**AUTHOR MARKETING RESOURCE GUIDE**

Hello Alcove Press authors! This guide is designed to help you build your author platform, grow and engage with your audience, and expand and track your marketing efforts throughout the course of your career. Whether it’s your first book or you’re already well into your series, these tools will help you make the most of your promotional efforts.

Think of these as tools in a toolbox. You don’t necessarily need to use every tool to get the job done, but we’ve outlined our recommended goals and strategies for all of the tools at your disposal. You by no means need to implement every one—and of course, we recognize that your primary goal should be writing your books—but the more effectively you can understand and engage with your audience, the more likely you are to see a bigger payoff.

**We have also sent you a checklist** that you can print out and keep on hand to refer back to. Keep in mind that every author is at a different stage in this process, so think of this as a jumping off point or a reference to revisit if you get stuck. If, by the end, you have further questions, don’t hesitate to be in touch.

Please note that we now have available a Marketing and Publicity 101 Webinar, which can be found [here](https://alcovepress.com/author-resources/). While we still recommend reading through this package, the webinar is another way to learn some basics! The password for accessing this webinar is: Webinar#71822

We’ll continue to add to this guide as new ideas spring up, so do check back from time to time for updates. And if you have any additional recommendations for resources, tips, tricks, and promotions that you think we should include in this guide, we’re always welcome to suggestions!

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1. **Your Author Website**

Your website is your primary platform, the resource that you will generally link back to on social media and in other promotional avenues. You might want to hire your own website designer to set this up. If you’d rather tackle this yourself, there are some easy-to-use, free or low-cost options—[WordPress](https://wordpress.com/start/design-type-with-store?ref=homepage), [Wix](https://www.wix.com/), and [Weebly](https://www.weebly.com/)—as well as more expensive, high-end services like [Squarespace](https://www.squarespace.com/).

These are the most important elements/sections you’ll need on your website:

1. Homepage
	1. Don’t get overwhelmed trying to make it pretty and perfect at first; baby steps!
	2. Focus on the color scheme: Is it readable? Does it match the tone of your series and/or genre?
	3. Does it feature the most important information about you? This is the first thing people are going to see, so make it your own. **Feature your newest book (with buy links)**, maybe a brief “Welcome!” paragraph. Highlight the most important information on this page.
2. Books
	1. A list of books you’ve published or will be publishing.
	2. For each: include the cover, promotional copy, reviews, and prominent links to product pages where readers can purchase your book:
		1. [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/), [B&N](https://www.barnesandnoble.com/), [Books-A-Million](http://www.booksamillion.com/), [Powell’s](http://www.powells.com/), [IndieBound](https://www.indiebound.org/).
		2. Remember: **Retailers like to see that you support them all equally!**
		3. If product pages aren’t available right away, that’s okay. Check back 6-9 months before on-sale.
		4. For a more complete list of buy links, go to [penguinrandomhouse.com](https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/) and search for your book in the search bar. It will have its own landing page, which you may reference and/or link to!
3. Bio
	1. Length is up to you.
	2. Your author photo is just fine, but if you want to post others, it’s a great way to engage fans. Pet photos are often fan-favorites!
4. Contact
	1. An **email address**, specifically for your role as an author (see [**II**](#bookmark=id.2jxsxqh) below).
		1. A submission form OR a publicist contact is also great, as long as you have some way for your authors to get in contact about your books.
		2. [Here](https://www.lyssakayadams.com/contact-1) is an example of a really great contact page that incorporates a bit of all of this.
	2. Links to your other **social media** **profiles/pages/accounts**.

Optional additions:

1. Newsletter Sign-Up (**highly recommended**— see [**III**](#bookmark=id.2jxsxqh) below)
	1. Ideally, this should be on your homepage and contact page “above the fold,” meaning you don’t have to scroll down to get to it. The more prominently placed, the better.
2. Events/Appearances
	1. This is an easy way for your fans to learn more about your upcoming signings and events. It can be in a calendar or list format but should have its own tab in your search bar so it’s easy to find.
3. Blog (see [**IV**](#bookmark=id.2jxsxqh) below)

For more guidance, check out the websites of other authors in your genre. What are they doing that you like? What are they doing that would also work for you and your books? Here’s a small handful we like to help give you some inspiration:

* Fiona Davis
* [Kiley Reid](https://kileyreid.com/)
* [William Kent Krueger](https://williamkentkrueger.com/)
* [Celeste Ng](https://www.celesteng.com/)
* [Elizabeth Wetmore](https://www.elizabethwetmore.com/)
* [Mhairi McFarlane](http://www.mhairimcfarlane.com/)

1. **Your New Email Account**

This email address should be dedicated entirely to you as an author. This will keep your personal account from getting flooded with spam and reader emails (the bane of every author’s existence). It’s also a way to help establish your author and professional persona. The easiest platform is probably [Gmail](https://www.google.com/gmail/). If your author website can host your new email (e.g. authorname@authorname.com), that’s great, too!

Also, [**sign up for Google alerts**](https://www.google.com/alerts)**.** You’ll get email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, etc.) based on your choice of query or topic (try creating alerts for your name, your book title, etc.). It’s a good way to keep track of mentions of yourself and your books as well as early reviews.

1. **Newsletter and List Building**

We cannot recommend this enough. The [**#1** thing](https://booklaunch.com/how-email-will-help-you-sell-more-books/) that you can do to grow your audience and drive book sales is build and grow a newsletter list.

There are a lot of free newsletter platforms you can use to get the job done (we use[Sendinblue](https://www.sendinblue.com/);[MailChimp](https://mailchimp.com/) and [Constant Contact](https://www.constantcontact.com/email-templates?utm_id=GOO-125754&cc=GOO-125754&pn=search&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIgq6Gi_qQ1gIVBAhpCh1o4Qv4EAAYAiAAEgJEaPD_BwE&ef_id=WRMuWwAAA3jtPxnf:20170906161400:s) are good, too). Whichever platform you use, you should be able to create a newsletter signup form to host on your website, design a template for your newsletter, and easily drop in new content to send to your list.

Here are some helpful tips as you get started:

* **Keep a regular schedule.** Once or twice a month is ideal. The first outreach should offer insights about: you, your writing process, character spotlights, etc. The second should give updates such as new publicity hits or upcoming events. While it’s important to send out your newsletter leading up to the publication of your new book, growing and engaging with your list throughout the year will help you expand your following and make your readers feel like you aren’t just trying to sell them something. Instead, you will be providing them with special content and engagement.
* **Incentivize new signups.** To make your newsletter signup more enticing on your website, you can offer free, exclusive content, like an excerpt of your book available for download right when they sign up or never-before-published, original content, like a short story. Feel free to be creative and tie it in with the theme of your book (ex. downloadable recipes if a recipe is featured in your book). The key here is to incentivize readers to want ongoing communication from you.
	+ If you’re planning on giving something away, like an excerpt, make sure to run it by us first so we can help you with the file.
	+ Author Maia Chance has [a great newsletter signup](http://www.maiachance.com/) on her website that you can take a look at for inspiration.
	+ Some authors choose to use a popup “gatekeeper” to invite readers to join a newsletter list upon arrival to their website. See [Brad Meltzer’s site](http://bradmeltzer.com/) for an example of this (i.e. “Don’t miss the next great mystery!”).
	+ Learn how to add your newsletter signup form to your Facebook page [here](https://www.bookworks.com/2017/09/email-list-tip-link-facebook-mailchimp/). You can put your signup link in your Twitter and Instagram bios, as well.
* **Grow your list year-round.** Conferences, signings, and events are a great way to add people to your newsletter list. Keep a notepad on hand to collect email addresses, and make sure they know that they are signing up to receive emails from you so they don’t mark it as spam.
* **Direct to sales and reviews.** Always make sure to provide buy links to your product pages. And don’t be afraid to politely [ask for their support](http://sanfranciscobookreview.com/get-book-reviews-hint-ask/). Mention that if they liked your book, you’d love to hear their feedback on Goodreads and Amazon.

You can find more tips on what to send to your newsletter list [here](https://booklaunch.com/what-do-i-send-to-my-email-list/), and [how to optimize your newsletter growth and automate your engagement here](https://booklaunch.com/automate-book-marketing/).

Advanced Newsletter Tips: Building a Street Team

This takes newsletters to the next level! Newsletters can also be used to identify your most avid fans and even recruit them into helping you promote your books. If this is something you’re interested in learning more about, please let us know.

1. **Blog**

Blogging isn’t for everyone. If you choose to pursue it, you’ll want to come up with new and engaging content that is searchable and shareable and commit to a regular posting schedule (ideally 2-3x per week to build momentum as you get started). It takes a lot of time and commitment to build a following, and it’s a much more difficult way to get your fans’ attention than sending a newsletter (newsletters go directly to their inbox, but they have to actively search or travel to your website for your latest blog post).

But blogging does have its advantages:

* The posts are shareable.
* It’s new content for your readers to enjoy and engage with.
* Co-author blogs are a great way to connect with other authors in your space, share your audience, and expand your reach. Some great ones for inspiration are [Jungle Red](http://www.jungleredwriters.com/) and [Miss Demeanors](https://www.missdemeanors.com/).

So, [is blogging right for you](https://booklaunch.com/should-authors-have-a-blog/)? If so, author marketing expert Jane Friedman has the best advice on [how to get started](https://www.janefriedman.com/blogging-for-writers/). And you can find some additional inspiration on content to post[here](https://kindlepreneur.com/social-media-for-writers/) and[here](https://www.ingramspark.com/blog/7-social-media-tips-for-authors).

1. **Social Media**

Social media is an invaluable promotional tool, but it’s important to note that **social media on its own does not sell books**. So what should you use it for?

* **Networking.** Connect with other authors and tastemakers (such as reviewers, bloggers, etc.) in your space and make friends! The more supportive you are of them and their work, the more likely they are to return the favor. Engage with meaningful influencers and they could end up helping to drive traffic your way.
* **Establishing a brand identity.** Help your followers get to know you and your personality. If they like what you have to say in 270 characters, they’ll be more likely to follow your more long-form content, like your newsletter and your blog.
* **Driving traffic back to your website and your newsletter.** You don’t own your Facebook followers, but you do own your newsletter list. Conversion is tricky but ultimately worthwhile!
* **Creating shareable content.** Boost your discoverability by posting content and images that are exciting and easy for your followers to repost, retweet, or engage with.
	+ Use tools like [Share Link Generator](http://www.sharelinkgenerator.com/) and [Bitly](https://bitly.com/) to create easy-to-use links for your followers to share.
	+ Get creative. Author Tracy Buchanan uses [Ripl](http://www.ripl.com/) to create more attractive and dynamic images. You can see some examples [here](https://twitter.com/TracyBuchanan/status/770964353000636416) and [here](https://twitter.com/TracyBuchanan/status/727574810159632386).
	+ Pose questions to engage your audience. Agent Juliet Mushens asked her followers a simple question on Twitter: “Name the TV show plot line that you’re still angry about.” Simple enough, but it got enough of her followers engaged that [Buzzfeed shared it](https://www.buzzfeed.com/jenniferabidor/27-annoying-tv-plot-lines-that-people-are-still-furious?utm_term=.qtopYn8Vw#.ea0qLwWzj). It takes a little bit of magic to create that kind of buzzworthy, word-of-mouth post, but you never know which one’s going to take off.

Make sure to **post regularly** and keep your audience engaged. To take some of the pressure off, you can use free social media managing tools (we like [Buffer](https://buffer.com/)) to schedule your content to post automatically throughout the day across all of your different accounts. Wind them up and let them go, stress-free. You can even use it to track your followers’ engagement. But do make sure to check in on your individual accounts separately from time to time to **interact with other users** through retweeting/reposting.

Understanding who your audience is and where and how they interact is key to optimizing social media. We strongly recommend following similar authors to see how they’re engaging with their audience and get some ideas. It will also help you determine which social media platforms will be most effective in reaching your audience and where to spend your time and energy.

1. **Facebook**

Many of you are already familiar with this social media platform, but it’s important to note that readers who “like” your author page are essentially signing up for updates on your author brand. This is an invitation to share news about your books and anything that gives them an idea of the type of author you are. As such, you should have an author page that is **separate** from your personal account.

Your Facebook Author Page

* You’ll need a personal account to make the page, but after that, you can keep the two pages separate. Here is a [how-to manual](https://www.writtenwordmedia.com/how-to-create-a-facebook-author-page/) for creating an author page!
* Content:
	+ Keep it brief—short bits of text work best.
	+ Including pictures and videos are fantastic and typically drive more engagement! (Again, who doesn’t love seeing a cute pet picture every once in a while?)
	+ Links to similar topics (books, publishing, and your genre) are great content marketing tactics. Links to a blog post, article, or video provides readers insight into who you are without you having to frequently think of a new topic to write about. It does the work for you.
* Post once a day if possible. You can go longer between posts, but the more frequent the better.
* Don’t “sell” your book. By implementing these suggestions, you will inform readers about your research, your craft, and your insights into your genre, which will do the selling for you.
* Bonus tips:
	+ Your header image is the first impression on your page. Use it to display your latest book cover and upcoming on sale date. [Canva](https://www.canva.com/) is a free and easy-to-use app to help you design the right sized image.
	+ Why not host a [**Virtual Launch Party**](http://authorunlimited.com/virtual-book-launch/)? Create a Facebook event, invite your followers and contacts, and promote it on your social platforms. Then, use the event to engage with your fans through hosting a live Q&A, trivia, or offering giveaways. (This is a good time to create a campaign hashtag for better discoverability, and to archive pictures, videos, and comments!)
	+ If you use MailChimp for your newsletter**,** [**link your newsletter signup to your Facebook page**](https://www.bookworks.com/2017/09/email-list-tip-link-facebook-mailchimp/) to make it easier for your followers to sign up!

Keep your voice and personality present, but remember that when followers are scrolling through a newsfeed, the most attractive and simple posts garner the most attention on Facebook.

For advice on Facebook advertising, see [**XII**](#bookmark=id.2jxsxqh)below.

1. **Twitter**

Twitter is the network of choice for a huge number of authors, agents, book bloggers, librarians, and publishers. The writing community is active, and reaching out and supporting other writers is a great way to **make connections** that might help you down the road.

Twitter-sphere Tips

* **For every action there is a reaction:** If you help writers when they’re launching their books, they’ll help you when you are. Follow, retweet, or mention authors and their work, and they will do the same for you when you need it.
* **Interact:** Use mentions, retweets, and hashtags; the more the better.
	+ Use hashtags to connect with a larger audience. According to [AmReading.com](http://www.amreading.com/2016/04/18/the-31-most-popular-hashtags-for-book-lovers/), adding the pound sign (#) before a word or group of words turns them into “a searchable link. This allows you to organize content and track discussion topics based on those keywords.”You may have a limited number of followers on your social media platform, but using related hashtags can help your posts reach far beyond just your followers. It can also help you gain new ones.
	+ Browse hashtags first before using them by entering them in the “search” field and reading the results. You don’t want to create a hashtag that is already aligned with a different product or brand.
	+ Here are some popular hashtags (more are available [here](http://www.amreading.com/2016/04/18/the-31-most-popular-hashtags-for-book-lovers/), [here](https://socialmediajustforwriters.com/on-the-hashtag-anniversary-hashtags-just-for-writers/), and [here](http://www.authormedia.com/44-essential-twitter-hashtags-every-author-should-know/)):
		- #Fridayreads: used on Fridays as a way to give a shoutout to a book you’ve read (usually recently) and liked. Mentioning the author’s Twitter handle, if they have one, and the handle of their publisher (or agent) will help get the tweet some traction.
		- #amwriting: used anytime, to tweet about whatever you’ve been writing that day (#amediting and #amreading are also popular).
* **It’s not Facebook:** Twitter’s appeal is up-to-the-minute content. Think of your interactions like being at a party—you don’t just show up, say something to everyone, then leave. You stay and interact; see what other people are talking about.
* **Don’t just retweet praise:** If somebody says something nice about your book, retweet and leave a comment. Create a conversation with readers that shows you appreciate their support and they will keep supporting you (refer to first tip).
* **Retweet:** You can use the [Retweet button](https://support.twitter.com/articles/20169873) if you see a tweet from someone you like and want to post it on your account while still giving credit to the original poster.
* **Try to post at least once a day**. But the more active and engaged the better.

1. **Instagram**

Instagram, more so than Facebook and Twitter, is incredibly audience-specific, so it’s not necessarily the best tool for everybody. The demographic is [younger and largely female](https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-demographics/).

If you decide Instagram is right for you and your audience, it’s a fantastic tool for creating attractive, inspiring, and engaging photo and video content, and there are countless features at your disposal to flex your creativity.

Insta-Tips

* **Your handle (username)** should be your author name. It’s the most easily searchable and will help with your brand identity.
* **Bio** is limited to 150 characters. Be creative with it but make sure to include a link to your author website.
* **Check the box next to Similar Account Suggestions** so that Instagram will suggest additional users for you to follow.
* **Use hashtags** to make your posts more searchable. According to some Instagram experts, eleven hashtags per post is the magic number. If you don’t want to crowd the caption with hashtags, you can post them in a comment under the photo and the image will still be searchable. (See [**Vb**](#bookmark=id.2jxsxqh)for links to examples of book-related hashtags.)
* **Cross promote** between your social media accounts to grow your following—in addition to hosting giveaways and posting shareable images.
* **Don’t use the Instagram app to share links to Twitter** when posting. Sharing on Twitter through the app sends the image as a link (rather than just displaying the image), which followers have to click on to actually see the image. Instead, post the Instagram-edited image to Twitter separately, through the Twitter app or website. Using the Instagram app to share to Facebook, on the other hand, is completely fine.
* **Post regularly**. Just like everything else, keep to a regular posting schedule. The more you post, the better.
* **What to post:**
	+ Behind the scenes photos of your writing process (ex. show off your writing desk, notebook of ideas, and any animals that keep you company!)
	+ Quotes from your books on pretty backgrounds (these are attractive and easily shareable). There are a ton of extra apps you can try out to create the perfect shareable quote. You can browse some [here](https://www.bustle.com/articles/160251-10-instagram-quote-makers-to-fill-your-feed-with-all-the-inspirational-words-you-need).
	+ Photos of things that inspire you: inspirational quotes, photos of your surroundings, pets, etc.
	+ Photos of the things that fuel you: coffee, tea, wine, pastry, etc.
	+ Books you’re reading and enjoying (be sure to link to the author’s Instagram handle in the caption and use hashtags for the book title to help support that author)
	+ Photos at your signings/events and conferences (remember to activate location sharing!)
* **Other posting tips:**
	+ [Instagram Stories](http://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/features/news/a17040/how-to-use-instagram-stories/) are short, temporary videos or photos that you can share on your profile for your followers to view within a twenty-four-hour window. You can edit them, draw on them, and add text, so it’s another creative medium to play around with to give your followers a behind-the-scenes look at live, timely content. But bear in mind these posts disappear after twenty-four hours. You can find more ideas for how to use this feature [here](https://mediablog.prnewswire.com/2016/12/08/10-ways-to-captivate-your-audience-with-instagram-stories/).
	+ Use the [Slideshow](http://www.refinery29.com/2017/02/141966/instagram-slideshow-post-how-to) feature to post more than one photo at a time.
	+ Get creative with additional apps to make your Instagram posts more exciting. There are hundreds to explore, but these are some of the most popular ones:
		- [Boomerang](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/boomerang-from-instagram/id1041596399?mt=8) is a great app for creating more dynamic and playful moving images.
		- [Pic Stitch](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/pic-stitch-1-photo-and-video-collage-maker/id454768104?mt=8) and [Layout](https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/layout-from-instagram/id967351793?mt=8) are great for creating collages.
		- If someone shares a photo of your book, use the [Repost app](http://repostapp.com/) to repost their photo and say thanks for their support (It’s good form to comment on their photo to say thanks first, and be sure to follow them!)

1. **TikTok**

Over the past few years, TikTok has taken the publishing world by storm. You may have seen books go “viral” and begin selling more and more copies. Again, like Instagram, this platform is very audience specific (60% of users are aged 16-24), with higher success rates for psychological suspense, nonfiction, YA, sci fi/fantasy, and literary fiction. This success can’t happen overnight, and it takes a certain amount of planning, creativity, and perseverance. Here are some general tips on using TikTok and making the most of it as an author:

* **The first few TikToks you post are the most important.** TikTok heavily pushes new users into the algorithm, so your first 2-3 TikToks will be your best introduction to new followers.
* **Engage and interact with other content creators.** Posting is great, but you will also want to interact with other videos. Follow content creators that you enjoy, and comment on, like, and share their posts. This boosts their posts while also leading people to your account. Stay positive and make friends!
* **Don’t only post about your books.** Post about your books, but also post about writing, reading, books you’re loving, funny everyday life things, etc. Readers care about your new books, but they also want to get to know you as an author!
* **Pay attention to what’s in the zeitgeist.** If you hear a certain song often or see a hashtag on every post, chances are it’s “trending.” Use these things in your own posts to try and boost your views and engagement.
* **Ultimately, it’s an algorithm.** TikTok will place your videos in front of people searching for and interacting with similar content. Use every tool on TikTok to break into your readers’ algorithms. Think about what they’re watching, what viral trends they’re seeing, etc.

Here are a few authors who have a great TikTok platform you should check out:

* [Abby Jimenez](https://www.tiktok.com/%40authorabbyjimenez)
* [Jeneva Rose](https://www.tiktok.com/%40jenevaroseauthor)
* [Colleen Hoover](https://www.tiktok.com/%40colleenhoover)
* [Chloe Gong](https://www.tiktok.com/%40thechloegong)

For more information, check out these links: [5 Mistakes Authors Should Avoid on TikTok](https://www.writersdigest.com/getting-published/5-mistakes-authors-should-avoid-on-tiktok), [How to Make the Most](https://booksforward.com/three-tips-for-authors-to-make-the-most-out-of-booktok/), and [How to Use TikTok as a Writer](https://writingcooperative.com/how-to-use-tiktok-as-a-writer-d2fe8119adf2). Again, using this platform is not required. TikTok is not the right space for everyone’s book, and not everyone is comfortable with this type of promotion.

1. **Amazon**

Setting up your Amazon Author Central account is important because it allows you to create a profile page that links your books together through your author name, but there are **really important do’s and don’ts** for using this portal.

**DO:**

* [**Create an account**](https://authorcentral.amazon.com/gp/help?ie=UTF8&topicID=200620850). Verification may take up to 7 days, but you can still add a photo and edit your bio while you’re waiting to be approved.
* [**Add an author photo**](https://authorcentral.amazon.com/gp/help?ie=UTF8&topicID=200649540).
* [**Add a bio**](https://authorcentral.amazon.com/gp/help?ie=UTF8&topicID=200649530). You can find tips on how to improve your bio [here](https://www.amarketingexpert.com/write-kickass-amazon-bio-sell-books/).
* **Link your books.** Claim all of your books by adding the ISBNs to your page. Amazon will verify these on the backend and add them to your profile.
* **Optional: Add bonus content.**
	+ [Link your blog feed to your profile](https://authorcentral.amazon.com/gp/help?ie=UTF8&topicID=200649550)
	+ [Upload videos](https://authorcentral.amazon.com/gp/help?ie=UTF8&topicID=200649570)
	+ [Include upcoming events](https://authorcentral.amazon.com/gp/help?ie=UTF8&topicID=200649560)

**DON’T DO ANYTHING ELSE:**

* **DON’T** edit the individual product pages.
* **DON’T** update review quotes.
* **DON’T** edit the book description.
* **DON’T** change the cover images.

**If you have changes or updates for your book’s product page on Amazon, email a member of our team and we will make the change for you.**

Author Central has these tools available so that self-published authors can control their own metadata. For traditionally published authors, **we enter this metadata for you** in a title management system which our sales team controls and which feeds regularly to all retailers. By manually changing the metadata on Author Central [**you will block our data feed**](http://www.koehlerbooks.com/using-amazons-author-central-may-cut-off-your-publisher/) and lock us out from making updates. This in turn can cause delays when we make important updates to your book’s data.

1. **Goodreads**

Goodreads is **the largest social network for readers** in the world. A place for casual readers and bona-fide bookworms alike, Goodreads members recommend books, compare what they are reading, keep track of what they’ve read and would like to read, form book clubs, enter giveaways, and much more.

Goodreads Tips

* [**Claim your author profile**](https://www.goodreads.com/author/program)**.** From there you can update your profile picture, write your bio, link your books, link to your blog, embed videos, post status updates, and more!
* [**Add the “Ask the Author” feature**](https://www.goodreads.com/help/show/375-ask-the-author-how-do-i-enable-ask-the-author) to your profile. This is an ongoing Q&A section where you can answer your fans’ questions at your leisure. You can read more tips on utilizing this feature [here](http://www.digitalbookworld.com/2014/4-ways-to-rock-goodreads-new-ask-the-author-feature/).
* **Rate and review books** so your followers can see what you’re reading. Add want-to-reads to your bookshelves.
* Since Goodreads is part of your online persona, **stay positive** and **only post 5-star reviews.** Use this platform to support your fellow authors rather than be critical.
* **Add friends**. Add friends via your social media platforms or email account and accept friend requests with abandon. It will help broaden your network.
* **Approach as a reader first and author second**. Talk about other books. Be an expert in your genre.
* **Join a group related to your genre**. Hang out there for a week or two and get to know the culture. Participate in book clubs and discussions. Engage!
* Like on Facebook and Twitter, **don’t be aggressive promoting your book**. People will come to you.

For advice on Goodreads advertising, see [**XII**](#bookmark=id.2jxsxqh)below.

1. **LibraryThing**

If Goodreads is the first, LibraryThing is the **second largest social network for readers** in the world. It operates in a similar way as Goodreads and is another great way for authors to connect with readers and share their own personal bookshelf. LibraryThing users can check out other peoples' libraries, see whose library is most similar to theirs, swap reading suggestions, and use a keyword system to find books based on their reading preferences.

LibraryThing Tips

* [**Create an account and become a LibraryThing Author**](https://www.librarything.com/wiki/index.php/LibraryThing_Author)**.** Just like Goodreads, edit your profile page. You can add a photo, describe yourself and your library, and link back to your website.
* **Contribute to the “Common Knowledge” on your author page.** This captures details about yourself and your books—everything from series information to where you went to school.
* **Catalogue the books you’ve read.** Your readers want to know what books they have in common with you. Rate and review books to let your fans know what you think, but as with Goodreads **stay positive** and **only post 5-star reviews.**
* **Add your readings and other events to** [**LibraryThing Local**](http://www.librarything.com/local). Events will then show up on your author page as well, so your readers can learn about your public appearances.
* **Join the** [**Hobnob with Authors**](https://www.librarything.com/groups/hobnobwithauthors) **group** and discuss your work with interested members.
* **Sign up for one of the** [**Author Chats**](https://www.librarything.com/groups/authorchat). It’s not “real-time,” but takes place in one of their forums over a two week period. Members ask questions, and authors check in about once a day and respond.
* Like with Goodreads, **do not aggressively promote your book**. From their Terms of Service: "Do not use LibraryThing as an advertising medium. Egregious commercial solicitation is forbidden. No matter how great your novel, this does apply to authors."
* Check out some of these fantastic LibraryThing Authors for examples:
	+ [Laurie R. King](https://www.librarything.com/author/kinglaurier)
	+ [Gillian Flynn](https://www.librarything.com/author/flynngillian)
	+ [Lee Child](https://www.librarything.com/author/childlee)

1. **Signings, Events, and Conferences**

Readings and Signings

**You are responsible for setting up your own readings and signings, including travel expenses.** Think of signings like another tool in your toolbox. They are absolutely not required and are entirely dependent on practicality, your schedule, and your budget. Signings are a great way to connect with local bookstores and libraries and engage with nearby readers, but they’re also limited in scope (for overseas authors, for example, this may not be the best use of your time and resources). Most stores rely in whole or in part on the author to bring in traffic for their event; think about what location(s) might make the most sense for your personal network (family and friends) and fans. Decide what’s best for you, your book, and your audience before scheduling. And please feel free to reach out if you need advice or recommendations.

When you set up an event, please make sure to [**fill out our author events form.**](https://forms.gle/sczzjDT2UYDhsMWY8)The bookseller is responsible for ordering copies of your book through their account with Penguin Random House. If you are hosting an event at a non-bookstore location, you will be responsible for ordering books. Our authors receive a 50% discount through Penguin Random House. Please email csorders@penguinrandomhouse.com to place your order. We suggest ordering about **a month in advance** to ensure copies arrive on time and that we can troubleshoot any issues that may arise. Please don’t hesitate to contact Madeline Rathle, our Marketing Manager, with any questions or issues that you may have.

We will do our best to support your promotional efforts through our social media. We will also notify our sales team of the upcoming event so they can coordinate with their regional reps.

The earlier you fill out this form, the better, but please try to notify us **at least one month in advance**. Any later makes it difficult for us to guarantee we can get your books to your event location on time. **If you book a last-minute event** and still need our help ordering books, be sure to send us an email in addition to filling out this form so that we can move quickly to assist you.

**You are also responsible for designing and purchasing your own promotional items** (bookmarks, postcards, posters, etc.). This is by no means necessary, but only if you’d like to have materials on hand for events and conferences. We’re more than happy to provide you with your hi-res cover art, quotes, or any other digital assets you might need to produce those materials. As always, we’re available if you need suggestions or would like feedback.

Something you may want to consider is virtual events. During COVID-19, this became a popular tool for many authors who wanted to connect with bookstores and audiences but could not host in-person events. There are many ways to do this via social media and [Zoom](https://zoom.us/). The best way to make these virtual events a hit are: having a bookstore host your event, partnering with other authors to pool your collective audiences, and thinking critically about date and time. When are your readers available, and when do your followers typically hang out online? As with in-person events, RSVPs are important. Create a Facebook calendar event and invite your friend. You can also link it in your newsletters and social media bios leading up to the event.

Tips for setting up events:

* **Don’t wait until the last minute.** Bookstores need time to fit you in their calendar and order books. You’ll want to start setting these up about six months in advance of your pub date.
* **Be prepared to pitch yourself.** They’ll want to know what the book is about, who you are, and how you plan on promoting the event.
* **Consider local libraries and book clubs** in addition to bookstores. These can be easier to reach and often have built-in audiences for your genre. In addition, hosting or attending **digital events** can be a good alternative to costly travel. Regional libraries and book clubs are big fans of this approach.
* **Coordinate multi-author events** to maximize turnout and incentivize bookstores and libraries to host your event. Connect with local Alcove Press authors in your genre with similar launch dates or reach out to your network of fellow authors cultivated through social media and conferences.
* **Don’t get upset if you get turned down.** Event coordinators only have so much room in their calendars.

Tips once you’ve confirmed your event:

* **Promote your event.** The larger the crowd you draw, the happier the event organizers will be (and the more willing they’ll be to have you back). Use your website, newsletter, and social media platforms to announce your upcoming events at least a week in advance and in the days leading up. Let the CLB team know as well—we may not be able to post about every event, but we are happy to help promote when we can!
* **Prepare a passage ahead of time** if you’re planning on doing a reading, and practice.
* **Bring a newsletter signup sheet.** See [**III**](#bookmark=id.2jxsxqh) above.
* **Bring pens and markers** for signings.
* **Thank everyone.** Thank your guests for coming. We also recommend writing a thank you note to the event organizers for coordinating. It’s good etiquette and will make them more willing to host you again in the future.

Conferences

Conferences are a great way to network with other authors, mingle with booksellers and reviewers, and engage with your fans. They range from genre-specific to more general writing conferences covering both fiction and nonfiction.

The following is a list of some **writing conferences** you may want to attend. Many more can be found [here](https://www.awpwriter.org/wcc/directory_conferences_centers). Again, you are responsible for your own travel and accommodations, so attendance is at your discretion:

1. [RT Convention](https://www.rtconvention.com/)
2. [RWA Annual Conference](https://www.rwa.org/conference)
3. [Writer’s Digest Annual Conference](http://www.writersdigestconference.com/)
4. [Association of Writers and Writing Programs Conference](https://www.awpwriter.org/awp_conference/)
5. [BookExpo America](http://www.bookexpoamerica.com/)

There are also a handful of **regional conferences** hosted by the regional independent bookseller associations (SIBA, NAIBA, MPIBA, etc.), as well as **library conferences** (ALA, PLA, and ALA Midwinter). We work closely with our sales reps to determine the most effective use of our time and marketing resources (in addition to your time and resources) at these shows. We review these annually with the guidance of our sales team and will be in touch with you if there’s one we think you should attend.

These are by no means the only conferences available to you, but they’re a good place to start. If you’re unsure whether or not a conference is worth attending, feel free to reach out to a member of our team and ask.

Just like with signings, please be sure to [**fill out the author events form**](https://forms.gle/5qv3rhBv4stjmzwG9) each time you sign up for a conference. Please be aware that space in the book rooms is often limited for conferences, and there are often many authors to accommodate. As such, the bookseller(s) may only order a small number of your books to sell/distribute. We strongly encourage you to bring a small handful of your books to have on hand just in case.

\*\*\*During pandemic times, please note that these conferences, festivals, and events are constantly changing and adapting. Please pay close attention to the official websites of these organizations as you make decisions and prepare.

1. **Awards**

The following is a list of **awards** you may want to consider (where appropriate), but are **your responsibility** to submit to. If you would like Alcove Press to provide copies of your book for these submissions, please vet the award with us and notify us by your publication date so that we can coordinate:

1. “State” Book Awards
2. [RT Reviewer’s Choice Award](https://www.rtbookreviews.com/rt-awards)
3. [USA Best Book Awards](http://www.usabooknews.com/2017bestbookawards.html)
4. [IPPY Awards](http://www.ippyawards.com/)
5. [Next Generation Indie Book Awards](http://www.indiebookawards.com/)

There are tons of other awards in addition to these that you can consider (see [here](http://awards.omnimystery.com/mystery-awards.html)), so this is by no means an exhaustive list. But **please be careful** when searching for reputable award associations, as there are also plenty of scam opportunities out there (our alarm bells start ringing when they charge more than $100 per entry). If you are unsure whether or not an award is legitimate and worth submitting to, ask a member of our team and we’ll be happy to look into it.

1. **Advertising**

Knowing where to get the most bang for your buck is a tricky business. A lot of it is trial and error, and it can become costly. Our marketing team spends a lot of time evaluating ad opportunities and determining the most beneficial and cost-effective programs for our titles to support you and your books to the best of our ability. As such, **advertising is not your responsibility.** We strongly feel that your time is better spent developing your author platform, building your newsletter list, and engaging with your audience.

That said, we understand if you want to promote your books beyond our efforts, and we want to help guide you towards some effective, budget-friendly options.

* **Social Media Advertising**
	+ **Facebook advertising.** We haven’t found Facebook ads to be terribly successful in terms of return on investment. There are a lot of people on Facebook and a lot of different audiences to choose from, so the key is knowing the right levers to pull. And that’s difficult to master. As such, we don’t recommend going this route. However, it is a fairly inexpensive option if you focus your audience, and it’s easily customizable (you can set your budget). If you’re dead set on trying it out,[read this article first](https://kindlepreneur.com/facebook-ads-for-books/) for a few helpful tips.
	+ **Goodreads self-serve advertising.** Goodreads’ self-serve advertising program for authors seems enticing for the same reasons as Facebook: you can set your budget, customize your reach, and it’s relatively easy to use. Plus it’s a platform dedicated to readers. But it has the same drawbacks: focusing the audience and reach to create a successful campaign with positive return is difficult, especially because Goodreads has a notoriously low click through rate (the amount of people who see your ad and actually click on it is very slim).
	+ **Goodreads giveaways.** Unfortunately, Goodreads now charges for giveaways. We’ll continue to evaluate this program on a case by case basis while also seeking out some cost-effective alternatives. If you are planning on running your own Goodreads giveaway, please let us know so we can help cross-promote. Please note that for any Goodreads giveaway you set up on your own that requires physical copies, you are responsible for providing books for the winners.
* [**Great Escapes Book Tours**](http://www.escapewithdollycas.com/great-escapes-virtual-book-tours/)**.** Lori, blogger for Escape with Dollycas, has a fantastic program where she’ll set you up on a blog tour with seven to fourteen different bloggers who will spread the word about your book through reviews, interviews, and guest posts. A lot of our cozy authors have had success with this program. It’s $35 to participate for cozy mystery tours; non-cozy tours are $125. Make sure to schedule this a few months in advance.

We’ll continue to grow this list as new opportunities arise. If you have any additional suggestions for programs you’ve tried and loved, be sure to let us know!

1. **Publicity Outreach**

We will take care of the vast majority of this for you. We do blurb outreach for your books, and we go out with widespread galley and finished book mailings to all the major publicity outlets, hitting the big four trades (*Publishers Weekly*, *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, and *Kirkus*) in addition to larger media (*New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, etc.), smaller book publications (*BookRiot*, *Shelf Awareness*, *BookTrib* etc.), regional publications, radio, bloggers, and then some.

**For blurbs**, please let us know if you have personal relationships with any authors in your genre whom you feel comfortable asking for a blurb. We will be more than happy to send out a copy of your book on your behalf if they accept your request. Please note that we prefer to work with digital copies for blurb outreach. This allows us to reach out sooner and more effectively.

**For publicity outreach**, please let us know if there is anyone in the media (especially personal contacts) you would like to receive a copy of your book, and we will make sure they get a copy in one format or another (electronic, galley, or finished book).

In order to stay organized and make sure nothing falls through the cracks, it would be great if you could put your publicity requests in a spreadsheet and send it to us in an email. These are the fields you should include:

| **Date Requested** | **Title** | **First** | **Last** | **Format (print or electronic)** | **Email** | **Address 1** | **Address 2** | **City** | **State** | **Zip** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

If you plan on **hiring an outside publicist**, we’re more than happy to work with them to coordinate our efforts to promote your book. Where possible, we recommend securing someone **ten months in advance of publication** so you have time to work out the contract details and so they have plenty of time to get to know you and your book and start putting together their plans. We start putting together galley mailing lists **six months ahead of publication**, so you’ll want your publicist up and running by then at the latest. You by no means have to go this route, but if you do decide to hire an outside publicist, please be sure to **put us in touch** so that we can sort out our plans and make sure we aren’t hitting the same media outlets.

1. **Marketing Measurement**

Once you set up your author platform, the first thing you’ll want to track is your **newsletter size and engagement**. Most newsletter services track this for you and are able to give you reports. You should keep an eye on how many new sign-ups, unsubscribes, opens, and clicks you get every time you send out a new newsletter. Is your list growing steadily? Do you get more sign-ups if you send out newsletters more frequently? Less frequently? Are your readers engaging with your content? Are they clicking the preorder links? Over time, you’ll start to see trends that should help to determine which of your efforts build the most momentum. For example, if you announce a giveaway where readers are directed to sign up for your newsletter to enter, keep track of how many new sign-ups you get so you can compare it against your average subscriber rate and determine whether or not that was an effective marketing program.

You should also track your **social media metrics** after you build your platform and start engaging with your audience. A few good things to track would be blog page views, Twitter followers and retweets, and Facebook “Likes” and shares. If you see any spikes in activity, your promotional efforts are clearly working. Keep an eye on any and all activity that seems to move the needle so you can better understand what your audience is reacting to.

Once you’re one or two books deep, you can also start to **track your reviews** on Goodreads and Amazon to get a better understanding of your readership. On Goodreads, go to your title page and scroll down to the reviews. Rather than list them by date posted, Goodreads automatically arranges reviews by most influential, meaning they received the most comments and likes. The more influential the reviewer, the more likely they are to influence other users’ interest in a title. Keep an eye on the most influential reviewers who gave your book 5 stars. Put a link to their Goodreads page in a spreadsheet along with their rating for your book, a link to their review, and the number of likes and comments it received. Keep that list on hand for your next book, because, since we know they’re already fans of yours, we can consider sending a handful of your most influential reviewers an advanced copy of your new book.

Keep a similar list for your Amazon 5-star reviewers. Sort your 5-star reviews by “top rated,” which will arrange them in the order that were marked “most helpful”. Just like with Goodreads, these are your most influential Amazon reviewers. Click on their username and drop the link into a spreadsheet with their rating, a link to their review, and the number of “helpful” ratings, and keep that list on hand for your next book, as well.

Once you reach the measurement stage, let us know! We may ask you about your results to help determine next steps. We can also put together some tools and tips to help you dig in a little deeper. In the meantime, here are a few helpful resources to get you started:

* [**Facebook Insights**](https://www.facebook.com/help/794890670645072). Learn how people are interacting with your page and posts.
* [**Google Analytics**](https://analytics.google.com/analytics/web/). This tool can give you a deep look at many aspects of where your web traffic comes from and how your audience engages with your content. It’s free, relatively easy to use, and incredibly informative.
* **Twitter Analytics**. You can find a bunch of free and helpful measurement tools for Twitter [here](http://www.razorsocial.com/free-twitter-analytics/).

**Congrats! You’ve come to the end of our marketing guide.**

On the next page, you’ll find a **checklist** that includes our **recommended timeline** to progress through these steps. You can print it out and check items off as you move through the list. Remember, **you absolutely do not have to do everything on the list**, but it will help give you some direction for how to move forward.

Remember, if you have any questions or feedback on this guide, feel free to reach out. Have fun building and growing your author platform! We can’t wait to see all your efforts pay off.