's not ideal, but it's better than nothing.

Look ahead to possible crises

Have a plan for situations where things will only get worse. Might our caregiving responsibilities increase? Will a chronic condition deteriorate until we need to learn new skills like writing with dictation aids? Suppose we have to or want to stop writing? Develop additional income streams now, rather than waiting.

Legacy planning

Develop a legacy plan to ensure the continuation of availability for our intellectual property. Who inherits our backlist and IP assets? How do we want them managed? What will our heirs need to do that?

Q&A

How will I know when I've pared back too much?

Connor said: "Ask yourself what is obviously not generating benefit for you—it's fun but I don't know that it works. I've seen writers competing in a hot genre and all they do is produce fast and buy AMS ads. They don't stack ads or build their BookBub list or blast often to their newsletter or 'all the things,' and yet they're killing it.

"I suggest you identify the most useful, profitable things. Create a system that lets you do the minimum or allows someone else to do it for you.

"I've had commenters on the early version of this workshop: One said, 'There's too much woowoo, too much feelgood. Get detailed!' The next said, 'You're not addressing the emotional impact.' That's why I remind you to make sure you are caring for your emotional needs. It won't be this way forever. It will change. But getting from frozen-in-panic to fully recovered takes time and self-care."

For a copy of this workshop with the notes, email myauthorconcierge@gmail.com.



Jennifer Stevenson writes contemporary rom-com, paranormal rom-com, and paranormal women's fiction. She is a founder and co-president of Book View Café.

Author Roadmap

Presented by Skye Warren

Reported by Pam McCutcheon

Skye Warren is a New York Times bestselling author with over 2 million books sold. It's her goal to empower romance authors to sell more of the books they work so hard to write.

Skye Warren started her author career struggling with fears she couldn't pay the mortgage, but now has a seven-figure business with consistent profits and works only four hours a day. In this presentation, she shared how she did it.

Warren stated that writing a book is an act of faith. Marketing is an act of surrender, since it is largely up to the readers to determine how well you do. However, if you know what's coming down the road, you can develop a strategy to maximize your profits, and once you see which actions result in sales, you can scale up. Wanting to empower authors to sell more of the books we work so hard to write, she shared her roadmap with us.

First, it's important to nurture your existing readers. To do that, keep them informed with your newsletter, post in readers' group(s), provide bonus scenes, etc. But while keeping your existing readers is important, there is always attrition. If you aren't gaining new readers, your business will shrink. To find new readers for your backlist, she suggested you use BookBub deals to put the first book in your series on sale, do newsletter swaps with authors in your subgenre, and utilize Facebook ads and Amazon ads.

Of course, at the beginning of your career, you may not have much money to put into marketing your books. However, if you take out all of the money you are making as salary/wages, you will bankrupt your business. Make sure some of the money you make from the books you are selling is going into marketing.

There's a common myth referring to marketing that says: *I don't control my book sales so why bother trying?* But your actions can affect sales, and Warren suggests the best way to do that is to schedule marketing events.

The best marketing event is to release another book. However, this type of event is very time-consuming and difficult to scale because you may not be able to increase your writing speed. So, you need to develop other, smaller events.

To achieve her seven-figure income, Warren scheduled one marketing event a week for over a year. She suggests that we try for at least two marketing events a month to keep "pumping the gas" and develop a plan to do that.

The plan should list the two events you plan to do each month for the following 12-month period. First, block off any vacations, conferences, and other times when you know you will be unable to work on a marketing event, then tentatively schedule releases of new material—your best guess as to when you can release new books, anthologies, novellas, etc. (She schedules her new releases three months apart.)

For each new release, choose a backlist book that supports it and put the backlist book on sale before the new release. The best choice of a support book is one that is closest in type to the new release (such as another book in the same series), but another book in a similar subgenre will also work. For the support book you put on sale, make sure to mention the new release in your back matter and link to it. The sale of the support book and the release of the new book are both marketing events in your plan.

As for back matter, most people will ask for reviews immediately after the end of a book. That doesn't sell books or get you more money. Another common use of back matter is giving a simple list of all of your books at the end. Instead, Warren suggests you use a short blurb/description and link to at least two other books.

For example, she uses a link to the next book (as a preorder, if necessary) as the primary exit immediately after they finish reading the current book. After that, a secondary exit links to another book, and she sometimes has a tertiary book/exit. The books don't have to be related to the one the reader just finished, but it helps if they are in the same subgenre.

Instead of advocating you write faster, Warren recommends you schedule more marketing events to find new readers. Nothing is too small, and you can create them out of thin air. Marketing is fundamentally creative, so be inventive. And, if something isn't working, stop doing it—don't spend time on what doesn't move the needle.

Examples of some marketing events she has done:

- Create a box set of an entire series and get a BookBub deal on the set.
- Create a box set of only two books of a series and get a BookBub deal on the set.
- Combine books into a set using a theme such as the first book in several different series, holiday stories, short stories, etc.
- Create a free box set (this gave her the same impact as a BookBub deal).
- Do an anthology with other authors as a free giveaway with the first book in a series, and have everyone promote on the same day.
- Create prequels, epilogues, special editions, merchandise, etc.
- Choose another book that can point to a new release, then do a BookBub deal and a box set and Facebook ads on the support book.
- Release paperback, audio, or translation versions.
- Rebrand to reach new readers.

Warren believes rebranding with new covers is not something we do often enough, but when we do, it's difficult to know if it will be successful or not. Polling your newsletter

subscribers or Facebook followers for their opinions on covers is not useful because they will most often want to stay with the ones they are familiar with. The objective is to reach *new* readers. So, Warren uses a polling site to test covers that is more effective: authoradsintensive.com.

Using romance as an example, she stated there are different types of cover styles:

- Hero only
- Heroine only
- Couple
- Illustrated (including cartoon covers)
- Object
- Setting (such as a beach)

If you are changing covers to test a rebrand, she recommends you don't change from one couple/hero/heroine to another image within the same type, but to try something different, such as an object, setting, or illustration.

When changing covers, brainstorm who your comp authors are. This may not necessarily be who you like or who your existing readers like to read. Instead, try changing to covers where you can find new readers.

As stated at the beginning, Warren is now able to do more in four hours a day than she used to do in 10 and credits the book *Rest: Why You Get More Done When You Work Less* by Alex Soojung-Kim Pang with learning how to walk away at the end of your four-hour workday. Perhaps it will work for you as well.



Pam McCutcheon writes all different kinds of romance (sweet, sexy, contemporary, historical, futuristic, paranormal, mundane) and nonfiction for writers under her own name, and the *Demon Underground* YA urban fantasy series under the name *Parker Blue*.

Brand Land:

What is Author Brand and How to Craft Yours

Presented by Carol Van Den Hende

Reported by Harper St. George

Carol Van Den Hende is an award-winning author and public speaker. She has 20+ years' experience in marketing, strategy, and insights, including branding for Mars Wrigley. She has boiled down her vast experience to make it actionable for authors.

Carol Van Den Hende began her presentation by assuring us that branding doesn't have to be daunting. She created this workshop so that authors will learn the following three things:

1. Why we need to think about marketing and branding as authors.
2. Based on her 25 years of experience, she will unveil how professional marketers think about their brand in a way that will be actionable for authors.
3. Ways in which that brand will translate in a visual world.

She began by taking a poll of the room: How clear do you feel about your author brand?

1. Not clear
2. Not very clear
3. Somewhat clear (Most were in the three range.)
4. Clear
5. Crystal clear

She then posed the question: What's the origin of the term "brand?" Ranchers with cattle found it helpful to brand the hide of the cow to show ownership. What happened over time is the brand mark became associated not only with ownership but with quality.

Marketing is the art and science of finding and connecting with your audience. One distinction she noted is that visual identity is related, but actually something different than branding. This talk will deep dive into branding.

Brand is your promise. Ask yourself, what is the promise you are making to readers? Readers invest hours into your work, so what is the promise that you will deliver to them again and again? Brand is a concept that encapsulates the unique positioning, differentiation,

relevance, and meaning of a person, product, or service. Visual identity is your brand promise translated to digital assets.

Why are brand and visual identity important? Back in agrarian times, our attention spans were about 20 minutes. This has dropped considerably to around 12 seconds. Millennials have a nine-second attention span. This is why brand is so important. People get 5,000 marketing messages a day. We have learned how to tune those out. Readers tune these messages out just to get through the day. We need every tool at our disposal to break through a lot of that subconscious behavior.

Myth: You have to be something you're not.

Be your authentic brand. We can feel when someone is being themselves versus something that isn't true.

Our brands can be articulated with five layers. Think of them as a brand layer cake: values, archetype, purpose, personality, and unique assets. Note that the first three layers are inner layers of the brand cake. You don't have to show them, you can just know what they are. The last two, personality and unique assets, are more outward facing to your reader.

Layer #1: Brand values

Your key values, themes, what you stand for.

Van Den Hende gave the example of her value belief that clarity of an individual's purpose (brand) unearths their good, and awareness of our connectedness elevates us collectively.

Layer #2: Archetype

Which one fits you best as an author?

Carl Jung identified 12 archetypes that writers often use to develop their characters. You can also use them in developing your author brand. Van Den Hende gave a few examples of popular authors: Warrior for Homer, Creator for Oscar Wilde, Explorer for Madeleine L'Engle, Rebel for Ayn Rand, Sage for Brené Brown or Malcolm Gladwell, Lover for Kristan Higgins (She noted this does not have to be romance/romantic.), Everyman for John Green, Caregiver for *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, Jester for Trevor Noah, Ruler for Tolstoy, Innocent for Judy Blume, and Magician for JK Rowling.

Which of these match your values? The archetype you choose must relate back to your core value. You can choose a combination of archetypes. There are archetypes and there are genres. Those two don't have to be mutually exclusive.

Van Den Hende's archetype is lover (of humanity) and creator.

(Note: She gave [this link](#) for finding your archetype. When I tried it, it redirected to [here](#).)

Layer #3: Inspiring purpose

Why does your work exist beyond ordinary functional or monetary reasons?

It is important to start from your why to understand your how and/or what. What is the reason you do what you do beyond the obvious for profit/functional purposes? What brings you to the keyboard every day if writing is hard? That's the key to finding your inner purpose.

Here someone asked if the answer could be as simple as to make yourself happy. She answered: Does that answer inspire you? If it does, then it works. It doesn't hurt as a thought exercise to go deeper. It could bring to light new ideas.

She talked about comedian Michael Jr. who discusses "Know Your Why" in [this video](#).

Van Den Hende's purpose is being her authentic self to inspire empathy for people and the planet.

Layer #4: Personality

How do you want to come across? What makes you *you*? Van Den Hende's personality that she hopes to display is elegant, approachable, encouraging, articulate, professional, and contemporary.

Layer #5: Unique assets and visuals

What design and other elements do you use consistently? These are how you convey the other parts of the brand layer cake to your reader or audience. Van Den Hende uses clean white, gradients of magenta to purple, edged in black.

(Question from attendee: Does every book you write have to display your value?

Answer: No, it doesn't. Not everything will completely support the value, but collectively they will work together to support that value. Different parts of your portfolio can come together to support that value.)

A new slide showed an anonymous author's brand cake and we were asked if we could identify the author.

Brand values: Underdogs can win.

Archetypes: Magician, Rebel

Inspiring purpose: To give everyday heroes hope.

Personality/tonality: Adventurous, scrappy, smart, fallible, "geeky"

Unique assets and visuals: Absorbing other worlds, fairy tales, *New York Times* bestselling author

Someone was correctly able to identify Marissa Meyer from the brand cake. Van Den Hende pointed out that Meyer uses a consistent set of colors, fonts, and placement of her author name.

Places to ensure brand/visual identity consistency

Brand promise: This will be in your storyline/style, "voice," about the author, social media content, pitch, query, and synopsis.

Visual identity (physical/digital assets): This will be on your website, social media visuals, online ads, book cover, author name/font/tagline, business card, clothing, and giveaways.

She put up a slide with partial logos and asked participants to call out what brands they belonged to. They ranged from industrial brands to consumer-facing brands, and people guessed them quickly. This is possible because we've seen them repeatedly. They are consistently the same color and shape repeated over time. **Consistency is the number one tenet in brand and visual identity.**

Next, she gave an example of Tropicana orange juice. A brand agency came to Tropicana and said they've been using the same carton with the same orange with a red and white drinking straw in it for years, and it's boring. They told them they needed to refresh their brand. So, Tropicana changed their packaging to a carton with a glass of orange juice on it. It looked like generic orange juice. People couldn't find it because they didn't recognize it on the shelf. Sales immediately dropped 25%. Consistency is important.

She then went through several slides of various authors' book covers to talk about the branding of each book series.

Skye Warren's Rochester Trilogy books have a key on each cover with a different color ribbon. You can immediately see they are the same series. Books in her other series look like Skye Warren books because of the distinctive font she uses for her author name on all book covers.

James Rosone puts his author name and title of his books in a consistent place on the book covers. The font and color for the text is very similar from book to book.

Kimberly Diede also uses a consistent author name and font on her books. There is a feeling conveyed in the cover to her line of books that groups them as a family.

Harper St. George's Gilded Age Heiresses series has consistency as well. The covers have a bold color block so that each title is distinct with different colors for the dresses. They still look like a family even though they are different. The titles are structured in the same way.

Conclusion

Van Den Hende ended her talk by going back to the beginning. We started with why authors need branding—readers and consumers are really busy and you only have nine seconds to break through, so you need every tool at your disposal. How do you approach this? Use tools that are available to you that professionals use to dig into inspiring purpose. Finally, when discussing visual identity, the most important thing is to be consistent.



Harper St. George writes historical fiction romance set in various time periods from the Viking Era to the Gilded Age. Her latest series is *The Gilded Age Heiresses*. She lives in the Atlanta area with her family.

Author Business Makeover

Presented by Joe Solari

Reported by Dan Alatorre

Joe Solari helps authors build great businesses. As the managing director of Claymore LLC, he helps six- and seven-figure authors to implement best business practices to reduce stress and create personal wealth.

Most of us author types enjoy the *writing* part of the book business, but not the *business* part of the book business. To underscore that point, at the start of Joe Solari's presentation he asked for a show of hands of how many authors had "been there."

Been where, exactly?

Solari's prescient question was preceded by a kind of testimonial wherein an author mentioned she had been struggling with sales recently. She'd been writing for many years and had a large backlist, but, unfortunately, she also had no real brand strategy, had too many subgenres, had a lot of inconsistency in her product as far as genres and subgenres and, by 2021, her income from book sales was nowhere near what it used to be.

"I had one good year," said the author in question. "That was 2015. I felt like I didn't know who I was as an author anymore."

That's when Solari asked how many other authors had been there—and most of the hands in the room went up.

Luckily, that's where Solari's expertise comes in. As managing director of Claymore LLC, a firm specializing in retooling an author's book-selling business, he can talk the talk because he walks the walk. Solari explains that an author needs to cultivate an audience. Nurture them. And Solari spoke with the confidence of somebody who's been there and done that, multiple times for numerous authors.

Solari held the attention of the assembled group as he explained what he calls the rules of the road. "It's a mindset."

Does your thinking align with success in publishing? Success breeds success, Solari's slides seemed to shout. And his business is guiding you toward that success—but not in the ways you might think.

"I help authors build great businesses."

Solari walked his audience through the Power Law market we operate in, where it's often a "winner takes all" landscape, but where authors can learn to use a force called Cumulative Advantage to strengthen and increase their position. "You only need to sell a book a day to rank

in the top 100,000 on Amazon,” Solari says. “That’s 1.1%. But you can’t live on that.” Getting to the next level isn’t selling two books a day. It might be selling 10 a day or a hundred a day. And that’s an exponential shift, so it requires a proper plan. Most people would know Power Law as the rich getting richer, but there’s a reason for this. The algorithms on book-selling sites are insensitive beings that push whatever is being successful—and those same algorithms can relegate something that’s perceived as unsuccessful to the trash bin, never to be seen again. Sometimes drastic measures such as doing a re-launch (for a book or for a whole author) is the only solution.

As an author, Solari explains, you are selling an experience. A reader’s brain reacts to the characters in your story the way it reacts to interactions with their friends and family. Bring that sense of family into your brand. The marketplace amplifies the signal you send it, so purify the signal. That’s how you successfully play this game. That’s your strength in the Power Law field.

Many things may be needed to accomplish this feat, such as setting up a company, a new tax ID, new accounts Whether you are just starting out or in need of rebuilding your current business, don’t be afraid to break away from what’s not working. It’s all part of building a “brand promise”—creating quality and operating in such a way so that when you say you’re going to do something, people believe it. Doing so makes purchasing your book the obvious choice.

Another part of it is nurturing your readers.

You need to have a *place* to nurture them. And whether that’s a newsletter or a landing page on your website, it almost certainly isn’t the Amazon site. If a potential reader doesn’t know you, sending them directly to Amazon could actually hurt you. Instead, send prospects to a platform where you can nurture them and advance them to the point of purchase when they’re ready. It’s a long game with multiple rounds, but when the machine gets going, it makes its own fuel.

An author must focus on quality, Solari preaches. Lock it down. How does your book signal quality? Through the cover, ratings, number of reviews, a quality blurb, and what prospective readers see when they click the “Look Inside” button. (By the way, if your book contains quality in these areas and your ads don’t convert—aka, if they don’t sell books—it’s because your ads suck. The book-selling platforms have an infinite supply of ads. They won’t keep showing ads that don’t perform.)

Then, did the book promise as delivered? If so, there’s an emotional connection with your reader—the one we mentioned earlier, where your characters are now like family to them. Build on that. The most valuable piece of real estate in author-world is the white space right after the story ends. They read and *finished* your book. Bring that satisfied customer to your nurturing grounds.

Reliability of production is important too. Fans need to know there’s a schedule and that you will stick to it. (Two books this year and then no books next year probably isn’t the way to go.)

Nurturing your readers creates an automatic sale for people who have enjoyed the experience of reading your book. Nurturing them develops that trusting relationship so that they become the avid reader and automatic buyer you want.

Here is a [link](#) to Solari's presentation.



[Dan Alatorre](#) is a USA Today bestselling author of unputdownable murder mysteries and thrillers.

Understanding Your Consumer Data

Presented by Deon McAdoo

Reported by Michele Dunaway

Deon McAdoo promotes growth to the IngramSpark platform by educating independent authors and publishers on how best to utilize Ingram's Print-On-Demand services for bringing a new book to market and maximizing global sales.

Every consumer leaves behind bits of data in their online journey, and Deon McAdoo shared tips and tricks on how to help authors hit their target audiences using this data. McAdoo, who is a key account sales manager at Ingram Spark, has been with the company six years.

McAdoo set the objectives for the session by saying that the goal was to help authors understand what consumer data is and how it can be useful to them, to give authors three tools relevant to them to help find and leverage their audiences, and to help authors position themselves to think more strategically about their consumer's journey and the "virtuous circle."

What is consumer data?

McAdoo described this as the decisions consumers make online and the trail of "bread crumbs" they leave behind as a result of their internet use. This trail consists of personal information that comes from multiple sources such as social media, marketing campaign interaction, customer services, communications, browsing data, mobile apps, purchasing history, and more. The trail includes the decisions a consumer makes, such as likes/dislikes on posts, web browsing, online purchases, etc.

He showed a slide to give an example of consumer data that would be important for a young adult author.

For example, YA authors would understand that their readers vary in age from 14-24, spend more time watching videos of 60 seconds or less on social media, are only reading articles supported by influencers on Twitter and Instagram, and search for the products they buy using words like "trendy," "new," or "near me." It also means that they ignore posts with no images, always share posts that are give-back oriented, respond to posts that ask questions, and share articles or videos that are relevant to the books they are reading.

When Ingram collects this data, the data shows what kind of key words the consumer is using, how long they are on media (15-30 seconds for a video clip) and what the age group is sharing. McAdoo said that on TikTok, for instance, this age group shares about the characters of books, not the author. They do more around the products they are looking for.

Why consumer data matters

COVID increased the growth of online activity. As of January 2022, over 80 million people use connected devices and services, 1% more than the previous year. There are 95 million unique mobile phone users, a gain of 1.8%, and 192 million internet users, a 4% increase. For social media, with a 10.1% increase, there are 424 million active users. These increases are new users. The digital growth is huge.

This consumer data matters *because* there are 3.78 billion people purchasing consumer goods online (+344 million/10%), and this equals a total annual spend on online consumer goods of \$3.85 trillion (+18%/\$591 billion). Basically, there are over 230.5 million online shoppers in the United States, which is a 1.3% increase, as 70 percent of the U.S. population shops online and spends per capita \$3,428 a year.

The consumer journey takes four steps:

1. The first is *exposure/awareness*, which is who is telling them about the product (often social media) or the consumer's online search.
2. Then consumers *consider* the product based on their interest. They look it up.
3. Then comes the *decision/conversion*, where they go further before a purchase. In author terms, they follow the author or publisher then buy the book.
4. The last one is *retention/loyalty*, where the consumer opens the emails, signs up for the newsletter, leaves positive reviews, and returns to buy again.

In order to have a full picture of who consumers are, consumer data is broken down as follows: age, location (North, South, Midwest, coastal, etc.), where they search and what key words/influencers, what sites they spend their time on, and what content/media they are most likely to interact with.

Where to find consumer data

Google Trends is a free tool to see what search topics consumers are interacting with. It allows one to see how popular keywords are at the moment (a day, a week) and over time (a month, a year). The historical popularity lets you see how best to market and when to release your book.

Amazon Campaigns gives you data on your targeted sponsor and product campaigns. The cost will depend on your daily budget and how much you spend per targeted ad.

Facebook Audience Insights allows you to find out what your audience engages with the most, such as pages, topics, interests, likes, etc. It also tells you other details such as relationship status

(single/married/etc.), education level, location (Dallas/Nashville/etc.), job type, and device preference. This also allows you to target an ad to a specific audience of 1,000 or more people. The cost for the data is free with a business account.

Twitter Audience Insights is more specific to the platform but provides similar data to Facebook. While Twitter Analytics is free for every account, a Twitter ad account is needed for the data, but as long as there's an account, you'll have access to the data without paying for an ad.

Instagram Insights gives access to 700 million active monthly users with higher engagement rates than Facebook and Twitter. These insights help you see the time of day your audience is active, what days of the week they are active, what content/media performs best and how far it reaches, and where viewers found the post. While ads vary in cost, the data is free with a business account.

TikTok Analytics is data on 1 billion users. This was the biggest social media platform explosion of 2021-2022. The analytics help you see the time of day your audience is active, what days of the week they're most active, how your individual posts perform, and where your posts are discovered.

Tools to leverage consumer data

SooVle: A free account helps you identify how people are searching for content and helps identify what phrases and key words are best to pay attention to. Helps answer what other words/phrases come up on the sites when a phrase (such as "what is cancer") is searched.

Answer the Public: A free account helps you see the specific ways readers are asking search engines about your topic. A prolific way to check keywords. (The above "what is cancer" may also show "how is cancer treated" and "where are cancer treatment centers.")

Goodreads: A good option for comping your title. Use the stats function to see when books like yours were most popular in the Goodreads community. The site is free and can help you find the same audience.

Right Relevance: A free engine that helps you find relevant content and influencers based on topics and tags that you input. You can see how influencers are relating and what is relative right now and maybe tap into their followers.

Other free tools (secondary to the ones above)

Keyword Surfer: A free Google Chrome extension that allows you to see what keywords and phrases have for search volume and their cost for Google AdWords campaigns.

Keyword Sheeter: Provides real-time results on how users are searching for topics. Can be used for generating keywords for free.

Keywordit: Mines Reddit for keywords for topics with 10,000 followers. Delivers 500 keywords with associated volumes.

QuestionDB: Pulls trending topics from popular question-and-answer websites. Great for generating post content ideas or blog content.

Putting it all together—so now what?

Using the data you've collected through these sites or their equivalents, you can take the time to reflect on the data and build an intentional and effective marketing campaign.

You can think of the right audience, message, time, and place.

Audience: Are we reaching the people who will buy? Where are they at? Use tools like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Amazon Shopping Insights, Goodreads, or LibraryThing. Determine your audience's age, location, interests, spending sensitivity, and shopping habits.

Message: Are we crafting it to hit our audience best, in the way we want to hit them? Use tools like Right Relevance, Answer the Public, and Soovle. Create a message that relates to your audience, answers their questions without them having to ask, helps them discover new things, and contains the right media. If your followers are on Instagram, use dynamic visual content.

Time: If your audience is on social media at 6 p.m., look at when are you are posting. It probably shouldn't be at 6 a.m. Use tools like Instagram and Google Trends to help determine what time of day to post your messages, what day of the week will be best for your audience, and what time of year is most relevant for your topic.

Place: Using tools like Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Amazon, determine where your audience is located. Where do they spend most of their time (online, brick and mortar, region, state, etc.) and where will you get the most bang for your buck? Your ideal message is designed for Twitter for short text promotions, Facebook for mixed media, and Instagram is best for dynamic visuals.

The virtuous circle of marketing success

Picture the following in a circle with Identify at the 12 o'clock spot. The rest then fall around:

- Identify (12 o'clock): Hit where the consumers are at.
- Target (2 o'clock): Hit the consumers with a message that helps them go from interest to purchases.
- Market (4 o'clock): These are the various tools to use to market to consumers, from radio, TV, etc. How your customers find you.
- Measure (6 o'clock): Use tools to identify if the marketing is working. Example: Are you spending dollars on social media if it's brick-and-mortar sales that are driving the marketing?
- Adjust (8 o'clock): Look at what's working or not. Let's say Amazon is working. Maybe you should add more to Amazon and less on social media.
- Repeat (10 o'clock): No one-hit wonders. Do it over and over. Keep hitting your audience. Convert to loyal customers.

Q & A

What is LibraryThing?

It's similar to Goodreads. It helps users find similar products to target.

How do I know when to compensate for when to send something to hit the audience?

Look at the length of interaction. You can see spikes of when people are seeing your posts and liking or interacting with them. If you see the majority of people at 2 p.m. or 9 p.m. and your post was at 10 a.m., then move the posts from the 10 a.m. slot to later.

What is the best way to measure what gives you the most bang for your buck?

Constantly adjust your budget and play around. Ingram has a suite (an all-in-one platform) that helps with this, although it's a little more costly.

Can insights see hashtags?

No.



Michele Dunaway writes traditional contemporary romance in small-town settings with vineyards, hot air balloons, or ice rinks. The Love in the Valley series debuts in January with What Happens in the Air from Harlequin Special Edition and continues in March with All's Fair in Love and Wine.

Stop Looking for Unicorns, Start Planning Strategies

Presented by Elana Johnson

Reported by Michele Dunaway

Elana Johnson is a USA Today bestselling and Top 10 Kindle All-star author. She runs Indie Inspiration with Elana.

Elana Johnson is an Edgar-nominated, seven-figure author who says she wildly gestures and paces all over the place, except that she was trapped in the little riser area where the microphone was. She said that because she had no unicorns in the presentation, she added one to the first slide, and the cute unicorn graphics read “Dream big.” She also said she did not wear a faux leather jumpsuit, but she showed a video of her Dijon-colored leather jumpsuit—to plenty of audience laughter.

Johnson said that most authors look at their career as if they are in a dark forest—she showed a picture of one—and that if we wander long enough inside it, we may find a unicorn. The unicorn is the way that some author has found that works, as if we’ve stalked that author to “find out how she does that.” Johnson says we generally only see what’s in front of us, which are often a lot of trees and gnarly roots. All is lost and we’ll never write again. Or we see just the bark of the tree right in front of us and nothing more. We do not see where we want to be. Johnson said, “There are no business decisions to be made from the ground.”

Instead of an overhead view of the road, we look straight on. If we did see the overhead view, it’s probably not going to be straight. Most of our careers have big hairpin turns, and plenty of them.

Johnson told the audience that her career started in self-publishing in 2011, and in 2015 her Liz Isaacson pen name was born. Johnson said she wished for a unicorn, but don’t be staring at the bark. Authors need to take a view of their career from 20,000 feet. What is your overall business model? Johnson reiterated that, as authors, we all have different experiences.

Johnson’s goal for the presentation was to help authors feel inspired, to leave room for them to feel “I can do this,” and to leave with a few strategies.

Johnson then told the audience that the best marketing strategy is planning and executing a marketing strategy. Example: “I will have X number of strategies per (time).” Johnson said that things like conferences and TikTok are not marketing strategies. They are part of a strategy that you set up.

Here Johnson also mentioned Skye Warren, who does a marketing strategy every week, and that Johnson tried doing that for a while. Johnson then showed a slide titled “Up First” with bulleted content that read:

- fly high—aerial view of your business / goals
- mileage varies
- experiment
- branch out
- fit your business model
- evaluate each strategy (appropriate time)

Johnson said it’s unreasonable to think you’ll make more dollars each year. She mentioned the *Sully* movie where the computer kept saying “Pull up, pull up.” Then she said how when she got on the plane, she heard these same words walking by the cockpit. The pilot restarted the computer. “Sometimes,” she said, “you’re in restart mode. Don’t panic when you’re at the gate. Don’t do that to yourself or each other.”

Look at the business goals from above, and realize your mileage will vary. What is your 20,000-foot goal? Then experiment to get it. This, however, takes vulnerability. People will know when you fail. But branch out of your box. What is your business model? Johnson’s is in KU and then she transitions people. “How do I work to that goal?”

Then evaluate the strategy used in the appropriate time frame. Johnson said indie authors often stop too soon. Was it enough time to know if it’s viable? Other things authors only try once, but maybe the strategy wasn’t bad. Maybe the market is not there for that book, but the strategy would work for another book.

Next Johnson showed a slide containing six rectangular boxes. These were labeled product, price, place, promotion, participation, and purpose. They come from Do More Good and can be found [here](#). Johnson said she adds participation and purpose, and most people think marketing is just promotion, but it’s really these six things.

Marketing strategy #1: Product

You write to market as you write the book and your front list. She said she’s also redone her backlist dozens of times to get it to sell. You can recover, possibly retitle, and relaunch the backlist. You can plan a big marketing push at relaunch to bring in new readers, warm up lukewarm fans, and reward superfans. Good time to move in and out of KU. If in KU, consider going wide with the new covers. Packaging a good book should sell the book before the reader even reads a word of it. The book, though, should work harder than you do. If you are working harder than the book is, you’re doing it wrong.

Marketing strategy #2: Price (discounts)

Johnson said she is the “Tesla of Western Romance.” However, it’s okay to be a Toyota, or even a Kia. What are you? What is your brand? Your pricing strategy should mirror your brand. You can, as she does, vary this between your pen names.

How are you pricing? This involves preorder, launch, backlist, etc. Examine your feelings toward discounted books. They are real. You can grow faster if you discount. The question is if you want fast growth or slow growth and what is right for you. Discounts can bring new readers to you for low risk. They can warm up lukewarm fans. It’s low risk and low energy for the author. Discount the book where they are dropping out of the series, which might not be book one but rather book five. “People will fall out,” Johnson said. “What can I do to get them back? Book five may be where you want them. With a discount you tell them, remember the first one through four? Don’t you want number five?”

Johnson said it’s hard to get people to read free books, but that it’s easy to get them to take them.

She mentioned three types of fans: new, lukewarm, and super fans. Have a goal for the pricing discounts besides money. Do you want them to join your newsletter? What are you doing for outside sales? “We want them later and forever,” Johnson said. “Grow the fan base.”

As for discounts, you can use weekend deals, one-day-only sales, newsletter-only sales (which can grow your newsletter), and social media platform sales, which can grow your sphere of influence.

Marketing strategy #3: Place

Where are your books being sold? You don’t have to be in KU to be Amazon-only. Give yourself permission to move in and out of KU at will. You do this by determining the series’ health for each one: length, price point, comp title, ever been wide in KU?

Johnson said direct sales are a huge industry topic right now. Johnson also mentioned that a lot of what we do in this business is by feel. Go with your gut. You are not going to do anything you can’t fix. Collect the data over time—and you need an accurate amount of time.

Marketing strategy #4: Promotion

This is what everyone thinks marketing is. But after the three other things, then comes promotion. What are your mission, vision, and values for the year? This comes first, as does having a new product, pricing, and distribution strategy. Then you promote the products you have inside your business.

She mentioned the following:

- Events: live, virtual, live virtual. She does virtual book clubs through her website. Everyone brings a snack and if they comment, she enters them into a drawing.

- Social media posts: TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Be Real, website, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, BookBub, Clubhouse, Goodreads. Basically, anywhere you interact (see participation). Your job is to show them your books exist.
- Logos/Branding: these are your colors, etc.
- Advertising
- Sales (Personal Marketing Events, aka PMEs)
- Reader communications
- Giveaways
- Price discounts

Personal Marketing Events are not Christmas in July or St. Paddy's Day reads for 99 cents. They are related to your personal milestones. Johnson gave examples of a Hallmark rejection but spinning that to your self-pub book. She also said you can run specials for anniversaries (writing, series starts, book releases), that day you quit your day job, started in audio, etc. It's all about you. You're talking about you.

If you get rejected by BookBub, go plan other things and then apply 30 days later for another. It happens. Don't just rely on that. You want to get your book in front of as many as possible.

Promo tactics can include the following:

- Pricing strategies
- Your newsletter
- Newsletter swaps
- Book paid newsletters (BookBub, et al.)
- Permafree wide Book 1 or 99 cents in KU
- Round Robin
- New TikTok/Instagram videos
- New distribution methods (like audio on YouTube which is a new trend)
- Paperback giveaways
- Book boxes
- Grow social media
- Group promotion within genre

Johnson said to email every day if needed. If they're not going to buy, they don't need to subscribe. Keep track of the data for a year. BookBub is best for discount readers. She'll do one or two things for the first month and two a month forever for permafree.

Be careful spending too much time and energy. Johnson uses paperback giveaways to increase membership in her Book Club or encourage newsletter signups. Book boxes grew her Instagram.

Marketing strategy #5: Participation

TV is one-way media. You can't talk back to it. You can with social media. It demands a conversation. You can't simply schedule and snooze. Don't just sell product—sell you and the benefit from your product. What problem does your product solve?

Johnson said: "I try to provide an experience." What is the benefit when they read your book? She also responds to every newsletter email, even if bad/hard.

Participation also includes live events and your newsletter. The newsletter has been her best marketing tool. You control it. Use it to remind your list of your permafree/perma 99-cent books every month. Email out all sales/deals to them first. Engage with them—ask questions, run giveaways, and continually remind people of all your books. Make a 12-month plan and schedule. Johnson mentions Zoe York here and the 12-month plan sheet.

Marketing strategy #6: Purpose

This drives all your activity in the business. What does your brand do? What's its purpose? What promises are you trying to make to readers? Do you deliver on that? Johnson mentions *Save the Cat* here—that the screenplay must deliver on the promise of the premise. Same for your business. Are you marketing with purpose? Or just putting books on sale?

Growth/launches/preorders/backlist—what is the purpose for your marketing tactic?

Bonus strategies: Box sets

Use these to make old products new. You can use a discounted price. It's a way to interact with readers and to build a fanbase.

Johnson created a box set with three books that were all book one in three different series. She also did a six-book box set which was all book one from six different authors. Bundle your work. You can also use box sets to bring awareness to your brand and/or a cause/charity you support and that you want people to identify with you and want to be associated with.



Michele Dunaway writes traditional contemporary romance in small-town settings with vineyards, hot air balloons, or ice rinks. The *Love in the Valley* series debuts in January with *What Happens in the Air* from Harlequin Special Edition and continues in March with *All's Fair in Love and Wine*.

Direct Sales with Kickstarter and Patreon

Presented by Monica Leonelle

Reported by Laura Resnick

Monica Leonelle, founder of [The World Needs Your Book](#), is a USA Today bestselling author, MBA, and former software engineer turned executive marketing professional turned independent author.

Monica Leonelle, along with her partner Russell P. Nohelty, has raised at least \$400,000 on Kickstarter across multiple writing projects. She urges authors to increase earnings by adding fan-based platforms to their business models, alongside their regular retail strategies.

Fan-based platforms (FBPs)

“Crowdfunding” or fan-based platforms (FBPs) are a new kind of revenue stream, one that doesn’t cannibalize income from the author’s retail stream. Readers are starting to accept this sales model more and are getting more interested in buying directly from authors.

Two prominent examples of FBPs: authors mostly use [Kickstarter](#) to do preorders or fund specific projects; [Patreon](#) is a subscription-based platform, where patrons (fans) pay a monthly stipend (which can sometimes be as little as \$1) to a creator.

FBPs attract fewer buyers to an author than a retail platform does, but the author earns much higher revenue per reader. Leonelle described it as swapping \$2–\$7 per retail sale for \$25–\$50 per direct sale. You can diversify your revenue streams, find new readers on a different type of platform than retailers, collect data from your customers, and connect directly with readers who enjoy investing in an author.

Some FAQs

Addressing some common questions about using FBPs, Leonelle said although it works better if your retail strategy is “wide” rather than exclusive, you can use Kickstarter, for example, for preorders before you switch to selling a book exclusively on KDP Select.

If you don’t have fans, you can use FBPs to develop a fan following.

If you live overseas, you might want to stick to crowdfunding only digital projects; alternately, you could use a U.S.-based fulfillment company to ship print books or merchandise. For authors who worry that they would appear to be “begging for money” or that using crowdfunding would look bad to their readers, Leonelle noted that readers are getting accustomed to authors using these platforms. Also, authors can educate people about this process. For example: “I’m not asking for donations; I’m making preorders available to fund this project.”

Mistake: Trying to replicate the retail experience.

You can't compete with retailers. You'll never print cheaper books, or ship books faster, or make downloads easier than Amazon does, so do not try to replicate what they do—people will say, "Why shouldn't I just buy it from Amazon, which is easier and what I'm used to?"

Instead: Sell things that you aren't selling at retailers, or things you *can't* sell at retailers. Examples: Bigger bundles of your ebooks; audio commentaries; artwork; special editions; merchandise options. And sell things *exclusively* on your FBP—even if only for a limited time period—like a brand-new book or a preorder.

Mistake: Porting over marketing tactics from retailers.

You can't compete with retailers. You'll never print cheaper books, or ship books faster, or make downloads easier than Amazon does, so do not try to replicate what they do—people will say, "Why shouldn't I just buy it from Amazon, which is easier and what I'm used to?"

Instead: Sell things that you aren't selling at retailers, or things you *can't* sell at retailers. Examples: Bigger bundles of your ebooks; audio commentaries; artwork; special editions; merchandise options. And sell things *exclusively* on your FBP—even if only for a limited time period—like a brand-new book or a preorder.

Mistake: Porting over marketing tactics from retailers.

SALES FUNNEL (READER JOURNEY)	PLATFORM HELPS YOUR BOOK	GOING WIDE									
		AMAZON		WIDE RETAILERS				GOING AGGRESSIVELY WIDE			
								FAN-BASED PLATFORMS		DIRECT SALES	
		KU	SALES	APPLE	GOOGLE	KOBO	B&N	KICKSTARTER	PATREON	SITE	EVENTS
1 - TARGET AUDIENCE		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●
2 - LEAD		●	●	●	○	●	○	○	○	○	○
3 - PROSPECT		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	●
4 - TRIAL READER		●	●	●	○	○	●	○	○	○	○
5 - INCOMING BUYER		●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
6 - BUYER		●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	●
7 - READER		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	●	●
8 - FAN		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
9 - TRUE FAN		●	●	○	○	○	○	●	●	●	●
10 - EVANGELIST		●	●	○	○	○	○	●	●	○	●

The column on the left lists the stages of a reader's journey, from Target Audience (someone who reads books like yours but has never heard of you) all the way up to Evangelist (someone who shares your books with other people and wants to attract more readers to your work).

Notice that Kickstarter is very weak (and Patreon even weaker) in the categories where retailers (particularly Amazon) are strong, such as Target Audience, Trial Reader (someone who downloads a sample or freebie), and Incoming Buyer (someone at the point of making a purchasing decision). Conversely, FBPs are stronger with readers where retailers are weaker, such as Fans (who read your work regularly) and True Fans (who read everything you've ever written).

These differing areas of strength illustrate why identical strategies won't work on both types of platforms.

For example, a typical success strategy for a book on Amazon is to promote heavily when the book first launches. If this succeeds, it raises the book's rank, which increases visibility, which attracts more sales. Over time, the book's sales gradually diminish as the intensive promotion efforts cease on this title and other newly launched books are heavily promoted.

A successful Kickstarter trajectory is different. It starts high, then drops off, then levels out to a "dead zone" or "flatline," and then, at the end, it shoots up again. This is partly due to the deadline nature of a Kickstarter; campaigns always have an end date, a specific finish line. The deadline plays a substantial role in driving the trajectory, and so this pattern differs significantly from a retail platform—as does the audience, which is smaller and willing to invest a larger sum of money.

Since these platforms are very different, authors need to make sure their strategies match the platform.

Mistake: Going after the same 20% of readers that retailers serve.

In sales, Leonelle said, 20% of people are an easy "yes," 20% are a firm "no," and 60% are undecided. Retailers maximize their revenue by going after the easy yes (20%). That's who they design their algorithms to focus on.

So, 60% of readers are persuadable, but they're not being shown your book by retailers because they aren't in the "easy sale" group. With direct sales and FBP, *you* can show them your book. And because your revenue-per-reader is much higher on an FBP, you don't need to persuade nearly as many readers as a retailer needs to persuade.

Mistake: Not making the case for your books.

A retailer doesn't have to be very persuasive to get people to spend \$5 on an ebook they can instantly download—especially not when the retailer is only *trying* to sell that book to people who are already inclined to buy it. A retailer page offers a brief description, a small sample of the book, and it's a fast transaction.

By contrast, trying to get readers to invest \$25–\$50 in your Kickstarter project requires a lot more persuasion. On this platform, Leonelle said, you're allowed 35,000 characters to convince people to become backers of your project. This is your opportunity to increase excitement, break through objections, and use psychological triggers. Lead them toward a goal, encourage them to want to participate.

On Kickstarter, for example, you can write an extended description of the book, add images, talk about yourself and your process, provide a series guide, delve into worldbuilding, include multiple character samples, add threads for discussing the book, and include multiple chapters as samples. The larger sum of money a backer spends, the more they want to know in advance.

Or, if you're crowdfunding on Patreon, talk about who you are, why you're on this platform, what's in it for readers if they become your patrons, what is the format of the material you're offering them, what's the schedule, how often do you publish.

You need to establish the trust with your backers that Amazon has established with its

customers. Backers are buying from you. Give them the sense that they're going to get something really good in exchange for the money they spend directly on you and your work at an FBP.

Mistake: Assuming that readership = fandom.

Readership, as Leonelle uses the term, denotes readers who are loyal to a platform, whereas fans are customers who are loyal to you. A reader will prioritize staying with the platform they prefer, whereas a fan will follow you anywhere. A reader likes to read, whereas a fan is deeply invested in reading your work.

Reading your books—even subscribing to your newsletter—doesn't mean a reader is a *fan*. It's still an impulse buy. A fan is more invested, and only a small percentage (10% or less) will become fans—but they will follow you everywhere and shower you with money. Thanks to FBPs, you can make a living with a small number of fans. You can also create more fans by creating cool and engaging fandom products. Give your fans more opportunity to invest in you. Creating more fans also helps attract more readers via word-of-mouth, platform algorithms, and getting your brand out there.

Authors build business via retailers by providing more and more books. But on FBPs, fans aren't asking for more books, they're asking for something really *cool*. Come up with a role-playing game, a tabletop game, higher engagement, more ways for your fans to delve into your work or your fictional world. How deep can your fans go with you?

Mistake: Mixing up donations with value proposition.

When you position payment on FBPs as a donation, the transaction becomes emotional and makes the customer think, "How much do I like them?" The situation is uncomfortable, and the value of what you're offering is very unclear—particularly when compared to the financially clear transaction available on a retail platform.

Instead: Lead with the value of what you're offering, so the customer feels clear on the transaction, what it's worth, and what price is right for them. For price shoppers, consider offering something worth more than what you're asking them to pay for it. Or present a value that's exclusive to the platform you're on, something they can't get anywhere else.

Kickstarter

Kickstarter tends to be a good platform for science fiction/fantasy and role-playing games. Contemporary and historical romance, as well as mysteries and thrillers, are starting to do better, but they still tend to underperform because those readers aren't there in big numbers yet. There may be a plan underway to raise awareness of Kickstarter in the romance community in 2023.

Types of projects that Leonelle recommends for Kickstarter include: an exclusive pre-retail launch of a book; a hardcover special edition of a backlist book; an anthology; new editions of titles, including new or recovered material (sort of a "director's cut"); something else, like a card deck, a game, an audio commentary; some combination of these.

She recommended studying these successful Kickstarter projects for inspiration: [Animal Magica](#), an epic fantasy coloring book; [The Farshore Chronicles](#), a five-book set of special editions; a special edition collection of the [Outsystem](#) series; and her own [Go Wide, Grow Wide](#) campaign.

Although doing a one-off project can be worth the effort on Kickstarter, most people try to use the platform regularly, maybe once every six months. The more you use a platform, the more your base grows there. Kickstarter has a “follow” button, and you train your fans to use it, so it makes sense to keep using the platform.

Although it’s feasible to do a Kickstarter for *only* digital rewards, so you don’t have to ship anything, your campaign will do better if you include a physical product—fans seem to prefer it on this platform.

Patreon

Patreon has a reliable mechanism for collecting subscriptions and has established trust with users.

The platform offers content plus community. A patron who pays a subscription fee to a creator on Patreon receives content in return. The community aspect relies on the creator’s level of interaction with patrons and depends on how much an individual patron wants to engage.

Leonelle cited two business models that authors use on Patreon. One is “books and bonuses,” where readers may get early editions of an author’s books, as well as previews of related artwork, chats with the author, and so on. The other mode is serialization and “writing to community,” where the author engages with fans on a series in progress or serializes a book—then releases it to the community in installments.

Two Patreon accounts that Leonelle suggested studying as successful examples are [Lindsay Buroker](#) and [Emilia Rose](#).

There are no discoverability algorithms on Patreon. Authors attract patrons via their newsletters, social media, and books. One of the best ways to attract patrons is to provide some sort of free version of what you offer, so people can sample it. And it’s crucial to be consistent about delivery, because patrons can reevaluate every month whether or not they want to keep subscribing to a creator.

Resources

- [The 5 Pillars of a Successful Kickstarter Campaign for Publishing Projects](#) (free)
 - [Advanced Kickstarter Strategies for Authors](#) (free Facebook group)
 - *Get Your Book Selling On Kickstarter*, Russell P. Nohelty & Monica Leonelle
 - *Get Your Book Selling On Patreon* (2023), Monica Leonelle
-



Laura Resnick is a longtime NINC member who writes fiction, nonfiction, and short fiction.

How Draft2Digital is Growing for You

Presented by Kevin Tumlinson

Reported by Jennifer Stevenson

Kevin Tumlinson is the director of marketing and public relations at Draft2Digital.

Most of the audience had used D2D, a publishing aggregator where you can bring your manuscript in digital format (MS Word or .rtf), upload it, and D2D converts it to ebook or print format. D2D distributes your ebook to retailers worldwide.

The big news is that D2D recently acquired Smashwords. What will this mean going forward now that they have joined forces?

Self-publishing is now just publishing

People used to say, “There’s publishing and then there’s self-publishing.” Now they say, “There’s publishing and then there’s traditional publishing.” Self-publishing *is* publishing.

Merger with Smashwords

Smashwords was founded in 2008. Tumlinson reports enigmatically that they are seeing early signs of earthquake since the merger. Smashwords made it easier for authors to get into the online storefronts and created an equal playing field.

The two companies merged in March 2022, combining both companies’ tools.

Why merge?

The two companies have a shared mission empowering self-published, independent authors and publishers to build and grow their publishing careers. They have shared values, similar histories, similar company cultures.

D2D and Smashwords are combining their marketing tools, the total to include Smashwords coupons, Smashwords presales, author interviews, self-serve merchandising in the Smashwords store (the author’s store on Smashwords), D2D author pages, Books2Read reading lists, universal book links, and the D2D promotional pricing tool, where you set a promotional price for a specific period and D2D will take care of lowering and restoring prices at the retailers for you.

The resulting company represents 264,000+ authors, 93,000+ ebooks, 20,000+ print books (and rapidly growing), hundreds of retailers, thousands of libraries, and hundreds of countries worldwide.

Another benefit is the number of distribution partners available to authors via this merger. Many of these retailers have hundreds of sub-brands:

- Amazon
- Apple
- Baker & Taylor
- Barnes & Noble
- Bibliotheca
- BorrowBox
- Gardners
- Hoopla
- Kobo
- Kobo Plus
- Odilo
- Overdrive
- Scribd
- Scribd Erotica
- Smashwords Store
- Tolino
- Vivlio

D2D print

Along with free conversion for an ebook file, authors can use D2D's cover converter, which automatically generates a print-ready version of your ebook cover. Supply an existing ebook cover and use D2D's free cover templates to ensure the perfect size. D2D uses Ingram's expanded distribution (partnered with Ingram). Authors can get into brick-and-mortar stores on a no-returns basis and must market directly to them. Authors can turn off expanded distribution to Amazon, which may be a choice, depending on your business plan. D2D print is a way to get both.

The cover converter takes the average color from your ebook cover and wraps that color around the physical cover. You can use your own colophon. You don't have to pay someone to do it; the D2D converter is free. You can upload any file to D2D's print generator, as long as the file generates the right trim size. The print converter creates industry trim sizes, matte or gloss finish, cream or white paper, and a free ISBN.

When you upload a new book, the automated back matter feature updates things like the Also By list, across *every book* you distribute through D2D. This is not retroactive, which means that if someone has already *purchased* a copy of your ebook, D2D doesn't go into their e-reader or app and update the Also By page for the book they already own. The updates happen to the files in D2D's system, so that the next person who buys the book will get an updated book with updated back matter.

Universal book links: Books2Read

D2D's universal book links can be used for ebook, print, hardcover, large print, trade, and audio. If your book is added to another storefront, you can refresh the link and B2R will capture that format's link. You can embed affiliate links in B2R links.

Author pages

D2D supplies free author pages for authors without their own websites. You can customize your page with or without author photo, links to books, a newsletter signup, and social media links. The author page also has a customizable image carousel for up to five covers. You can also mask the page's URL so that it doesn't say "D2D." If you already have a website, your D2D author page can be an additional page to point to.

B2R reading lists

You can create a curated, customizable list of books (yours or someone else's) on your D2D author page to use in promotions. This list is broken down by categories, giving your book credibility and "If you loved X" associations. You can also feature a "hero book" with a much larger cover with text and links. Every book on the book page is monetizable; that is, if you've set up your affiliate accounts with sites like Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, Smashwords, and Kobo, then, when someone clicks and buys a book from this page, you get a little kickback (in the form of affiliate money), even if the book on the Reader List page is not your book. The amounts and terms are all dependent on the platform you have the affiliate relationship with.

Great new features available since the merger

Now that they are merged, you have access to the Smashwords store, with the highest royalties in the industry, 80%. Smashwords offers a coupon manager, author interviews, and presales, where you can offer a book at a discount before it is launched anywhere else.

What's coming?

Features coming soon include audiobooks and an Erotica Certification tool. This latter was a challenge in the past because each retailer is fussy and they wouldn't tell D2D what their rules were. They erred on the side of caution, not wanting to risk their relationship with Barnes & Noble by offering something they wouldn't take. With this opt-in tool, D2D can tell retailers exactly the heat level of a book, and the retailer can choose to take or not take the book based on this. Smashwords will also add more stores. D2D is working on upgrades to their new promotions process and on something you are going to love related to email.

Evolution of self-publishing

Self-published authors now have worldwide reach, with global distribution and more control all the time. Each tool we have solves an author problem. Over time we circle back to improve every tool. It makes us happy that self-publishing is standard now and empowers the author. The more authors who come in, the more leverage D2D has with retailers.

D2D gift to conference attendees

Get the D2D Author Pack free [here](#).

This a collection of three books by Kevin Tumlinson, Nick Thacker, and Mark Leslie LeFebvre.

Q&A

Can you address Apple's notice about the EU requiring authors to post phone, email, and snail contact information with every book?

You do have to provide some sort of physical address if you're direct with them. Because of D2D's relationship with Apple, all your books use our address/contact information. Apple is the only retailer with that agency agreement, where you are the seller and Apple doesn't take responsibility. You can also uncheck the EU from your distribution for each book at Apple, but no one wants to do that. Anytime we add a distributor, you can push a button to select any, all, none, or specific distributors.

Comment from audience member: Apple told me the likelihood is that this will only be an issue if or when you upload the wrong ebook file.

Is there a concrete timeline for Smashwords to start working?

We'll have the beta in October; we're porting books over then. The word is, hopefully, we may be able to open it up by the end of the year.

Will you have the same front end and reporting for both stores, or separate front end and reporting for each store?

We're going with Smashwords Classic. Eventually, the Smashwords storefront will look like the D2D platform. It'll be a while before it's a one-button push to move books from one platform to the other. Eventually, you will only need one upload to get into both stores.

A friend of mine has a Smashwords account. She doesn't have a D2D account yet. Will they merge?

We'll be merging them, yes. There may be a little culture shock as we work out the wrinkles, but we'll be there to talk you through it. The merge will go both ways.

Regarding the way books look, we're making a template to make D2D's conversion system look more like Smashwords's meat grinder, which works better for some nonfiction.

If we currently go through Smashwords, will we also have to go through D2D?

Yes, until probably next year.

On Books2Read, have you ever considered allowing a short book description on the book page?

It was never designed for that. We have a book tab, which is functionally what you're talking about. This tab offers cover, book description, even book carousels for more books in the series, but that tab doesn't have storefront buttons. People have asked for that in the past. If you suggest it to us via email, it'll go on the consideration list.

When you have the storefront launch, will it integrate with people's websites? Amazon sets that up. Some authors don't want to build their own store.

We're not currently developing that. There are quite a few things ahead of that feature on the development board, but if we get more requests [for the feature you suggest], that carries more weight. I'm using Squarespace for my site, but there are definitely things on WordPress, where I upload my universal link and thumbnails, but it's not really what you're asking for yet. B2R links can be customized too. That's another incentive to customize that link; if you have more formats, you can get all formats of the same book under one link.

You mentioned audio: Do you have any plans?

We're always looking at things like that. Right now, our only audio feature is that we have partnership with Findaway Voices. There's nothing to talk about yet. We see it is a big thing. We hope to add more help for authors.

When will the storefronts merge?

In October we will beta that, and they will fully merge at the new year. Both sets of storefronts will be available to both sets of authors.



Jennifer Stevenson writes contemporary rom-com, paranormal rom-com, and paranormal women's fiction. She is a founder and co-president of Book View Café.

Managing Book Details with the Series Bible

Presented by Heather Slade and Frank Buchman

Reported by Harper St. George

Heather Slade is a multi-bestselling author who developed templates to streamline her workflow, production schedule, social media, and other communications. Frank Buchman is the driving force behind OrganizedAuthors.com to bring Slade's organizational tools to other authors.

Heather Slade has been writing romance for only five years and has already published over 40 books. She claimed her organizational skills are the reason she can write so many books a year. She doesn't spend a lot of time looking for information about her books or series on her computer, because she keeps it all in one place. This presentation is all about the templates she uses to organize herself. She introduced Frank Buchman, her son, who said he got a front-row seat to her organizational process. They cofounded OrganizedAuthors.com to bring her templates to all authors.

They created a total of seven templates. These include: Master Series Bible template, Social Media Content and Scheduler template, Author Income and Expense Tracker template, Author Master Plan template, Master Character Guide template, Ad Management template, and Writing Production Schedule template. This presentation focuses on the Master Series Bible template. It is important to note that all of their templates work with Airtable.

Airtable is a cloud-based collaboration service. There is both a website (airtable.com) and a downloadable app. The website claims to be "a spreadsheet-database hybrid, with the features of a database but applied to a spreadsheet." The duo said it is the best tool they have found to manage this type of work. The Airtable basic service is free to use after you create an account. Slade said that their template will run on the free plan. However, the upgraded plan will allow you to collaborate with other users. For example, you could give a cover artist view-only access to your character profiles.

Slade said that the workshop would be a true workshop in that attendees would be working through the template the entire time. She had us use our laptops, or phones in some cases, to sign up for a free Airtable account and allowed us to download a sample template of her Master Series Bible. She said that you can't write books if you spend hours a day looking for your information, which is why she created this template. It took some time for every attendee to download and access the program, because several people had internet connectivity issues in the conference room.

At first glance, the template looks like a spreadsheet with rows, called records, and columns, called fields. All series overview and instructions are prefilled in with detailed

instructions on what to put into each row. The example she used was her series K19 Security Solutions Team. Start out each page for each series with a series overview. This will include things like logo, tagline, blurb, family tree, and series trailer. Then each book has a row. Book one, *Razor's Edge*, has book-specific information in each field. There is a field for the ebook cover, paperback cover, audiobook cover, and ePub cover. These fields not only show the photo of the cover, but it stores the actual file. Instead of searching for the cover in a folder on your computer when you need to send it to someone, you simply go to this field and grab it.

Continuing the *Razor's Edge* example, there is a field for the two main characters where she puts quick reference information about them including physical and personality attributes. The other fields are Book Timeline, Tropes, Categories (for retailers), Keywords, BISAC, Excerpts, Teasers, Review Quotes, Audio Sample, Word Count, KENP, Audio Length, Narrators, ISBN fields for various formats, links to various retailers and formats, Link to Goodreads, and Link to Bookbub. The idea is that you have this information all in one place that is easy to find for all the books in your series. The book two links, for example, are in the row directly below book one links.

If someone needs an ePub, she simply pulls up the master file, goes to the cover, and clicks the link which brings up the file. This means she doesn't have to go look for it elsewhere on her computer. It makes her life easier and faster. The attendees were able to walk through an example with a clean field using their own book or a made-up book. They added the book, the series name, and the cover. Adding files to the spreadsheet/database is as easy as dragging and dropping. If you have all of this information in a csv file format, you can import it into the template as long as the fields match up.

Slade reiterated that you can share a view of your base template that is read-only. You do not have to pay extra for the read-only views. You can simply give them a link. This is great for her narrators. There is also a form setup in Airtable, and she is able to share that with her reader group. She does not have to pay extra for those.

Slade and Buchman ended the workshop by reminding attendees that they can view videos of the templates and how they work on their website OrganizedAuthors.com.

Q & A

If you create a town, can you put in business names or secondary characters in the town?

Not in this template currently; however, you can add a field with that information. (Slade walked us through a demonstration of how easy it is to add fields.) She mentioned a Series Outline by Chapter template that includes setting fields and location changes by chapter.

When in your process do you use this? Before, after, or during writing of the book?

She sets this all up when she has her covers, because she is going over them to set up preorders. Or if she is updating her website, she is going in to assign ISBNs and will do it all at once. It all depends on where she's at in her process. In the Series Outline by Chapter template,

she does that as she goes along. She is not a plotter, so this makes it easier for her to go back and remember what happened in chapter two, for example. This template also helps her narrators, because she uses two and they can quickly read through the chapters that aren't theirs, so they don't have to read those chapters in full.

When you are putting your images into the Airtable, is it uploading the entire file?

Yes, it is uploading the entire file. This makes it really easy to work with a PA, because they can access that information without you having to send it to them.

Is the Master Character Bible a separate file to this?

Yes, that is a separate file. There are videos on the Organized Authors website that will show you how the various templates work.

All of these templates are on Airtable?

Yes, all work in Airtable. The paid version is around \$25 per month and allows you to have collaborators. You don't need to use the paid version to use the templates. She only uses the paid version so that her team can access all of these files. She finds it useful for production schedule and book covers for promotion.

What is included in the Master Series Bible?

The Master Series Bible has the overview and Series Outline by Chapter.



Harper St. George writes historical fiction romance set in various time periods from the Viking Era to the Gilded Age. Her latest series is The Gilded Age Heiresses. She lives in the Atlanta area with her family.

Expand Your Empire: Conquering New Markets with Translations

Presented by Nora Phoenix

Reported by Laura Resnick

Nora Phoenix is the USA Today bestselling author of MM romance, a proud single mom, lover of all things pink, and an avid reader.

Novelist Nora Phoenix advocates maximizing the profit from each book you write by investing in foreign translations.

Why translations?

If your book sales are dependent on English-speaking markets, you're essentially putting all your eggs in one basket. Translations broaden your market. They also optimize income from books you've already written. With translations, you find new readers. Many people in foreign markets prefer to read in their own language—even if they speak English. This all represents sales you're not making and money you're not earning if you're not releasing your work in translated editions.

Phoenix, who writes in a niche market (MM gay romance) used her own earnings as an example. She has about 40 titles, not all of which are available in translation yet. Her 2021 writing income was \$536,667; translations accounted for 33% or \$176,151 of that overall figure. She said that her 2022 year-to-date income from translations is \$98,921.

Which translation markets are lucrative?

Germany is her most lucrative market by far. Germans are readers; their country has a strong reading culture. And most Germans want to read in German (even though, yes, many Germans speak English). Obviously, the bigger your genre, the bigger your market is in Germany. Phoenix noted that although she earns well in Germany, MM gay romance wouldn't be considered a major market there.

France is usually the next best market, followed by Italy. In her experience, Spanish has so far not been very lucrative. Your mileage may vary.

Deciding which of your books to translate first

Unsurprisingly, books with a broad, general appeal will sell best. Keep in mind that humor often doesn't translate well across cultures; Germans, for example, have a very different sense of humor than Americans. Will your romantic comedy or your humorous urban fantasy seem

funny when translated into another language and read by someone in another culture and country? Not necessarily.

Books that are immersed in very specific American settings may or may not appeal to readers overseas. How relatable is the setting to someone outside of U.S. culture? How universal (or not) are the book's themes?

Also think about the language in the book. Word-play humor is very hard to convey in translation. So are accents, regional dialects, and books that rely heavily on colloquial language. [As an aside, a recent interview about the American hit musical *Hamilton* noted that it took experienced professionals more than two years to translate its 23,000 words into German. *Hamilton's* extraordinary libretto is famously dense with word play, colloquialisms, and U.S. cultural references.]

In terms of genre, choosing which book to translate first depends on the market. Phoenix said that thrillers and police procedurals sell well in Germany, for example, whereas romance tends to do better in France and Italy.

She advised studying the sales rankings in your categories on Amazon's German, French, and Italian sites—which have translation functions that allow you to view those sites in English. Look at the overall rankings in the store. A book that ranks No. 53 in the entire store is good, but a book that ranks No. 1 in its category but only No. 450,000 overall is not going to make money. So get familiar with the patterns of genres or subgenres that sell or don't sell well in a given country.

Organizing translations

Once you've chosen which book to translate first, how do you go about getting it translated?

One possibility is to get a foreign agent who will sell your book to a publisher in that market, or approach foreign publishers yourself. Licensing your work to overseas publishers is less work for you if you don't have time to manage translations, but it also means less money for you.

Phoenix said she prefers the DIY method. After you decide which market to tackle first and which book to translate first, hire a translator.

One method she suggested for finding a translator: look on the copyright page of foreign editions of U.S. books, and approach that translator directly. This can be a good method if you have information that a book in your genre is well translated. One way to get that information would be to visit Amazon's German store, for example, and use the translation function to read reviews of recent U.S. books in your genre that have been translated into German. Look for comments about the quality of the translation (or the quality of the writing).

Another possibility is to look for a translator through an online freelance market, where you post a description of the work you need done, and people apply. Phoenix has used Upwork a lot, so she discussed the process there.

After you create an account, describe your project, and start receiving résumés, *always* look for a native speaker of the language. Phoenix was emphatic about that. Decide which applicant seems best suited to your needs (look for someone likely to understand the conventions of your genre), and negotiate a fee.

Upwork bases fees on an hourly rate, which isn't appropriate for translations, so be sure to ask for the translator's *per word* rate and negotiate on that basis. Also be specific about what the translator's fee includes—proofreading, copy editing?

Next, have them do a (paid) 2,000-word sample. At this stage, you may want to get a sample from more than one person if you've received several good résumés. For the sample translation, do *not* choose the first chapter. Pick a scene which is crucial to the novel. They need to show you they can translate your specific genre. Two thousand words will usually cost you about \$75. You don't need that many samples, so this won't cost a fortune. And the samples will belong to you, since you've paid for them.

Next, find a native speaker to evaluate the samples. Phoenix recommended hiring an experienced editor in that same genre and language; this is also a job you can post on Upwork. Expect to pay about \$0.01/word. All fees combined, getting a sample set may cost you about \$500.

Once you've chosen your translator, negotiate a contract with them for the first 20,000 words of the book. Do *not* contract for the *whole* book. They might not be that good a translator, after all, and you want to find out sooner rather than later. This way, if it's not going to work out, at least you've only paid for 20,000 words, not the whole book. Have those 20,000 words evaluated (probably by the person who evaluated the samples) before proceeding any further.

Offer a contract for the rest of book if the translation is good. If it's not, move on to someone else. And even if it's good, don't offer a whole series until they've finished the book and you've had it evaluated. You'll also need your title, blurbs, and promotional text translated.

As with a book in English, you'll need to hire an editor and proofreader. This might be the same person, or two separate people.

Have your copyright page translated, including the original English title, and credit your translator and editor.

Also, when working with your foreign translator and editor, be mindful of cultural differences, which can be mistaken for rudeness.

Payments and earnings

If you hire and pay your translator through Upwork (or a similar service), then Upwork will handle the money. They'll put the fee in escrow and won't pay the translator until the work is done and delivered. There's a fee for Upwork's services, and it adds up, but it protects you (and the translator).

If you work directly with the translator, rather than through a freelance service, you can pay them via PayPal, for example. Don't pay them until they've delivered the work, then ask

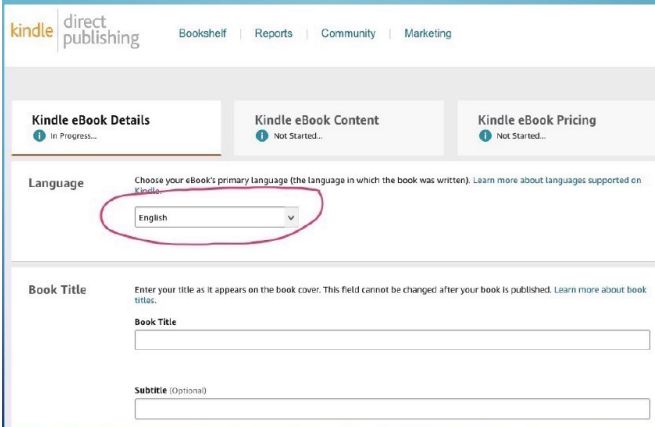
them to invoice you. There are other ways to pay, of course, if you or the translator don't want to use PayPal; this is something you'll need to research and agree upon.

How much should you expect to spend? Phoenix's experience is that translation typically costs \$.03–\$.06 per word and editing costs \$.01–\$.02 per word. A 70,000-word book will cost about \$3,500, plus whatever you spend on the formatting and the cover. (In many cases, you may simply use your American cover. If you format your own books, Phoenix stressed that you need to *turn off autocorrect* when formatting the translated version of a book.)

Phoenix said her books in Germany usually earn out in a month or less. She added this will not be the case for everyone, or certainly not at first. She has by now built up a readership there. In France and Italy, her books earn out in six to 12 months. She tracks everything for each book in each country: cost, sales, profit, release month, etc.

Publish and promote

When you're ready to upload the book to Amazon, use the KDP tools to select the relevant language and primary market, which will not be "English" or "the United States."



The screenshot shows the Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) dashboard. At the top, there are navigation links: "kindle direct publishing", "Bookshelf", "Reports", "Community", and "Marketing". Below these are three tabs: "Kindle eBook Details" (marked "In Progress..."), "Kindle eBook Content" (marked "Not Started..."), and "Kindle eBook Pricing" (marked "Not Started..."). The "Kindle eBook Details" tab is active. Under this tab, there is a "Language" section with a dropdown menu. The dropdown menu is open, showing "English" selected. A red circle highlights the dropdown menu. Below the language section, there is a "Book Title" section with a text input field. Below that is a "Subtitle (Optional)" section with a text input field.

And once it's published, Phoenix said, "Promote the hell out of it."

Have your translator translate your promo text to use on social media. Involve your foreign readers in promotion on social media promo groups for your genre. Post in their language, using Google translate; it's nowhere near good enough for your book or promo blurbs, but readers in another language will recognize and accept this mode of communication in social media chat. Use translation tools to read what they're saying—and to read reviews of your book. In particular, try to get a sense of what readers think of the quality of the translation. (If they think it's bad, they'll say so.)

Consider building up a specific newsletter for German, French, or Italian readers with freebies through BookFunnel. (You can use Google translate for the newsletter; just be sure to indicate that to the recipients so they'll understand why the language is awkward.)

A few legal details

In Germany, every book title must be unique. If your title has already been used there, one way to fix this is to add your series name to your title.

Copyright should be crystal clear in German contracts—because in German law, copyright belongs to translator. So make sure your contract with the translator stipulates that the laws of the United States apply to this contract, or the laws of your state or jurisdiction, and also that the translator is considered an independent contractor.

When working with a translator through a service like Upwork, *always* set up your own contract in addition to the legal agreements provided by that service.



Laura Resnick is a longtime NINC member who writes fiction, nonfiction, and short fiction.

Write to Riches: Manifesting Abundance From Your Books

Presented by Renee Rose

Reported by Tanya Agler

Fifteen-time USA Today bestselling romance author Renee Rose is passionate about helping other authors find and maintain an abundance mindset to catapult their careers and create their best future.

An indie paranormal writer, Renee Rose started her presentation by emphasizing she practices and uses abundance mindset in her everyday life. She is the author of *Write to Riches: 7 Practical Steps to Manifesting Abundance from Your Books*, the founder of the Author Abundance Facebook group, and the creator and coach in the Author Abundance Monthly Membership. She now makes seven figures and has doubled her income since starting abundance mindset. According to Rose, an abundance mindset point of view is designed to give authors confidence and mojo so they can hit their goals in their own way. Rose emphasizes she's not a unicorn. She uses the method of rapid release for her books and writes to market, and that, along with an abundance mindset point of view, has helped her get to seven figures. By using the abundance mindset, Rose is giving authors a tool to clear away the negativity. She considers herself a mindset coach and credits Skye Warren for helping her find her goal, which is to promote her love for energy in the author world. In that way, she can help writers stay positive and manifest abundance.

Are you tired of the grind?

Rose noted some questions to ask when thinking about adopting this practice, including "Are you sick of the constant striving of your author career?" and "Are you ready to transform it into something that matches your dreams?" She encourages the method of abundance mindset to empower writers to manifest their desires and attract wealth.

What is abundance mindset?

There are negative emotions in the writer world, especially jealousy and envy. Authors have hopes and dreams and then become fearful they won't come true. Abundance mindset is designed to open authors up to receiving all that is available to them. There are two ways of looking at the practice: that there's a little magic involved, or that it is based on science-based psychology. Either way, Rose believes that it works.

Lack mentality vs. abundance mindset

Lack mentality can be depressing. Some authors start to feel as though they are contracted, like they're not enough, or there's never enough money. Lack mentality often revolves around a sense of grinding out books with constant striving. It is often manifested in comparisonitis and can lead to disappointment, demoralization, or low-level depression. Practicing abundance mindset has led Rose to write faster with a sense of delight. Abundance mindset can help authors love themselves and their books. It pulls in the magic of synchronicities, opportunity, and abundance. Then abundance flows with gratitude for what you have, with a trust that you will find success. It's more than just positive journaling. It involves taking time and clearing your core wounds.

Your core wounds and money blocks prevent your success

A person's functions revolve around their core wounds. Common core wounds include the following:

- "I'm not worthy."
- "I'm not good enough."
- "I'm not likable."
- "I'll get it wrong."
- "I don't know enough."
- "I'm not ready."
- "I don't have what I need (the resources/knowledge/experience/connections)."
- "I might fail."

Her own core wounds and her journey

Rose shared that her core wounds are that "I am not enough," "I am not worthy," and "I don't fit in." These core wounds drove her to hit the *USA Today* bestseller list, but there was a whiff of desperation in that goal. She became worried she couldn't share with others about her writing career. Her then-husband asked an important question, "When is it enough?" She didn't believe she was enough. Then she asked herself whether she was trying to accomplish her goals for joy or to fill a void. She made a conscious effort to answer that. At the time, though, she wouldn't take the steps to overcome her wounds. Instead, she started side hustles and worked on her books' translations. This wasn't sustainable, though, because she wasn't addressing her self-image. She went on pause for a few years until she opened up energy to bring in readers. She affirmed to herself she was willing to be seen. By clearing her energy, that made the difference. She now believes she has her own back.

Benefits of freewriting to uncover core wounds

According to Rose, there are three main ways to go about uncovering your personal core wounds:

1. Access your subconscious
2. Tap into intuition
3. Answer questions

Freewriting practice

Rose recommends and is a big fan of Julia Cameron's Morning Pages. She suggests the following exercise to dig into your own core wound: keep writing with the pen moving at all times while shutting off your internal editor. Don't think—just write.

- *Writing Prompt #1:* What underlying belief about yourself or your books stops you from your greatness?
- *Writing Prompt #2:* What pain, rejection, or fear from your past have you held onto that you could let go of so it stops influencing your future?

Awareness

It is the first and most important step of abundance mindset. By naming and understanding her core wounds, Rose believes that helps her now become more aware of negativity when it shows up. She added that she can come up with a name for the negative feeling and know it's a lie.

Clear the lie from your energetic goal

Rose listed four steps toward accomplishing this:

1. Choose
2. Verbalize
3. Visualize
4. Flip the script

After you choose to fight the lie, you can visualize how to clear it away. It's like you're taking a magnet and pulling out the particle of the core-limiting belief from you. It may feel weird not to carry that around because it's so familiar, but it is freeing and promotes abundance. Then you visualize that you are wearing your field. By flipping the script, you say the lie aloud and find its opposite. Instead of carrying around the core wound, "I'm not worthy," you flip the script so you believe you deserve the positive and that you are worthy.

Additional clearing methods

Rose added that if the previous method doesn't work for you that you can go online to YouTube to find other clearing methods or try practicing different ways to accomplish this important step. Some other methods include tapping or Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT), hypnosis or self-hypnosis, or Energy-Clearing Sessions.

Money blocks

In addition to core wounds, Rose emphasized that personal baggage often revolves around money blocks. Some people are programmed to hate money. Others feel it's rude to talk about money. Rose suggests finding a safe space to ascertain how you feel about money. One way to look at it is that if we as authors want to make a difference in our community, we need to be able to discuss money.

Limiting beliefs about money

Rose presented a question to ask yourself: if money were no object, what would you choose to do with it? She suggested pulling in the abundant mindset energy now so you can use that positive energy surrounding yourself to flip the script. Turn the question, "Can I afford that?" into "I'm worth it." She examined several limiting beliefs and addressed how to flip the script on each:

- "I have to save every penny." One way to flip the script on that limiting belief is to consider that you can't take the money with you.
- "I have to spend it while I have it." One way to combat this is to open a unique bank account or put 10% in the bank right away.
- "There's only a certain allotment of money." There are different reasons some have this limiting belief. It may stem from a sense of guilt or that money will run out. One way to flip the script is to consider that our joy and abundance leads to others having joy and abundance.
- "Money is the root of all evil." Rose admits she has struggled with this limiting belief. One way to flip the script is to consider how you can do amazing things for your community.
- "No matter what I do, I can't get out of debt or get ahead." One way to flip the script is to consider making a set point and then seeing if you can shift your set point. For Rose, this led to her having an abundance mindset about being a list author.
- "It's wrong to have more than I need." The limiting belief behind this comes from some people having a mindset against wealth. Flipping the script and embracing an abundance mindset is that abundance comes from the creator.
- "I have to work hard for my money." In the abundant mindset, you follow the flow. When it happens, it feels like total ease.
- "Having money makes me a target." Authors especially feel this once they hit it big. Part of this limiting belief is sometimes that you don't want to stand out. Flip the script: I'm seen and loved. It's safe to be successful.

Writing Prompt #3: Based on your limiting beliefs, consider what belief about money or wealth limits you the most.

Seven steps to creating abundance

1. Clear the deck. Clear what's keeping abundance from coming in.
2. Feed the fire.
3. Love your books.
4. Trust your gut. This can be applied to how much to spend on ads to what's the next scene in your book.
5. Live it now. You belong at the table. Act as if you do.
6. Let it be. Give the abundant mindset space and time to manifest and receive.
7. Honor yourself. Listen to your body and take care of yourself.

Home play

Rose suggested making a folder and every time you see a positive review or email, put it in the folder.

Those authors who wish to delve further into the subject can sign up for Weekly Abundant Author Affirmations at write2riches.com and/or join Rose's Author Abundance Facebook group.



Tanya Agler writes sweet contemporary romance set in small towns. She is working on her new series, Rodeo Stars of Violet Ridge. She lives in the Atlanta area with her husband, four kids, and one beagle.

Stay on Track and Motivated with a Smart Marketing Plan

Presented by Clayton Noblit and Emma Boyer

Reported by Elaine Isaak

Clayton Noblit, senior marketing manager, and Emma Boyer, vice president of digital operations, both of Written Word Media, presented about how to develop an annual marketing plan and organize it for success. Written Word Media runs FreeBooksy and Bargain Booksy, among other author services.

Boyer and Noblit provided two basic handouts: “2023 Author Marketing Plan,” with space for listing five goals, along with a quarterly breakdown for steps required to meet those goals; and “Do What Works,” to list marketing tactics the author is already using that work for them. Periodically throughout the presentation, they encouraged the audience to work in small groups to brainstorm about their marketing plans, with the goal of learning from each other as well as from the presenters.

How do authors feel about marketing? Boyer asked for a show of hands for who loves marketing, and few hands rose; most authors don’t enjoy their marketing regardless of how much money they make, or how long they’ve been publishing or marketing.

Why does marketing @#\$%?

Figuring out what to do feels overwhelming. Authors feel they must be on TikTok, doing Facebook ads, newsletters, and more. There’s too much to do, and always something new. It’s hard for someone to do it all.

As author Glennon Doyle says, “I have written a book, and now I must become a commercial for the book I have written. I have to say words about the words I have already written. Do painters have to draw about their paintings?”

Most authors started writing books because that’s what they’re great at. However, digital marketing is all about failure, learning what works by learning what doesn’t. It’s an iterative process with a steep learning curve. People value competence and want to do what we do well. However, marketing takes a long time to develop mastery from beginner to expert. Then digital media can change overnight and return you to an earlier stage. As a result, authors experience a lot of conflicts about what they *should* be doing.

Boyer and Noblit did give the caveat that different genres may have different strategies. Different authors may have different strategies also because they have different strengths.

How do we fix marketing?

Make it more effective and less intimidating. Their tips for changing your marketing mindset include: avoid comparisons to other authors, know you're not alone—many authors feel the same way, and know there are many resources to help you. The first thing to do is make a great plan.

The three keys to a smart plan:

1. Be intentional. Use well-defined, deliberate goals and tactics.
2. Do what works for you.
3. Get organized to bring your tactics into a plan for the year.

Be intentional: How to set SMART goals

This approach may be familiar to many, but SMART is an acronym breaking down as follows:

- **Specific:** know what your goal is trying to achieve, and have a benchmark to know how to get there.
- **Measurable:** know how you're doing in your progress to meet your goal.
- **Achievable:** but not necessarily easy. "If you only ever shoot for the stars, you might not get there," Boyer said. You must believe you can do it.
- **Relevant:** help you meet your long-term goals.
- **Time-bound:** have a due date for your goal so you achieve the benefit for the goal.

Here's an example of a possible writing goal: *Get more people to discover my new series*. This goal is *not* SMART: it's neither measurable nor time-bound.

A better goal by the SMART rubric might be: *Get 150 downloads of book one in my new series between Dec. 25 and Dec. 31*.

Our small groups introduced ourselves and learned the other members' primary genres. We then took 10 minutes to define three to five goals for 2023, using the SMART rubric.

Then for about five minutes, we filled out the "Do What Works" worksheet and discussed tactics we've used in the past that we have found to be effective.

Bringing together those goals and tactics, we brainstormed how to meet the goal. For example:

Goal: Get 150 downloads on book one between Dec. 25 and Dec. 31.

Tactic: Lower price and run Freebooksy promotion.

How Written Word Media analyzes tactics

While we often consider the dollar-cost of certain tactics, we may not think of the other types of investment that marketing tactics require. What is the effort involved to do the activity? Does it require high mental energy? Taking that into account, when is the best time to do this tactic? What is the time commitment of the task?

How do you determine the effectiveness of the tactic? Look at the return on investment (ROI) in terms of your goals (number of downloads, percent increases, engagement, etc.).

Boyer and Noblit shared a grid showing return on investment on one axis versus time investment along the other. Using this structure, you can evaluate where your tactics fall. Are many of them high time investment? As you plan your quarterly tactics, consider the amount of work, both in terms of time and also of mental energy, that your tactics require. Rather than employ a large number of high-investment tactics at once, balance the work you're doing throughout the year, or make different choices about which tactics to use.

The audience then shared their top three tactics with their small group, and why they employed them. Are these tactics useful? Easy? Good ROI? Fun?

Get organized: Make a plan

Apply the tactics you wish to employ to your goals, breaking the goals down into quarters. Assign four to five tactics to each quarter, but be sure to set up for success. If something will pay off later in the year, assign it to an earlier quarter. To limit your sense of failure and frustration, limit your new tactics to one or two per quarter. Make sure the tactics tie back to one of your goals so that you stay on target to achieve them.

An organized marketing plan means no distractions, enabling the author to focus on what specifically works for them. It gives you benchmarks toward measurable progress. Boyer and Noblit concluded by observing that it's okay to stick with things. It's also okay to pivot, as long as you are making the choice intentionally to support your goals.

They answered a few questions, describing their Reader Reach ad service, which runs Facebook ad campaigns for \$150, 60% of which goes to the platform. These ads use Written Word Media's proprietary data for a five-day blast and perform best for titles at \$4.99 and below (similar to Bargain Booksy).

For email book blasts, they recommend spacing promotions at least 30 days apart; 60-90 days works for most authors. For more information about their services, go to WrittenWordMedia.com or reach out at info@WrittenWordMedia.com.



Elaine Isaak writes knowledge-inspired adventure fiction including *The Dark Apostle* series about medieval surgery as E.C. Ambrose and the *Bone Guard* archaeological thrillers as E. Chris Ambrose. She's a frequent workshop instructor and former adventure guide who makes wearable art in her free time.

Building Your Marketing Team

Presented by Ricardo Fayet

Reported by Cidney Swanson

Ricardo Fayet is one of the founders of [Reedsy](#), a marketplace providing author services including editorial, cover design, book marketing, and translation.

Fayet believes it is critical to understand *when* and *what* an author should outsource because different services can have vastly different impacts on revenue. Revenue springs from a beneficial combination of traffic, conversion, and vitality. Traffic can be boosted through advertising, social media, and newsletter swaps. Conversion is impacted by cover, description, and reviews. Excellence in editing, narration, and email marketing assist with vitality.

So, how does an author choose what to outsource and when to outsource? Some decisions are easier than others. In the case of a series, which requires Sisyphean levels of effort just to sell a few copies, Fayet suggests moving on and writing the next series. Books that sell consistently are the ones to focus on; hire someone to take these books to the next level of profitability.

Since there is no such thing as an assistant who takes care of *all* marketing tasks, it is helpful to use a matrix of skills versus level of enjoyment for these tasks. If you are good at a certain task and enjoy doing it, don't outsource it. If you are bad at something and don't enjoy doing it, hire someone.

When it comes to things you are good at but don't enjoy, watch for burnout. It may be better to hire someone to take over once you have gotten them up and running. For tasks you are not good at but enjoy, learn from a course or a paid consultant. Fayet points out that in situations where an author knows nothing about a task they are also bad at, they will become entirely dependent on the person they hire—so hire wisely.

While a comprehensive list of marketing services would be impractical, the following can serve as a guide to areas where services can be outsourced.

A book's retailer page and metadata

Authors can hire a professional marketer to do tasks such as writing the book's descriptive blurb, researching keywords and search engine optimization opportunities, researching categories for each marketplace and analyzing their competitiveness, or even performing a thorough audit of each retailer page.

Social media

It is not advisable to hire out social media where you are creating original content or interacting with other accounts. Readers want a connection with you, not your assistant or publicist. However, you can potentially outsource scheduling of posts and videos, generating graphics, answering some reader comments and messages, and organizing giveaways or collaborations.

If you want to contact a BookTok or Bookstagram influencer, do it yourself for the best results. In most cases, an influencer doesn't want to interact with your assistant or publicist; they want to assess *you*. However, you can hire someone to research the top 10 influencers that are a good fit for what you write.

Email marketing

Here, too, readers want to hear from you, not your copywriter. However, you can hire someone to advise on reader magnets, design your welcome automation, provide advice on list hygiene, advise you on list segmentation, or help you with a migration from one email platform to another. It is also possible to get coaching on any of the above if you would like to do these tasks yourself but don't know how to.

Newsletter swaps and promotions

Consider hiring an assistant to research promotion sites, book promotion slots, organize and schedule promotions, and advise on price promotion strategy. Don't hire them to reach out to potential authors for swaps; authors will want to communicate with you and not an assistant.

Advertising

This is the easiest task to hire out, but Fayet advises careful consideration before doing so. Are your books ready to be advertised? Have descriptions, cover, editing, and so on been optimized? If you are ready to hire out advertising, it is essential that you have some basic knowledge of the platform. Also, don't expect to make money in the first month or two. Start with one platform at a time (except for during a launch or other big push). Define a clear goal for the advertiser to meet, whether in ROI, sales volume, or rank. Ask for regular reports that allow you to visualize the progress they are making.

Costs for assistance with advertising can vary widely depending on the task. Website development can run from \$500–\$2,500. To have a mailing list automation set up, expect to spend \$1,000–3,000. For help with Amazon metadata, including things such as description/blurb writing or keyword category research, expect to pay \$250–\$500. Ongoing ads management can cost several thousand dollars per month. For a marketing launch plan, \$1,000–\$3,000 is reasonable.

Having concluded the *types* of assistance available to authors, Fayet provides suggestions concerning the length of assistance an author might require. Both short-term and long-term assistance are possible. A good marketer can rewire your entire approach to marketing, allowing you to carry on with what they teach you. One-time, short-term assistance is available on Reedsy for the following:

- social media coaching
- full-scale marketing plans
- audit of your Amazon book page
- author branding and platform building
- Amazon/Facebook advertising audit
- blurb writing
- wide marketing coaching
- email marketing consultation
- price promotion strategy and scheduling
- audiobook marketing consultation
- back matter conversion audit
- market research

Fayet also has advice when it comes to deciding between a professional marketer and a virtual assistant. A professional has a strong marketing background, knows more than you do, and can dramatically improve your marketing game, charging \$100–500 per hour. A virtual assistant may have some marketing background, should be trained, can save you time by taking activities off your hands, and will charge \$35–\$70 per hour if trained, or \$10–\$25 if untrained.

When hiring a long-term marketing partner, consider what you can realistically afford and whether their contribution will boost sales enough to recoup fees. Decide what level of skills you require and who will train them—or are you hiring them to train you?

To find the right person for your needs, Fayet recommends searching via word of mouth, on internet forums, at conferences, and within writing groups. Fayet suggests getting a feel for the market and comparing quotes, even if you already know who you want to hire. Reedsy is an excellent place to source professional marketers, all of whom have been curated by Fayet, while Upwork is a good place to search for virtual assistants.

Fayet provides the following handy list of dos and don'ts when hiring help.

Do:

- look for experience in your specific genre.
- seek a specialist in the exact area you need help.
- negotiate, but be respectful of their experience and time.
- beware of big agencies where it's not clear who does the work.
- get references and contact them.

Don't:

- expect someone to do everything for you.
- expect people to work for a percentage of profits.
- impose unrealistic deadlines.
- believe all the reviews or testimonials on their website.

When it comes to assessing and maximizing value from marketing professionals, there are several considerations. If you find good professionals with whom you work well, keep them around by clearly defining and delimiting their services. *What* are they going to do? *How* are they going to do it, and will you be able to use it? *When* will they deliver, and when can you expect to hear from them again? It is also critical to be open to the feedback you receive from a professional. Look at disappointing feedback as an opportunity and pay attention.

Recognizing that things can sometimes get ugly, Fayet provides some concluding advice. Prior to beginning the relationship, get a clear, unequivocal contract that delimits the services and remuneration. It is wise to set up a kill fee to stop the collaboration if needed. During the period of the relationship, provide regular honest communication, and share feelings and issues earlier rather than later. If things do get ugly, learn to let go. Avoid escalating, threatening, or public shaming.

More...

To learn more about any of the information shared above, Fayet has a free ebook and marketing newsletter which can be accessed by visiting: rdsy.me/newsletter.

To view slides from the presentation, visit: rdsy.me/sj-ninc22.

For further questions, contact Fayet at: Ricardo@reedsy.com.



Cidney Swanson is an award-winning author of young adult sci-fi and fantasy with 30 titles to her name. Her novel *Saving Mars* was named to Kirkus Reviews Best of 2012 and was an honor book for the SCBWI Spark Award 2014.

Healthy Living for the Busy Writer: How to Avoid Sedentary Spread

Presented by Jasinda Wilder and Jack Wilder

Reported by Dan Alatorre

Using her own unique life experiences, Jasinda Wilder developed an eight-week jump-start plan, The Wilder Way, that will get you eating, moving, living well, and feeling great.

Authors, even if you don't need to lose weight, you need to be healthy. Our jobs share a lot in common with many office workers, desk-bound managers, and work-from-home individuals: we sit and we stare at a screen all day. As a result, our health can suffer.

Especially authors, because we tend to be alone while we work.

Gaining weight is the most outwardly visible sign of a poor health routine, but the sedentary lifestyles many authors adopt can be a significant factor in other afflictions such as poor circulation, diabetes, and heart disease.

Jasinda Wilder can sympathize. As a *New York Times*, *USA Today* and *Wall Street Journal* bestselling author, she knows about the author lifestyle. Healthy living, Wilder says, is "something I want to share because it's something I struggle with."

Although she now lives an active lifestyle on a farm in northern Michigan with her six kids and 200 animals, at one time Wilder was the biggest kid in fourth grade. She started Weight Watchers at five years old and over the course of more than a decade, she met with many doctors to help with her larger-than-average body. Not much of their advice worked. As an adult, she eventually decided to take her health into her own hands—and lost more than 100 pounds as a result.

Wilder is a bit unconventional at times and somewhat of a free spirit. Her presentation consisted of no slides and no microphone, and only a few glances at her notes. She knows the material about healthy living because she practices it.

But that was not always the case.

"Our family routine was eat, then watch TV. Now we eat (healthy) and go for a walk." Eventually that evolved into doing family 5Ks. That's *running*, for the uninitiated out there—three-plus miles of it at a time. Although most authors might say, "If you see me running, it's because there's a bear chasing me," keep in mind: changing to a healthy lifestyle is a journey of many small steps to achieve a big result.

Sugar was one of the keys for Wilder and it could be a key for you as well. “Sugar is in everything,” she says. “In the 1950s sugar came on the scene and American disease skyrocketed. We try to do low sugar. We try to do whole, God-created food. Real food.”

She also practices “cycling carbs.” This is important to do, especially for women. It’s similar to the Suzanne Somers diet. “We enjoy our carbs, we just don’t eat them in a way that’s bad for our body. We also eat protein. Lots of protein.” Protein is the easiest thing for your body to break down.

But again, a healthy lifestyle is not just about what you eat. One of Wilder’s recommendations is: try to move. In the beginning, she got her family to run. Then, they moved to family yoga.

“A lot of shame about my body was disassociation with my body. Yoga helped with that.”

She also recommends not torturing yourself. Find an activity that you love and do it consistently, even if it is in small amounts. Consistency is important. And don’t think of it as a diet, Wilder cautions; think of it as health. Small, daily changes that add up.

“If we don’t take care of ourselves physically, it affects us mentally. Especially women. We are the last to take care of ourselves. We take care of everyone else first.”

The business of being an author is hard. It’s stressful. And it’s usually a solitary effort, so it can cause anxiety and burnout.

“Some writer burnout is from the physical—sitting and stressing.”

But you don’t have time to be active, right? No one does.

However...

You have time to go to the bathroom, right? Remember, you’re looking to add small increments of healthy activity to your day that add up. Five minutes, not 45 minutes.

So:

March to the bathroom.

Do a few jumping jacks.

Park farther away from the front door at Target.

Stop thinking of a workout routine as getting dressed and driving to the gym and spending 45 minutes sweating. Think of it as little breaks throughout the day and simply incorporate an activity into that. Be creative. Experiment. When Wilder started the program that would eventually become a health-related book and a website, she tested it with 35 women to assess the results. Not every idea worked for every person. Find the things that work for you.

One useful tip Wilder likes is the Peloton app. “It’s useful even if you don’t have the bike. The yoga and meditation on the app is worth it all by itself.”

She espouses the benefits of Yin Yoga, also sometimes called restorative yoga, which is geared toward relaxing, not flexibility. “Come on,” Wilder says. “It uses pillows! And it’s for all body types.” Her husband Jack is a relatively trim fellow, and he has adopted yoga with the rest of the family but notes, “I’m not flexible. I can’t touch my toes. But I could do yoga.”

There are other, less obvious benefits to yoga. Sometimes it's hard to calm our brain at night. "When I started taking yoga, I realized I had voices in my brain all day. I never, ever had quiet. Yoga helped my brain find the quiet."

The Wilder family gets creative in January too. That is a month of pretty much carnivore dieting for the entire Wilder clan. A carnivore diet helps with her inflammation issues. (All meat, all month? Sign me up!)

Part of her overall strategy is to consider your side dishes. "In our family, everyone gets a protein. Then the kids that need more carbs or more vegetables get those."

Remember, it's tough to get kids to eat vegetables, right? (And not just kids.) Don't give up too quickly. It takes seven to 10 "tries" of a food before a kid will say, "Okay, I can take this."

Adults can be similar. Wilder notes, "It took years to get my dad (who has diabetes) to change. Finally, one day he said, 'This is good cake.'"

"Well," she replied, "that only took 10 years, Dad!"

Wilder notes that there are many more good options for people today, but you have to read labels because there are also more crappy options. For example, for people who want to use an artificial sweetener, Stevia is what most users tolerate best. But each sweetener is different, and they will affect you differently.

Women have special dietary needs too, so consider that. Women have been trained to be scared of eating fat. "We were told our whole lives it's bad for us," Wilder says. "It's not. I still have days when I think, can I really eat this? Butter on my green beans? It's okay? Olive oil, where have you been all my life?" Postmenopausal women need more protein, so factor that in if you're in that group.

Again: Small adjustments that add up in a big way.

Fasting is good too. We eat too many snacks between meals, especially kids. At school, there are so many snack times! Show up, have a snack. You participated? Have a snack. Your kid might even get a snack for finishing a snack. There used to be 12 hours between dinner and breakfast, aka *break your fast*. For authors, sometimes fasting creates more productivity. Wilder and her husband admit they write better when fasting.

"Fasting is not for everybody," she says. "Adjust your windows for your preference." She also recommends being more satiated before you fast, to help carry you through to the next meal.

Finally, Wilder, who has been sober for several years, addressed the "romance" authors can have with wine and writing (and readers who may enjoy wine with reading). "It's not a good combination. It numbs your mind. Does it numb your writing?"

Each author will have to discover what works for them, but with Wilder's innovative suggestions and strategies, the goal of being healthier just got a little easier.

Check out her health-oriented website at [Biggirlsdoitrunning.com](https://biggirlsdoitrunning.com).



Dan Alatorre is a USA Today bestselling author of unputdownable murder mysteries and thrillers.

Generational Insights: Writing Millennial Characters

Presented by Carol Van Den Hende

Reported by Michele Dunaway

Carol Van Den Hende is an award-winning author, public speaker, and MBA with 20+ years' experience in marketing, strategy, and insights.

Carol Van Den Hende started the workshop by saying that if you're trying to write characters who are younger and wondering if you should do it from your perspective as to what you were like back at the age of 26-40, then you were in the right place for the workshop. (Answer, you shouldn't.) She also mentioned that, as authors, repeat purchase of our books by readers is a sign of quality.

Her goals for the workshop were to (1) define generational cohorts, (2) answer whether life stages are occurring later, and (3) to discuss four themes regarding millennials.

As for those millennials, she said there are generational experts who think about the experiences. They come in with precepts. These labels of the ages/generations are not simply arbitrary. Experts weigh in, and a generation is defined normally by when something big shakes up a generation during the formative years. Example, the Silent Generation and the Greatest Generation were shaped by the World Wars. For the longest time, Baby Boomers were the biggest generation—they span 18 years. Since 2020, millennials have been the largest generation.

Please note—all the following information is United States-centric and does not include other countries. The focus of the workshop is only on the generations in the U.S.

The generations

- The Greatest Generation was born before 1928, so they are 94 years old or older. They make up only 890,000 of the current U.S. population.
- The Silent Generation was born between 1928 and 1945, making them 77–94. This generation spans 17 years and numbers 19.13 million.
- The Baby Boomers were born 1946–1964 making them 58–76. This generation spans 18 years, and there are 70.23 million of them.

- Generation X was born between 1965 and 1980, making them 42–57. This generation spans 15 years and numbers 65.8 million people. This generation is squeezed between the two largest generations and is often overlooked.
- The Millennial Generation was born 1981–1996, making them 26–41. This generation spans 15 years and has 72.19 million members. They are often all thought to be younger, but the oldest of the generation are in their forties.
- Generation Z was born between 1997 and 2012, making them 10–25. This generation spans 15 years and is made up of 68.6 million people.
- There is an up-and-coming Generation Alpha, born 2013 and beyond, but they are so young that nothing has yet defined them as a generation.

Millennials

Van Den Hende asked what defines millennials, and the audience said the following: 9/11, school shootings, gun violence, LGBTQ/social change, climate change sustainability, and that they are digital natives.

She then showed a slide that contained many of these things, but also the rise of big tech companies (FAANG—or Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, and Google), the *Exxon Valdez* spill, the Crash of 2008, political polarization (red or blue), Columbine school shooting, and the Oklahoma City bombing.

“My career at Mars has been in digital brands where I launched new products,” Van Den Hende said. “I’ve spent the last 10 years in insight.” Because of this, she warned the audience to “be careful when it comes from cultural references and use of tech and world view.”

Van Den Hende says you can’t just write what you know. You can write what you know when it’s universal human truths, emotions, and relationships. However, be careful with cultural references, use of technology, and world view. Don’t directly apply your own view.

She gave this example for her personal life: 29th birthday OMG!

Because her mom was married at 20, when Van Den Hende was born, she grew up thinking that you got married at 20 and this is how she played with her dolls. Her husband and she were dating when she was 29, but they were not married. She felt a big pressure because it was later in life than her parents. Van Den Hende and her fiancé were married the weekend before she turned 30.

However, she pointed out she’s not alone. Life stages are getting later. Now most get married around 28–30, and this data is from the U.S. Census Bureau. Whereas men used to get married at 23 and women 20, this has shifted to 30+ for men and 28+ for women. One reason is because more women are having careers. She pointed out there’s even singles day. There’s the idea that “My life is pretty good” and marriage comes later. In other countries, they also do not have the stigma of living together and having kids out of wedlock.

Four themes that define millennials: debt-laden, entitled bifurcation, expect diversity, and technology-dependent.

Debt-laden

Millennials are better educated than prior generations, with 39% of them having a bachelor's degree or higher. The number is 29% for Gen X and 25% for late Boomers.

Since this generation feels the need/pressure to have a college education, the college debt of this generation is greater than their credit card debt. This debt is also driving things to happen at later life stages because you need a certain amount of money to buy a house, car, etc. Even in dating, debt will be discussed where the earlier generations do not talk about it.

Millennials are not in a better place. While their wealth more than doubled to over \$9 trillion since the pandemic began, Baby Boomers are still worth almost eight times as much. The weight of the debt can impact a family.

Entitled bifurcation

Millennials are often considered an entitled generation. There's this perception of them as being the "me, me, me" generation. There was even a *Time* magazine cover saying this—that they are lazy and live in their parents' basement. However, that's the bifurcation—25% of millennials are millionaires. As for money, though, millennials value experience over material goods. They have social consciousness and environmental awareness.

For instance, they care about climate change. They fill their water bottles rather than use disposables. They have a sustainability mindset. Gen Z and Millennials are more active than older generations in addressing climate change, both on- and offline, and addressing climate change is one of their top personal concerns. Seventy-one percent of millennials believe climate should be a top priority to ensure a sustainable planet for future generations.

Expect diversity

This means gender, LGBTQ, female power. U.S. millennials expect this and only notice when it's missing. They expect social justice. This group is the most diverse adult cohort, with 55% white and 45% persons of color. This is expected to be 50/50 soon. Diversity should show up naturally in books. Weave in color, etc., naturally and organic.

Technology dependent

Think about what happens when the server or internet goes down. Millennials are on their smart phones 150 times a day (versus 30 times for older generations). They use their phone to check the time rather than a watch (unless Apple watch). Eighty-three percent of millennials sleep with their phone, and one in 10 will check it during sex. Millennials have a different mode of shopping, convenience is expected, and they have far shorter attention spans. While all generations have dropped to around 12 seconds, it's 9 seconds for millennials. They like watching video over reading text, and their number one learning source is YouTube. You can use these to reflect in your characters and also to develop your website. Ghosting also occurs in this generation.

Final thoughts

Weave social media and technology into your works for these characters. They did grow up with all the music because of what their parents listened to and because of streaming. They can go and get it. Understand that some references may go over their heads. Video gaming is also huge, even for females. (Side note: many in Gen Z believe that their video game skills will be useful in their lives. An audience member pointed out that the military recruits these gamers to fly drones.)



*Michele Dunaway writes traditional contemporary romance in small-town settings with vineyards, hot air balloons, or ice rinks. The Love in the Valley series debuts in January with *What Happens in the Air* from Harlequin Special Edition and continues in March with *All's Fair in Love and Wine*.*

The Secrets to Success at Barnes & Noble and NOOK with B&N Press

Presented by Julie Braunschweiger

Reported by Jennifer Stevenson

Julie Braunschweiger is the manager for Barnes & Noble Press and responsible for day-to-day business operations, author outreach, promotions, and social media, as well as being closely aligned with top-line NOOK strategy. She previously spent four years in Los Angeles working in film and television. Her first love has always been books. Before joining B&N, Julie was the lead bookseller for a local, independent bookstore in Westchester, New York.

News and highlights

The latest NOOK devices are the GlowLight 4, 4e, and 4 Pearl Pink Limited Edition. The pink version is currently sold out online. The updated NOOK app includes an integrated audiobook experience. They have a 10-inch HD tablet, partnered with Lenovo, new story layout and organization, and a focus on local booksellers.

New apps

The Barnes & Noble app is new for brick-and-mortar bookstore customers; it is not the same as the NOOK app. Through the new app you can visit your favorite bookstore, access your B&N membership card, place a café order, and more.

The NOOK app integrates ebooks, audio, comics, manga, newspapers, magazines, and is available for free on iOS and Android devices.

B&N Audio is no longer a separate website or app. It is now available in subscription, and the first month is free for the app and on the website. Via this all-in-one app, you can access your digital library.

B&N Press

B&N Press is the B&N online storefront for indie books. It is separated out from traditional publishing. B&N Press has a print platform, but is not getting into self-published audio. They work with Findaway Voices.

You can create your ebook and print formats online at B&N Press. Publication takes 72 hours for ebooks and a little longer for print. Royalties run a flat 70% royalty, no matter what

your price point, and authors are paid on a 30-day payment cycle. Print royalties are 55% of list price minus the printing cost. If you include retail and distribution, your profit is reduced from there.

B&N Press has a robust sales reporting dashboard that allows you to filter by title, author, and ISBN. It offers a 30-day graph, a Top Five bestseller list, series sales data, and preorder reports. It's possible to do paperback and hardcover, with dust jackets or printed-case covers in hardcover. B&N Press charges no set-up fees. Personal copy orders can be shipped to the author. Finishes include glossy or matte, with 20 trim sizes including mass-market sizes. Your book is on sale within 96 hours. Preorders can be scheduled up to six months in advance of launch.

Coupon code tool

B&N Press offers a coupon code tool with buy-one, get-one-free capabilities, exclusive price deals for NOOK readers, no price matching, share buttons to Facebook and Twitter, and the power to follow, i.e., monitor redemptions in the "summary" section of your coupon dashboard. BOGO is working especially well to re-engage readers in a series. Braunschweiger's recommendation is to put a BOGO coupon in the back of the first book: "You've read book one. Now here's a price break on book two."

Dynamic merchandising

B&N Press offers standard promotions like Top Indie Favorites, Free Ebook Favorites, the very popular NOOK Books Under \$2.99, Free Fridays, and the NOOK Daily Find. Additional promotional placements include bundles and series, a category spotlight, seasonal sales, and their Indie Special Offer. You can also participate in guest blog posts and partner programs.

The Top Indie Favorites promotion runs every other month, with 100 titles.

B&N Press offers merchandising for free ebooks. Examples are Top Free, Start a Series for Free, Free Ebook Favorites, and Free Friday. These promotions are free, and only four books are selected per month.

All these promotions appear on the NOOK device, in emails, and on the B&N site.

You must apply for all of these promotions.

Year-round promos

The most important promotion all year is the Under \$2.99, a curated promotion. The application for this promo is available under Price Promotions on the B&N Press dashboard. You can also compete with traditionally published books via NOOK Daily Find, which is less available for indie books than is the Under \$2.99 promotion. Free Favorites is the cheapest available promotion.

Special themed promotions

Special themed promotions at B&N Press include the Spring Armchair Travel sale, the Summer Beach Reading sale, Fall Bundle Up sale, and the Winter Holiday Mysteries sale. These are just examples; more are available.

Braunschweiger monitors the B&N Facebook channel, where customers can find interviews with authors and groups of authors who want to interact with readers online via Zoom. Suggest something to her.

Tools and tips

Instructions on the basics are available at the site for the author who is new to B&N Press. These may not be as useful for the NINC attendee, but they can possibly give you a new notion—especially in the “book metadata basics” tutorial.

For example, the B&N Press website includes a note from the bookseller which tells the reader why they should read this book. Here they are trying to communicate as if they were a bookseller in a brick-and-mortar store. You may get some ideas if you go through the site and look at what traditional publishing is doing there.

Third-party relationships

Some trusted partners who work with B&N Press include BookTrib, which offers promo advice; Reedsy, which offers editorial help; 99Designs for covers; and Inkubate, which can help authors find comps for their books.

B&N Press partners with Findaway Voices to get the author’s audiobooks on NOOK. Look at the audiobook store on their site and on the NOOK app. At Inkubate, an author can match their book with others like theirs when seeking to reach their comps’ readers. Inkubate hosts free webinars that authors can sign up for through the B&N Press newsletter.

Braunschweiger recommends keeping an eye on the Author Resource Section on the site, at the top right, bottom item on the menu. This is where you can look for upcoming features and services. She also recommends the My Contributors page, where you can share your B&N Press work with your assistants without giving them all your logins. On this page, you can control which pages and features they have access to, such as projects, sales reporting, and promotions. B&N assigns unique links to each person to whom you want to give access.

More features

B&N Press offers custom book samples and exclusive coupon codes and special deals. You can include a personal note to your readers in your book, or present a brief recap of a previous book(s) in the series. You can create customized print book cover templates with controls for interior print color, cover format, cover finish, and paper color.

Staying in touch

B&N Press has a [blog](#) featuring indie author voices, cross-channel promotion through social media and bn.com. On the blog, they offer the latest news, publishing advice, and marketing tips. Guest blog pitches are very welcome! B&N Press's social outreach includes its [Facebook page](#).

Contact: jbraunschweiger@bn.com

Support: BNPressSupport@bn.com

Q&A

Will you accept Google AI audiobooks?

B&N does not take direct upload of audiobooks. We use Findaway Voices, and they don't accept AI audiobooks at this time.

Where do we sign up for your newsletter?

When you sign up for B&N Press as a vendor, you are automatically signed up for the newsletter and can unsub if you want.

Is there a limit to the size of a custom book sample?

Good question. I don't think so. I can double-check, but I'm pretty sure you can set the sample to however long you want it to be.

About \$2.99 promo: How often should I apply? I want to be able to schedule it.

That's curated. The list of \$2.99 promotional books is larger, but we don't bloat it. We don't want readers to see the same books over and over. If you have multiple books running on 99 cents over a season, don't pack them all together. We don't want four titles by the same author in the same collection at once. We may spread them all out ourselves, but if you want control of that timing, bear that in mind and submit with some common sense.

Can I apply (for a \$2.99 promotion) for a longer period if it's selling well?

Contact me and we'll work something out.

If I have books in KDP and Ingram, is there an advantage to using your print service?

We only sell within our own ecosystem. We don't offer these books through other retailers or libraries. I recommend that you at least create the books with us. We have our own ISBNs. You're getting a competitive royalty rate for author copies. You can use the same files from other places.

If you're already using another service to distribute a print book, how do you go through B&N for ebook?

If you're doing that, just suppress that version of your print book on the B&N site.

B&N is phenomenal for getting author copies.

They're nice for special gifts for readers or special hardcover editions. Our quality is superior.

If you get author copies printed at Amazon, they have an ugly ARC banner across the cover, a pre-print watermark.

We don't have that.

Do you have any merchandising for print?

Not at this time. We are looking now at ways to optimize that, but we don't have it yet.

At Ingram, we can do case-laminate hard covers with a paper cover as well. Can you?

No. So far, we only offer printed-case hardcover or paper cover.

Do you have assetless preorders?

Yes, but you must upload your final print files 10 business days before it goes on sale. If you don't get them up on sale, we will kick it off sale. Ebooks, it's 72 hours. You can upload right until last minute, but I wouldn't recommend it. Assetless for both, though.

Will you someday be offering printed box sets?

We don't offer them yet, but it's a really good idea. I will bring that up. By the way, that reminds me, on the ebook side, use two-dimensional covers on your box set pages. They're more likely to be merchandized (promoted) that way. When customers see a three-dimensional box set cover, they sometimes think they are getting a printed box set.



Jennifer Stevenson writes contemporary rom-com, paranormal rom-com, and paranormal women's fiction. She is a founder and co-president of Book View Café.

Don't Give Them Spaghetti When They Asked for Cake

Presented by Melanie Harlow

Reported by Julia Thomas

Melanie Harlow is the USA Today bestselling author of more than 25 books. Deep study of her readers' expectations and marketing have helped her experience huge growth in her sales.

Are you serving readers spaghetti when they asked for cake? That was the question that romance author Melanie Harlow had NINC attendees pondering.

"This is the closest thing to a magic bullet that I've ever found," said Harlow. "I only serve cake. It's the glorious magic of binge reading at work. It is the reward for serving cake when I really wanted to serve spaghetti. Some cakes still sell better than others, but it's not because I served spaghetti with icing on top."

In her session, Harlow discussed how to uncover what your readers expect from you, why authors should think about marketing before writing a book, ways to bake the marketing into the story, and the importance of knowing your niche and sticking to it.

What are reader expectations? Where do you find them? Why do they matter?

Meeting reader expectations is critical for a successful author career—and reader expectations are about trust. Trust that there will be a happily ever after delivered at the end of a romance book. Trust that a mystery book will have clues along the way. Trust that readers will get the experience they expected when they picked up the book.

Harlow quoted marketing expert Seth Godin: "People don't want what you make. They want the way it will make them feel."

There are two kinds of expectations when it comes to books. There are general expectations related to genre (romance, mystery, epic fantasy); audience (children vs. adult, literary vs. commercial, sweet vs. spicy); and trope (the promise of the premise). And then there are "specific-to-you" expectations that are related to an author's brand (the feeling your books deliver).

How can authors discover what their readers' expectations are? Harlow offered five suggestions:

1. **Start with your genre.** Drill down into your niche and audience. What are the obvious rules? Do not break them. Look for less obvious rules too, ones that can be broken in order to stand out—as long as you understand the risk.

2. **Do a deep dive into your backlist.** Which books performed the best? Which ones missed the mark? Look for patterns such as best-loved tropes, characters, and settings.
3. **Ask your readers what they love about your books.** Use your reader group, mailing list, and beta readers. Look for repeated specifics in emails and messages from readers. Those are the things that set your books apart from other authors in your genre. If you have a strong stomach, read your reviews. Look at reviews for other authors in your genre, as well, to get a sense of what their readers are responding to. Don't overlook the middle-of-the-road, three-star reviews, either. Those are the reviews that often reveal a balanced blend of what a reader liked and disliked about a book.
4. **Do market research.** What is selling in your niche? What are your successful comp authors doing? Look at their covers and read their blurbs. Analyze their ads and promo to see what is grabbing readers' attention and getting them to click.
5. **Read, but not just for pleasure.** Train yourself to read books like a scientist. Pay special attention to the opening—that's what draws a reader into the story.

"Find the sweet spot," Harlow advised. That's the spot where what the market wants overlaps with the book you feel like writing and with your superfans' expectations. "I had poured blood, sweat, and tears into books that I *hoped* readers would like," she said. "What I didn't have was a good sense of my readers' specific expectations for *me*."

When she conducted a deep dive into her own books and readers, she discovered that Melanie Harlow readers want:

- Light, funny books with relatable people written in first person point of view.
- An "everyday" hero who might be grumpy, but is basically a good guy.
- Tropes like small town, friends to lovers, single dad, opposites attract.
- Strong female friendships/sisters.
- Banter and heat.
- Some angst; "But they're not coming to me for an ugly cry."
- To feel warm and cozy.
- To read in Kindle Unlimited.

With her newfound insight into her readers, she sat down and planned a five-book series that would meet all of their expectations and deliver what they liked best. Small town, five sisters, good guys, favorite tropes, and medium-high heat. She made sure the covers were cohesive, on trend, and on brand. That became the Cloverleigh Farms series, published in 2019–2020: *Irresistible*, *Undeniable*, *Insatiable*, *Unbreakable*, *Unforgettable*. She followed that up with the Bellamy Creek Series in 2020–2021 (*Drive Me Wild*, *Make Me Yours*, *Call Me Crazy*, *Tie Me Down*) and the Cloverleigh Farms Next Generation Series in 2021–2022 (*Ignite*, *Taste*, *Tease*).

The results were explosive. Between January 2019 and September 2022, her subscriber list grew from approximately 17,000 subscribers to over 120,000. She doubled her income from 2018

to 2019. In 2020, it doubled again. In 2022, she will release only three books and still expects to earn more than in 2021.

Baking the marketing into the book

She also began to study marketing, not just writing craft. Three of her favorite marketing resources are: *This Is Marketing* by Seth Godin, *Strangers to Superfans* by David Gaughran, and *Writing Killer Cover Copy* by Elana Johnson.

“It’s not enough to think about what you’ll write next. You have to think about how you’ll market that book too. No one wants to write a gripping novel only to watch it crash and burn because it wasn’t packaged properly for the market,” she said.

Her five tips for making marketing easier by thinking ahead include:

1. **Embrace tropes.** They sell books. Figure out which ones your readers love and get creative with them without breaking any rules. Aim for fresh, but familiar.
2. **Come up with a hook.** The hook is what will grab a reader’s attention. It spells trouble for your hero. It makes your spin on the trope a must read.
3. **Write your blurb before you write the book.** Get the tropes and the hook into the beginning of your blurb.
4. **Come up with ad copy before you write the book.** Use the Facebook Ads Library to do research and see what’s working for other authors in your genre.
5. **Keep it simple.** Come up with a concept that you can explain in 10 seconds. The truth is, you will have far less time than that to get the click. Getting complicated in your story isn’t always better from a reader’s point of view.

Packaging: know your niche

A book cover has to communicate multiple things to a reader—and has to do it fast, Harlow said. Your book cover should convey what your book will deliver through the title, font, colors, and imagery. Certain elements on a cover serve as a code to signal to readers that “This book is for you.” When your book crosses genres, it’s helpful to fall back on what you know about your readers’ expectations.

Her book *Tease* from the Cloverleigh Farms Next Generation series features a billionaire hero. So why didn’t she put the typical “dude in a suit” on the cover? Because she wanted to meet the expectations of her current readers, who expect a small town romance from a Melanie Harlow book. In addition, her backlist doesn’t include books that would satisfy the expectations of billionaire romance readers. She did, however, include the word “billionaire” at the top of the book’s blurb.

Common author mistakes

The most common mistakes Harlow sees authors making include:

- Trying to be too original with their stories and ignoring tropes.

- Trying to be too different with their packaging out of a fear of seeming too cliché.
- Trying to write and market books for “everyone” by aiming too broadly.
- Not understanding the market and what actually sells books (it’s not our shiny, lyrical prose).
- Inconsistency in genre, tone, and production that leads to confusion and broken trust.

She closed with this baseball metaphor: “A home run depends on a bunch of different factors, and you don’t have control over all of them. But you do have control over the number of good swings you take.”



Julia Thomas writes contemporary romance under the pen name [Julia Gabriel](#) and teaches creative writing in Emerson College’s MFA in Popular Fiction program.

Small but Mighty: Marketing Techniques for Selling Niche Books

Presented by Nora Phoenix

Reported by Jennifer Stevenson

Nora Phoenix is a USA Today bestselling author of MM romance, a proud single mom, lover of all things pink, and an avid reader.

Nora Phoenix's first novel in her No Shame series, *No Filter*, was released Oct. 26, 2017, with 152 preorders. The book made \$446 in its first month and \$1,346 in its second month. Her second novel, *No Limits*, had 254 preorders and earned \$938 in its first month and \$1,099 in its second month. Her writing income went from \$5,800 to \$536,000 between 2017 and 2021. Thirty-three percent of this income came from her German, Italian, and French translations. So far, she has spent only \$2,000 in advertising in 2022. She may spend as much as \$3,000 by the end of the year.

Phoenix advised her audience to "question the premise." Her publishing history is based on her research, her experience, and her genre. Hers is a method you may use, but is by no means the only road map. "Your mileage may vary."

Consider your niche market

Phoenix's niche market is Male/Male (MM) romance. This is a relatively small genre. Its authors have a close relationship with their readers via very large Facebook groups. Phoenix's Facebook group has nearly 6,000 voracious readers who read a book a day. The market is now oversaturated and highly competitive, although it was not when she started in 2017. The genre carries important political and activist aspects. "You have to be aware that you are representing the queer community at its broadest. I'm not a gay man, but I'm queer and it's important." Phoenix emphasized the niche nature of her market. "My niche is special. We have a unique subculture in our genre. We have something that binds us—acceptance for the LGBT community in its broadest sense. Compare that to small-town romance. You may not live in a small town just because you read small town romance, so you and other fans of small town romance might have nothing to bond over. The market has changed a lot since 2017. There is no one right way, no shortcut or magic tips. You must take your own personality into account."

Consider your own strengths

For Phoenix, connecting online is easy; she is not shy, although she can only be social for a few days at a time. She advises authors to take their experience into account. Phoenix used to be a manager, so the project management side of this job is easy for her. She has a lot of languages because she has lived everywhere. She leans into her strengths. She also took Becca Syme's "Write Better Faster" class and found it invaluable.

Strategy

Phoenix's plan followed Syme's recommendations: Do thorough research, write to market, build a platform before launch, release with a strategy, stay consistent, diversify her income streams from her content, and decide that the important thing is, "Bank, not rank." Money matters, but kudos don't.

Research

There are no shortcuts, Phoenix reiterated, to any step. You must research the market you're writing in. Research your competition, i.e., the biggest names in your niche. Research the content and reader expectations—that is, what are the elements that all books in this genre should have? You won't know this until you read a whole bunch of books in the genre. That means you must also read reviews of books by other authors in this genre. "Read the five-star reviews to see what readers love about these books."

You should also research trends in the genre to learn what may be oversaturated. Research marketing strategies being employed so that you know the most effective ways to market in *your* genre. What are the high-hitters doing?

Above all, you *must read* in your genre! If you don't love your genre, it will show. You must constantly feed yourself with those conventions that hit the high points of reader deliverables. For example, in MM, safe sex must be discussed. You have to be careful how you handle that.

Surveys of your market

She did a survey of MM Romance readers in 2020. Eighty-seven percent of her readers are cis females; 35% read three to four books per week on average. They can't afford to buy four books a week, so that readership is heavily into KU. "We surveyed average reader age and subgenre preferences as well. We are repeating that survey right now and already have 5,000 responses. I share this survey with all MM authors, not only because I'm a great person but because I don't reach all the subgenres. I don't write funny, but the high-hitters are in MM romcom, so I wanted to survey their readers too."

Write to market

Pick a niche you love. It will always show if you are forcing yourself. Appeal to the broadest audience within your niche. In a Venn diagram of the survey results on MM romance,

MM romcom occupies 99.9% of the space. Phoenix doesn't write MM romcom, but she loves to read it. In the same Venn diagram, MMM Romance (threesomes) grabs 75% of the MM market. Only 5% of readers like MM about cheating, and this is the reader's definition of cheating, obviously a huge no.

Follow genre conventions for viewpoint and style. In Phoenix's survey, she found a slight preference for first-person POV. Her books have a bit of suspense, which makes first-person harder because you can't hide anything. Focus on evergreen tropes. Stand out, but meet readers' expectations too.

Niche + niche ≠ bigger niche

Phoenix warns authors to focus on your niche, and not try to capture a bigger market by combining niches. Niche + niche does not equal a bigger niche; it is a *smaller* niche. "Learn from my mistake," she said. "I wrote four books in apocalyptic MM sci-fi romance. The niches included dystopian romance, alien invasion, survivalist themes, and MMM romance. These books did not sell well compared to my bestselling series. Looking at the Venn diagram of dystopian, alien landing, and MM romance, I realized I was only reaching about 5% of the market." Be aware that "niche + niche ≠ bigger niche and make that decision very consciously.

Productivity

Focus on the optimum of speed and quality. If you can afford to spend a year on a book, fine, but you may also need a balance between rapid release and quality. "Would my books sell better if I put only six months into them? In fact, yes, because that would make for more rapid release."

Brand

If you can, determine your brand. Most authors have trouble with that. Phoenix's brand is perplexed characters, kink, suspense, high heat, and surprising twists in the story. She advises authors to figure out what yours is.

Test your fiction

Find experienced beta readers. Phoenix has found benefit in swapping with fellow authors, because they can give professional advice. But beta readers from your audience can give you a reader's take. They *must* be well-read in your niche.

Build a platform before you launch

Phoenix wrote her first MM romances in 2016 and 2017 and then sat on them for 10 months so she could build her platform. "It's a lot of self-discipline, but it was worth it. I would have had a much slower start without that platform. Leveling up from a low point is much harder. The fiercer the competition, the bigger your platform needs to be."

Meet readers where they already are

The MM readers are on Facebook, but yours may be on Goodreads or somewhere else. Phoenix advises authors to network with fellow authors. This can be super important. Her first lucky break happened when she emailed a fan letter to an author whose book she had loved. That author was friendly and offered to beta read Phoenix's book. She absolutely loved it. She recommended it in her own MM Facebook reader group, and that's where Phoenix's preorders came from. "My Facebook group had 300 people join on the first day."

Set up an ARC team

The earlier you are in your career, the bigger your ARC team should be. Don't be afraid to give away 100 copies or more. The priority is not sales, but building a fan base.

Build up momentum before you launch

It's hard to get new momentum when you've already started. Measure everything you do and follow the numbers. Phoenix says, "I do not make decisions based on what feels right. I base decisions on the numbers." Many authors say you can't sell books on Twitter, but Phoenix does, using reader links so she can tell which books were sold via Twitter.

Release with a strategy

Make sure your cover is designed to match the current trend in your market. In MM, the biggest successes have been abfab covers. Consider rapid releasing, which is a strong plus in many genres. Plus, Amazon loves the 30-day beat, and they support that. By the way, translations count with Amazon in that 30-day release beat. "I release my translations in the U.S. market even though I don't make a lot of sales in that market, but it counts toward my 30-day release schedule." Decide whether to go wide or KU based on your research. If 75% of the top sellers in your genre are in KU, go KU.

Plan a promotion strategy based on what you see others do that works. Go ahead and copy others' promotion strategies, but wait a month or two, maybe, out of courtesy. You don't need to reinvent the wheel. Send out a lot of ARCs, but to the right readers. "I got mine right by accident when I started. MM readers will pick up all kinds of subgenres. I can send ARCs to any old MM reader. But you need to get it to the kind of reader who loves your specific genre. In the first wave of reviews, you want readers to love the fuck out of your book." Do not engage with reviews, ever, Phoenix warns.

Market based on evidence

Marketing is not about your gut. You must follow the numbers, including the number of hours you have available for marketing. What's your life like? Limit your marketing time; focus on biggest return on investment (ROI). How do you know what marketing delivers the biggest ROI? You have to measure.

Phoenix provided a screen shot of how she uses ReaderLinks, a service and spreadsheet for creating, inserting, and tracking geo-links in books (more information at <https://theauthorhelper.com/>). The spreadsheet makes it possible to track links, where they are inserted (for example, in your newsletter, in BookFunnel promotions, in a Nook edition, in back matter), what store the link connects to, the page for the link, and the total clicks. “Never underestimate the value of back matter and amount of sell-through possible.” The ReaderLinks spreadsheet shows the last 90 days of performance.

Stay the course

Don’t genre hop or niche hop. Be consistent both in marketing and releasing. Build your brand. It’s all about keeping your promises to your readers. Readers need to know what to expect from you. (Phoenix, for example, delivers complex characters and high heat.) This is what they want and this is what they pay for. Give them what they paid for. There’s nothing harder to come back from than breaking reader trust. Unfinished series are a huge trust breaker too.

Diversify

This means optimizing income from the books you’ve already written. Do the research to determine what can deliver that on your books. For example, Phoenix has diversified into five additional revenue streams based on books she has already written: audio, direct sales, Patreon, merchandise, and translations of her own work.

Follow the money!

Remember, pay attention to bank, not rank! Amazon ranking *does not matter*. None of us knows how Amazon does its ranking. Track everything you do. “I’m a spreadsheet queen, although, I hate math,” Phoenix says. If you want to try out a Freebooksy promotion, for example, try it alone, without anything else. You need to know whether or not it’s working. Stop doing what doesn’t make enough money. If it brings you joy, that might be a reason to do it, if you can afford the time to do it. Phoenix says, “I’m a single mother. I have a child, a mortgage, and a pension to build up. I cannot afford that much joy.”

Phoenix sticks to the Pareto principle, also known as 80/20. “Eighty percent of what you do is not benefitting you. Stick to the 20% that works.”

Q&A

Is it a good idea to read your own reviews, because readers will tell you what they like?

Yes, but if you are personally easily discouraged by negative reviews, you should get someone else to do this for you.

Do you do audiobooks of your translations?

I haven't found a German translator who will read high-heat MM fiction, so, no.

You mention merch. How do you work out finances of paying for it while still making a profit?

I sell merch direct through my website via Woocommerce: stickers, buttons, pens. I also use Redbubble, Stickermule, and Zazzle. My assistant handles it. The best thing I can suggest is that you subscribe to every single possible company, and watch for promotions. For example, Vistaprint does great promotions from time to time. Grab it on the day it's cheap. "I give away a bunch of stuff."

What kind of merch do people want to buy?

Direct merch like special editions; also, stickers, buttons, pens, T-shirts, pillows. We have standard designs that the customer can have applied to any merch they want. A lot of readers in MM want discreet merch because you can't always put a naked man magnet on your fridge.

Building a platform before launch: please elaborate.

Building momentum is incredibly hard and has gotten harder because readers are tired. I still recommend writing a free prequel and offering it on BookFunnel to get your newsletter built up. Run some ads on the prequel. Get that initial boost. My first way was connecting with other authors and asking them to cross-list. Many authors are willing, but don't approach the big A-listers. Approach the solid B-listers. They will give you that first boost.

I recommend Printify and Printful. They can connect to Woocommerce or Shopify or Weebly for print-on-demand copies.

I sell signed paperbacks through my site. A surprising number of people pay the \$1 extra for an autograph, and they pay shipping. For signed paperbacks I make my 14-year-old do it. If I sign a book for you, I personalize the hell out of it—mention your name, talk about how I met you—to personalize the connection.

I heard about TikTok videos. When I heard that they only have to be 9-12 seconds long, I thought, I can be fun for 10 seconds.

You absolutely can, I know you and I know you could do it. However, I sell MM romance, and I can't use the same images high-heat romance authors do. Even though we both have identical male torsos on our covers, mine are for gay romance, and that can get me banned. I don't want to have a highly successful TikTok stream and suddenly have it shut down.

Do I have to change marketing if I move from MM (gay romance) to MMM (threesomes)?

No, there's a lot of crossover. About 25% of MM readers won't read poly. So don't release an MMM as the first or second book in the series, because then you've fucked yourself over.

How about a niche Patreon?

It can be effective, but I'm really concerned about the intensifying scrutiny of content at Patreon. I'd rather run my donations through my own website. That way, I get all the money. But it's a great way to build readership. Same with Facebook. I can't tell you why I have 6,000 Facebook group members, and others can't get off the ground. You have to like doing it. Because it takes a lot of work.



Jennifer Stevenson writes contemporary rom-com, paranormal rom-com, and paranormal women's fiction. She is a founder and co-president of Book View Café.

How to Promote New Releases with BookBub

Presented by Carlyn Robertson

Reported by Michele Dunaway

Carlyn Robertson leads the BookBub Partners marketing team. She's an expert on BookBub's promotional tools and strives to make sure all authors and publishers know how to use these tools to sell more books and hit their marketing goals.

BookBub is a discovery service that reaches 20 million readers. Carlyn Robertson told the audience that she would cover the following:

- BookBub reader behavior
- Promoting preorders
- Promoting new books
- Maximizing exposure after release
- One audiobook (Chirp) feature

BookBub reading and purchasing habits

BookBub readers are power readers. Seventy-four percent of them are reading four or more books a month and many of them are reading a book a day, which means they are constantly on the hunt for new content. They are always looking for new books.

Robertson said that because they are reading so many books, they tend to be price sensitive: "I imagine it would be a very expensive habit to buy a book a day at full price."

For its featured deals, BookBub does see that purchase rates decline as the price of the book goes up, meaning 99-cent deals get the highest volume of sales in those emails.

One common concern BookBub has heard over the years about BookBub readers is that because they went to BookBub for deals, they're only interested in deals and will not buy at full price. "We have not found that to be the case," Robertson said. "Seventy-four percent of our members are purchasing full-price books in addition to discounts, and if we dig deeper into their habits, we see they use deals as a way to discover new authors."

Ninety-five percent of BookBub members purchased a book from an author they hadn't heard of before because that book was discounted, and once they found someone they liked, with that low-risk way to take a chance on someone new, they are "very likely to become a loyal fan."

Sixty-three percent of members have purchased other books by an author they discovered as part of a price promotion or discount. The author is the most important factor to readers

when they are deciding to buy a new book. Eighty-four percent of members choose new books to read because the book is by an author they already know they love.

“And our readers often buy books very early in the launch cycle,” Robertson said.

Seventy-five percent of them bought a book within the preorder period or within one month after launch. “We are driving tens of thousands of new release and preorders every month across all of our tools,” Robertson said. “We are also a fantastic place to promote new books.”

Two tools for preorders

Preorder alerts are dedicated emails sent to your BookBub followers in the U.S. letting them know you have a book up for preorder. “Common marketing wisdom says that a person needs to see things seven times before they’ll purchase,” Robertson said. “Preorder alerts give you an additional opportunity to get your new book in front of your most devoted fans in the lead-up to the launch.”

These alerts include links to purchase on all retailers where the preorder is available. Those early sales can help increase your visibility. This tool has a lot fewer requirements than some of the others. This is also your only opportunity to promote certain types of content to BookBub readers, and that includes multi-author box sets of full-length books and box sets of previously published contents.

You can select any day to send these in the lead-up to release day, and BookBub expanded the scheduling window to a full year in advance.

Another update is that you can send two preorder alerts for each book. “Readers will purchase books at different times,” Robertson said, “and the more chances you have to reach them, the more likely you are to hit them at the moment they are likely to purchase.”

The second preorder alert is another opportunity to get your book in front of your fans on BookBub.

“So far this has been really effective,” Robertson said. “We see on average 80% more clicks from members to their preorder to 50% with one alert. You get more engagement when you send the second alert.”

Preorder alerts are available to authors with over 1,000 followers on BookBub. To grow followers, add follow links to BookBub in the back of your ebooks along with other social media, encourage your existing fans to follow you on BookBub, and add links to follow on your website, as well. BookBub has case studies on the blog for examples and inspiration.

BookBub ads are open to authors with any number of followers. “Between BookBub and Chirp, we’re sending millions of emails every day to our audience,” Robertson said. “It’s the most flexible of all our options. There is no selection process and no eligibility process, so you can promote any book at any time.”

With the ads, you get to set up custom targeting for your campaign so you can reach specific engaged readers. There is also no minimum spend.

Even with all these customization options, BookBub has designed the platform to be simple and straightforward. All you can do is promote books. This is the only requirement—that it is a book you are promoting. This tool was designed just to promote books on the BookBub platform. Again, the blog has more tutorials.

Use ads at any stage of your book launch. But for preorders, one of the best ways to run BookBub ads to drive your preorders is to target your own fans. This is one of the most powerful targeting options. You can also target fans of a particular author. For BookBub ads, this means you will reach any reader who follows that author, or who has clicked on their featured deals, or who has clicked on their ad campaign or engaged with them on the platform. You can send preorder alerts and then ads.

Unlike preorder alerts which only reach U.S. followers, ads let you reach the international readers.

In BookBub ads, the image is all that the reader sees. They do not get any context. Include all the information the audience needs in the image, such as author, character, world, title, series, price, elements the reader recognizes, etc. Grab the readers' attention. Tailor the copy to the audience you are trying to reach. When targeting your own fans, leverage that familiarity.

The preorder period is a good time to test ads before launch day. You can try different images and different copy so you can hit the ground running with the campaigns that worked best during release week. When you are setting up test campaigns, you are creating multiple campaigns and tweaking one element between them. You do want to set up multiple ads to run at the same time to isolate the results.

BookBub recommends using low budgets for tests, starting with \$5–10 and try to get a couple hundred impressions so you don't spend a ton of money before you know what is going to work, and then adding a little at a time to get to the point where you get that data. Once the ads run, you can compare the click-through rate. You can keep them running or pause them or keep tweaking. Testing can be time-consuming. "It's the best way to figure out what can work for your campaign. Approach the testing with an open mind," Robertson said.

Another new feature is that you can sort campaigns by stats. This was rolled out over the summer.

Promote a new book

Three tools:

1. *New Release Alerts*, which is a dedicated email sent close to launch to all of your U.S. followers that is free for all authors no matter the number of followers. All you have to do to trigger this is to make sure your book is added to your author profile one week after release. BookBub is also sending new release alerts for Chirp audiobooks.
2. *New Releases for Less* is an email tool that lets you reach a wider audience. It's a weekly email for books priced \$6 or less. It allows you to reach an entire category of readers. It's a different version of what we did before, but now there is a price limit, which serves

readers. Chance to highlight the price and to get exposure beyond your existing fanbase, highlight the great price of a new book, and boost visibility and sales during the launch event. Book price does impact conversion with higher sales at the 99-cent and \$1.99 point. Many authors do see an increase in sales and reviews and rankings, but be aware that the sales volume is not going to be as high as featured deals. Book price is less predictive of performance in New Releases For Less as factors like book content and author are more important, especially at higher price points above \$2.99. This does mean sales and the ROI is a little less predictable. You can submit for this promotion from six months in advance up to release day. If you don't do a preorder, you can still submit on launch day. This can be scheduled any time within the four weeks after release. There is an editorial process for this one, and BookBub is selecting a handful of books for each category. BookBub looks at things like cover, book description, and then what they know about their BookBub readers in terms of likes of tropes and such. You can upload a cover even if it's not live on retailers. Primarily featuring books priced \$6.99 and below right now.

3. *Ads* can be run for any new release, no matter the price of the book. You can target your fans like during the preorder. You can use ads to expand the reach of the readers that you are promoting to. You can use author interest and also category interest, and you can combine the two; it narrows the audience down. This is a great strategy if you are targeting an author who writes in multiple genres so you only get the one you want. It can be tempting to use category targeting because it's easy and you know it's a huge audience. But BookBub sees that author targeting drives higher engagement than category alone, with a 61% higher click-through rate. Which authors to target is very important. Some tips:
 - a. Avoid the biggest names in your genre as everyone is targeting them and the larger the audience, the less engagement. BookBub displays the size of the following of an author in the ad portal. Higher engagement with 25,000 fans or fewer. Definitely drops off in engagement over 200,000 fans.
 - b. Look for similar tropes or themes.
 - c. Look for similar cover branding. Great signal to a reader.
 - d. Check for compatible distribution.
 - e. Re-test your targets from other ad platforms.

Where to find new author targets?

- Look at also-boughts and then dig even deeper into the also-boughts of the also-boughts.
- Browse popular authors in your genre on retailers. Skip the biggest names and dig deeper.
- Ask your readers.

- Keep an eye out for similar books featured on BookBub or Chirp.
- Use BookBub's "Related Authors" tool in the ad form. BookBub will generate a list of related authors, and you'll be able to save this—which is a new feature as of August. You can create and save targeted groups with one click.

Again, for ads, have an ad image with a strong hook in that image. This hook could include attracting readers with an appealing price and/or the trope that will appear to your base; a quote from another author also works well, or a movie and TV show comparison. Whatever you do, don't mislead with the comparisons.

BookBub does say that it sees a 31% higher click-through rate for ads with \$0.99 than ads with \$1.99, and 32% higher click-through for ads with the word "free" in the image.

Maximize exposure after the release: the featured deal

The featured deal is one of the best ways to gain exposure. It reaches an entire category of readers. It sends a dedicated deal alert to your followers as well as all the readers of that category. It can generate thousands of sales or tens of thousands of free downloads, and it can drive sales of other books. "We surveyed authors and they see a 22 times increase on sales of other books on the day of the featured deal," Robertson said.

Readers snap up a lot of books on the day they can get that free book.

Schedule the featured deal after the book is live to capitalize on those day-of sales. Pick a book as close to the new one as possible and discount as low as you're comfortable. BookBub does see 11 times more downloads for free books than 99 cents. However, 99 cents is a good price point.

Use back matter in the discounted book to drive readers to take that next action. Authors have reported seeing a 200% increase in follow-up sales when they put links to the new book in that discounted book. Including one chapter from the new book in the discounted book led to a higher conversion of purchase of the new release. This was better than a cover or more chapters.

There is a selection process. BookBub gets hundreds every day, so they have to be very selective. There are minimum requirements in regard to page counts. Editors know what BookBub readers want. They will look at readers' reviews, even beyond BookBub. There isn't a minimum number of reviews needed. However, BookBub likes being able to say that the book has a certain number of reviews. Editors are willing to dig into the content of the reviews beyond the rating and number. One-star reviews for formatting and typos is a red flag. However, reviews with "I just didn't like this" will have less impact. They know not every book will fit every reader.

"We really look at the content fit in each category, etc. We do consider alternative categories. We want authors and readers engaged. We want the readers to click and purchase so they keep opening their BookBub emails," Robertson said.

The schedule is the final hurdle. They can only do 10–20% of what's submitted. There are dozens of really good fits, but they can't handle them all. They just have to be choosy. "We keep that calendar space limited so that every book gets great engagement from our audience," Robertson said.

To improve your chances, keep submitting. Once every month, keep submitting. Every time you submit it's a different pool of submissions. So keep going. The competition pool changes so keep submitting.

Another thing is to include as many regions and retailers as possible. BookBub's goal is that every reader gets a deal in their category every day. It's tougher to get one if you've narrowed—they prefer a wide distribution. We always prefer the wide one so all the readers get that deal.

Never hurts to have more reader reviews. And assess how your book compares to what BookBub is featuring.

Gaining followers/increasing recognition on BookBub

Recommending other books is a way to gain followers and BookBub highlights author reviews. "Our goal is to surface recommendations in particular as we want to make a positive environment for authors and readers to share the books we love," Robertson said.

BookBub readers trust authors to recommend books, with 77% having purchased based on a recommendation from an author that they like. It's almost the same stat as buying because of a recommendation from someone you know personally. Followers want to hear from you and see your recommendations.

The recommendations you post will boost your exposure on BookBub, even for those not following you, and boost your exposure. After a reader recommends a book, BookBub will let them know authors who have similar reading tastes. "One new way that we've started surfacing and recommending books is that we'll even email your followers when a book you recommend has a deal," Robertson said. "We used to do a weekly recommendation, but we found that focusing the emails on recommended discounted books really increased engagements with the emails and the purchase rates as well."

For new releases, ask other authors to post reviews for you. In exchange, you can pay it forward by posting a recommendation on a book you love. All this helps you be more visible on the platform.

For personalized advice and support anytime, email: partners@bookbub.com

You can download the slides at: insights.bookbub.com/NINC2022

Get started at: partners.bookbub.com



Michele Dunaway writes traditional contemporary romance in small-town settings with vineyards, hot air balloons, or ice rinks. The *Love in the Valley* series debuts in January with *What Happens in the Air* from Harlequin Special Edition and continues in March with *All's Fair in Love and Wine*.

Spotify and Findaway Voices are Creating Big Opportunities for Audiobooks

Presented by Will Dages

Reported by Lisa Verge Higgins

Will Dages is the head of Findaway Voices, a platform that helps authors create and distribute audiobooks through a global network of over 40 retail and library partners.

Since Will Dages's last talk at NINC, [Findaway](#) has launched the audiobook-creation platform Marketplace. It's a free service that provides end-to-end audio tools to produce audiobooks. Findaway also offers worldwide distribution of those audiobooks for an 80/20 split of royalties.

Wide distribution is important for success in the audiobook market. First, because readers listen across many devices, not just one. Second, Dages strongly believes in the advantages of "going wide" as the best way to diversify your business. Exclusivity with some other platforms often lasts at least seven years, which makes it difficult to adapt to a swiftly changing marketplace. In the last five years, Findaway has markedly increased the number of their distribution partners. They've added Kobo, Chirp, BAM, Overdrive, Hoopla, Barnes & Noble, etc. Avoiding exclusivity allows you to take advantage of new opportunities when they arrive.

And a huge new opportunity has just arrived. Spotify, the digital music and podcast service, purchased Findaway Voices last November and closed the deal in June 2022. Dages's whole team is still with him (Christina Calderone is in merchandising, Scott Curry in marketing). They've all moved over to the Spotify organization. They now have more resources at their disposal and more tools to better compete in the audiobook marketplace.

Before Dages launched into details about Spotify's recent purchase and his take on the future of audiobooks, he provided some recent data on Findaway's audiobook sales and trends:

- **Price promotions help retail sales.** The usual split of audiobook units sold at Findaway is 26% through libraries, 37% through retail à la carte, and 37% through retail subscription. However, the split changes when there's a price promotion, to 22% libraries, 31% retail subscription, and 46% retail à la carte. That's nearly a 10% jump in profitable retail à la carte sales. If you're interested in promotions, note that June is Audiobook Month, the best time of the year to have a campaign or promotion. Watch for Findaway Voices Second-Quarter Merchandising Call for Entries opportunities, and check out Findaway author podcasts.

- **Top three genres for annual growth** this past year are fantasy, romance (up 98%), and mystery/thriller (up 179%). Furthermore, certain niche genres have been boosted based on cultural trends: chess (due to drama miniseries *The Queen's Gambit*), bedtime and dreams, pets, body cleansing and detoxification, humorous stories, family life, and children's health.
- **Average audiobook pricing based on length:**
 - 0-3 hours, \$4.74.
 - 3-6 hours, \$10.21
 - 7-10 hours, \$11.72
 - 11+ hours, \$18.75

Where are audiobooks going?

Spotify's purchase of Findaway Voices is the biggest change in the audiobook industry, and Dages believes it will shift the business big time. Spotify has 433 million global users. It's known for music but it's also the largest podcast platform in the world, including podcasts that are narrative stories. Imagine what could happen at the intersection of music, podcasts, and audiobook content. Spotify will bring an entirely new audience to audiobooks, and he suspects hundreds of millions of people will be listening to audiobooks through this platform in the next few years.

Note that three days before this NINC conference session, Spotify launched audiobooks in the United States. If your audiobooks are currently with Findaway, and you haven't previously opted out (by checking a box on your dashboard), your audiobooks have already been put up on Spotify.

Spotify uses the à la carte model, with 50% royalty rate off the list price you set. Audiobooks are sold at Spotify just like they are sold at Apple. Because Spotify uses the à la carte retail model, you can launch price promotions. Findaway is still working on getting Spotify retailer links on your dashboard, which will only work in the U.S. because Spotify is only launching audiobooks in the U.S. at this time. You will also have ratings on Spotify, which will be integrated into your Findaway dashboard.

Suggestions for promoting discovery

How can we bring readers to our audiobooks on Spotify and other retailers?

- **Price promotions.** Consider CHIRP. They run daily deals for audiobooks, deeply discounted to bring your audiobooks to a brand-new audience. You can't reach these readers on your own. People have credit cards on file so it's a great audience to grab in terms of discovery.
- **TikTok** or other social media. For these platforms, it's all about the hook in your marketing. Consider hooking people with short, fantastic clips of your audio narration.

Dages said, “If you hear the best 15 seconds of a song it doesn’t make you want to hear less, it makes you want to hear more.” Think the same way about the marketing of your audiobooks. Hook people with something strong.

- **Format bridging on Spotify.** Spotify is bringing a whole new audience into the book world. The users of Spotify are coming in to listen to music or a podcast, so consider how to leverage your expertise in a clever way to steer them toward your audiobooks. He suggests creating podcasts about your books or about a parallel subject. For example, writers of romantic comedy could podcast about romcom movies to draw in those listeners who love romcoms and thus are warm potential audiences to also pick up a romantic comedy audiobook.

Consider revamping your audiobook production

Dages states that attention spans are getting shorter. TikTok is driving this, so short, short content is becoming ingrained. The average TikTok is 21 to 34 seconds. And yet most audiobooks are long form.

Think about this: An audiobook has opening credits, the content of the book, and then closing credits. It’s often a 10-hour experience and few people finish a full chapter in a single sitting. No one makes it through a long audiobook without a serious interruption. If you have a complex story with a lot of characters, folks may lose track of plot details. People will drop the audiobook mid-read and won’t go back.

Now consider an episode of TV: It has a cold open, then credits, a recap, action, closing credits, and the next episode teaser.

Dages suggests authors might want to re-consider the length and content of their audiobooks. The business is evolving, and the age of making many-hour audiobooks for the credit model may be over. (The credit model is when listeners buy audiobooks with earned credits, charged per audiobook, no matter the length, so listeners who use this model often prefer the longer audiobook as a better value.) He doesn’t believe the credit model will be a successful model in the future. Instead, authors should think about shorter-form audiobooks and serialization and focus on listener engagement.

He suggests creating a “Take-Your-Time” edition of your book where you recap each chapter before the next chapter begins. Perhaps you could make a podcast that offers a recap of each book in a series, entitled “Before you read book 2/3/4/5”. He hasn’t seen anybody use these techniques but he thinks they can be impactful. Any tools you can use to get readers to finish a book without frustration gives a better listening experience.

Dages encouraged audiobook authors to think out of the box in terms of discoverability and marketing, particularly in light of Spotify entering the market. Think about what music and podcast lovers want to fill their shelves with. Try to engage your super readers by offering up Easter eggs in the audiobooks. Harness the power of “Surprise and Delight” in your efforts. He recommended the book *The Power of Moments* by Chip and Dan Heath, which takes advantage

of the power of surprise and awe. People will gloss over the rougher areas of your book if you give them something memorable, an experience they won't forget.

Think out of the box, Dages says, and you'll win big.

Q&A

Will Findaway allow AI-generated audiobooks on the platform?

Right now, Findaway does not accept AI audiobooks.

What is the royalty payment structure with Spotify?

Spotify offers a 50% royalty rate on à la carte purchases. You set the retail price; you'll receive 50% of that from Spotify no matter what Spotify sets for the consumer price.

How can I take charge of my Spotify author profile to connect to readers?

There are no author profiles on Spotify yet, but more is to come. Those factors are impactful so he thinks they'll do it.

Will Spotify launch audiobooks in the UK?

He can't talk about any specific release plans yet, but Spotify is considering other countries.

Will Spotify consider a tier royalty for higher-selling authors?

It's early days, he hasn't thought about it. But it's an interesting idea.

Will you make your website more mobile-friendly?

Aware that nearly 25% of Findaway's visitors are on phones, he's working on it.



Lisa Verge Higgins is a critically acclaimed author of uplifting women's fiction. Her alter ego Lisa Ann Verge writes historical and contemporary adventure romance.

Smart Marketing for Savvy Authors

By Tawdra Kandle



*This quarter of Smart Marketing
is all about using the tools we own:
Wowwing with our websites;
Nabbing readers with our newsletters;
Super-maximizing our sales pages!*

When I was a brand-new, green author who knew next to nothing and had no clue about how to promote my just-published first book, a wise friend told me that I needed a website. She sent me to Godaddy.com to buy my domain name and then constructed the basics of a very rudimentary website for my author business and books.

To me, it felt like magic.

Nowadays, thanks to some generous author assistants and other web-savvy friends, I know how to manage my own website. I've even (gasp!) learned how to put up a fairly pretty website from scratch for my new publishing ventures. It isn't quite as rocket-sciencey as I once thought (although at times, there's a decent amount of trial and error happening—or as I call it, let's just see what happens when I do this . . .).

Mastering my own website was an important step for me, and even now, when I jump over there to work on my end-of-the-month updates, I'm grateful that this is one tool on my belt that is 100% mine. No one will tell me that the man-chest covers are too nippy (I see you, KDP!), or that I can't use a certain font on my descriptions (Hello there, Apple Books!). I can run my blog however I see fit, and when I decided to tackle some sensitive issues there in late 2020, no one threatened to close me down.

I've learned the benefit of using my newsletter and website hand-in-hand, sending readers there instead of to other sites whenever it's possible. Because, you see, the more comfortable

readers are with stopping frequently at the website of their favorite author (me), the more likely they are to fall into my other books and series.

I can also engage those readers more deeply by entertaining them with my blog, informing them with pages that show how series are linked or offer a suggested reading order for my various genres, and even selling to them in my website store. Why shouldn't they want to come visit—and stay awhile to explore?

As most of us know, an author website can be as basic as an eye-catching landing page with links to our books or as complex as a site with multiple menus, pages, and an associated blog. How you use it is entirely at your discretion. Perhaps you want the most low-maintenance sort of website, something that only needs to be updated when you have a new release. Or perhaps you want to provide your readers with an immersive brand experience.

Over the past ten years, I've played with multiple concepts on my website. Currently, on the right-hand column, I keep three static categories: My Latest Release, What's on Special This Month, and My Next Preorder. I make sure to update these widgets and their associated pages each month or as often as required.

Beneath those quick info-shots are all of the logos for all of the vendors where my books are sold, linked to my page on those vendors. I do my best to keep the logos as current as possible, especially for those companies who have in the past frequently changed their preferred names and/or graphics.

Beyond keeping your information accurate and current, what else can you do with your website to use it to its fullest potential? The opportunities are plentiful:

- Make your site an extension of your books or series. Do you write sci-fi or fantasy? You can add a page that serves as the space cantina for visitors new to your worlds, a place where they can find out more about the characters and their history. If your preferred genre is small-town romance, you can do something similar with the community diner, offering a cozy spot where local gossip is shared and sneak peeks for upcoming books just might be the special of the day. Consider adding maps of the most familiar settings of your books, or create a family tree so that readers can see at a glance just how all of your characters are connected.
- Use your site to offer the most dedicated readers exclusive, just-for-them content, something no one else can access. You can write a special short or deleted scene and add it to your website on a password-protected page.
- Serial stories are so popular right now—but you don't always have to add a story to a subscription site if you'd rather not. Publishing your entries on your website is a terrific way to draw new and increased traffic on a weekly basis as your new chapters go up. I did this last year, beginning a story in early August that ended in October, days before a big (and clearly related) release went up. It was very well-received by my readers—and then this year, I released the same story on several subscription sites to draw in new-to-me readers. A big win on both sides!

- Train your readers to expect both goodies and info on your site. When I do author cross-promo, I will often add a line to my newsletter that links to a post on my website. The post contains all of the pertinent information on the new or promoted books for that week, and having readers click the link and visit the site increases my web traffic. I'm also counting on the fact that most will wander around a little and visit other areas of the website. (They do!)
- Remember that your website is your virtual storefront, even if you don't actually sell your books there (Though why are you *not* selling your books there??). Just as you wouldn't want to present a cluttered, dusty, and outdated table at an in-person store, neither should your website appear to be dated or cluttered. Visit it often and with a critical eye, watching for graphics that are no longer effective or branding that you no longer use.
- Speaking of branding, this is a huge must for your website. Your colors, fonts, and graphics must absolutely be spot-on for your author message. If you write dark and angsty romance, a photo of a young woman picking flowers in a field isn't what you want on your website header. Don't be afraid to tell site visitors over and over again who you are. Use your taglines and logos to drive home the message.
- Consider adding a store to your website. At this year's conference, the buzzword phrase was definitely *direct sales*. I use Payhip to sell my ebooks from my website, and my experience has been overwhelmingly positive. I simply add the books to my Payhip store and then copy and paste the code for that book onto a page on my website. I've found that giving each series a separate menu entry and making each book in that series a sub-entry of that option works best, but there are a variety of ways to make this work, depending on how many books you're selling and how you'd like to present them. I'm working hard to train my readers to go to my store first, so whenever I have a freebie or a discounted book, I use my own website link (and often a coupon code so that the lower price is only offered to my newsletter readers) for my subscribers.

Talking about the endless opportunities for author websites is motivating me to go work on my site again. Just as I like to do a huge housecleaning every spring and autumn, it's a great idea to tidy up my site at least twice a year, in addition to my monthly tweaks. This includes testing links, making sure covers and blurbs are right, and trying some new features here and there. I might add a pop-up subscriber link for my newsletter, or maybe embed my TikTok stream on the sidebar.

The possibilities are exciting—and since this is my little corner of the publishing world, I want to make it beautiful and appealing, drawing my existing readers back time and again and enticing new-to-me customers to linger in the world I've constructed. Don't neglect this important tool in your publishing toolkit!

Tawdra Kandle is the USA Today bestselling author of over 100 romances that span genres from contemporary through paranormal. Her engaging and realistic characters bring readers back again and again to devour the steamy love stories she spins. She lives in central Florida with a husband, a mischievous pup, and too many cats.

Membership Benefits

Need industry intel, software, or legal help? We've got you covered.

Are you taking advantage of all your member benefits?

As a NINC member, your benefits include industry discounts, newsletter and website articles, professional services directory, networking opportunities, and more.

We've compiled all of these—which you can also find on our website—into this list as a helpful reminder.

Networking (these groups are for NINC members only):

- Email list for all NINC members: <https://groups.io/g/ninclink>
- NINC Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NovelistsInc/>
- Follow NINC on Twitter: https://twitter.com/Novelists_Inc
- NINC on [Clubhouse](#): Novelists Inc Virtual Tiki Bar
- Critique/brainstorming group: <https://groups.io/g/NINKcritique>
- Traditionally published authors: <https://groups.io/g/NINCTradPubbedAuthors>
- SF/F & speculative fiction writers: <https://groups.io/g/NINCswordsandrayguns>
- Authors of thriller/crime/suspense: <https://groups.io/g/NINC suspense-thriller-crime>
- Discuss creating book covers: <https://groups.io/g/NINCcovercreators/>

Conference:

Conference information: <https://ninc.com/conferences/about-the-ninc-conference/>

Newsletter

- Propose an article: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/propose-an-article/>
- Submit a letter to the editor: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/submit-letter-to-editor/>
- Newsletter archives: <https://ninc.com/newsletter/news-archive/>

Website (You must be logged in to access these services.)

- Legal Fund: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/legal-fund/>
- Pro Services Directory: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/pro-services-directory/>
- Sample Letters: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/sample-letters/>
- Articles & Links: <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/articles-and-links/>

Member discounts

NINC members are eligible for certain professional discounts. A complete listing of these can be found at <https://ninc.com/member-benefits/member-freebies-discounts/> along with other member discounts.

Volunteer

One of the greatest benefits of NINC is the opportunity to volunteer your talents to benefit other members—which pays incredible and unexpected dividends in networking and knowledge. Learn more about volunteer opportunities here: <https://ninc.com/members-only/open-positions/>

Open positions include:

- Social Media Committee
- Tweet Team
- Recruiting New Members
- Anything!



Founded in 1989

NINC Statement of Principle

Novelists, Inc., in acknowledgment of the crucial creative contributions novelists make to society, asserts the right of novelists to be treated with dignity and in good faith; to be recognized as the sole owners of their literary creations; to be fairly compensated for their creations when other entities are profiting from those creations; and to be accorded the respect and support of the society they serve.

NINC is committed to welcoming a diverse and inclusive membership to our organization and serving all members. No author will ever be discriminated against on the basis of gender, race, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual beliefs if any, ability, nationality or age. It is NINC's desire and goal to make sure that every author member feels welcomed and accepted and heard.

Founders

- Rebecca Brandewyne
- Janice Young Brooks
- Jasmine Cresswell
- Maggie Osborne
- Marianne Shock

2022 Board of Directors

If you have questions regarding Novelists, Inc., please contact a member of the Board of Directors.

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- Treasurer: Timothy Cerepaka
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- Victoria Thompson
- Steven Womack

2022 Committees

Complete committee member listings are available on the website. Many committee positions are open and looking for new volunteers.

- Central Coordinator: Laura Resnick
 - Assistant Coordinator: Mica Stone
- 2022 Conference Committee
 - Conference Director: Mel Jolly
 - Assistant Conf. Director & Programming Chair: Tawdra Kandle
 - Assistant Prog. Chair: Hallee Bridgeman
 - NINC After Dark Coordinator: Tamsin Ley
 - Hotel Liaison: Karen Fox
 - Assistant Hotel Liaison: Tegan Maher
 - Conference Registrar: Pam McCutcheon
 - Assistant Registrar: Stephanie Julian
 - Sponsorship Chair: Sarah Woodbury
 - Assistant Sponsorship Chair: Dylann Crush
 - Traditional Publishing Liaison: Victoria Thompson
 - App Coordinator & Graphic Design: Laura Hayden
- Authors Coalition Representatives: Rebecca Zanetti & Hallee Bridgeman
- Bookkeeper: Christy Wilson
- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Committee
 - Chair: Celeste Barclay
 - Misti Boehm
 - Pooks Burroughs
 - Malorie Cooper
 - Lynn Emery
 - Pamela Kelley

- Ellis Leigh
- Hildie McQueen
- Alison Perry
- Harper St. George
- Samantha Silver
- Social Media Committee
 - Chair: Violet Howe
 - Sylvia McDaniel
- Membership Committee
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 - Sarah Woodbury
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 - Copy Editor: Cynthia Moyer
 - Production Manager: Laura Resnick
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 - Chair: Wayne Stinnett
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 - Katherine Garbera
 - Pamela M. Kelley
 - Kathryn Le Veque
 - Kristine Smith
- Discounts Program: Emilie Richards

Central Coordinator

Novelists, Inc. c/o Laura Resnick

P.O. Box 331, Covington KY 41012

admin@ninc.com

Address changes may be made on the website.

***Nink* Newsletter**

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Nink's goal is to provide our readers with high-quality articles that offer critical business advice, marketing how-tos, advanced craft coaching, or strategy to continue building a career, all geared to established authors. All members should feel confident that *Nink* provides something for them. We welcome pitches and submissions from all members.

To request reprint rights or to **submit an article proposal**, please contact [the editor](#).

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