



July 14 membership meeting

Marketing books by genre, audience and topic and being picked up by a major publisher

Marketing. It's the #1 topic our members consistently want to know more about. The thing is, there's no one right way to promote and sell books. It's different for every author, and the tactics vary depending on the genre, audience and topic of your book.

Join us Wednesday evening, July 14, as we bring together a panel of authors who have each learned the **best routes to marketing their specific type of book** (and two of them just sold their book to a major publisher). They will share their hard-won insider secrets and give lots of ideas that you can apply to your own unique book promotion efforts.

Our panelists include:

Anne Milford and **Jennifer Gauvain** initially self-published their book, *How Not to Marry the Wrong Guy*. That must have been a good move, because Random House just picked up it up. Yes, Random House!



Anne Milford canceled her wedding exactly five months before the big day. In the aftermath of her breakup, she realized how many people want to cancel their wedding — but don't. She wondered why there wasn't a book about doomed-from-the-start relationships and marriages. Now, with over 20 years experience as a freelance writer and editor, and 15 years as a happily married woman — she has written that book.



Jennifer Gauvain is a licensed clinical social worker whose primary focus is working with couples and families. With over 13 years experience in private practice, she helps people address the issues revealed by those who forged ahead with mismatched marriage partners. <http://coldfeetpress.com>.



Katie Rodriguez Banister is a woman on wheels who has transformed her paralysis from a 1990 auto accident into myriad new opportunities. She and her husband Steve co-founded Access-4-All, with a mission to educate and empower others through motivational speaking and disability education. Katie's books span several genres, including the illustrated children's title *Aunt Katie's Visit*; *The Personal Care Attendant Guide*, a how-to resource on caregiving; and *A Pocket of Poems and How to Write Your Own* a collection of her own poetry that is also an empowering creative writing tool. www.access-4-all.com.

Come to the July 14 meeting at the Richmond Heights Community Center: Doors open at 6:30 p.m. for networking. The meeting begins at 7:00 with announcements, followed immediately by the evening's program. The program concludes about 8:30 with networking continuing till 9:00. **Our regular meetings are free to members. Guests – \$10.00 at the door.**



What's ahead?

August 14 – SLPA Field Trip: Join us on site at **Corley Printing** for an up close view of the offset and digital printing process. We'll celebrate with food and a tour of the facility in Earth City. Watch the SLPA website and your email for more details. **Mark your calendar!**

In This Issue

- 1 Marketing books by genre...
- 1 What's ahead?
- 2 Book promotion tips for skittish sellers by Elizabeth Spann Craig
- 2 SLPA meetings move to Brentwood in September 2010
- 3 Novel ways to promote your novel by Patricia Fry
- 4 The importance of book genre by Gary Smailes
- 5 Ten book writing tips for career writers by Pearl Luke
- 6 Mark your calendars!
- 6 Book learning

Book promotion tips for skittish sellers



by Elizabeth Spann Craig

My children are both in Scouts. It's been a great experience for them—they get to try new things and build self-confidence and self-reliance.

The only thing I dislike about it? The selling.

I'm sure the other parents out there know what I mean. In October, my son sells barbeque for his troop. And in January/February, my daughter sells Girl Scout cookies for hers.

And they have a mom who absolutely hates selling things.

This means that I end up buying whatever they've got to sell. Yes, I will buy \$100 worth of BBQ and \$100 worth of Girl Scout cookies just to keep from hovering anxiously behind my children as they sell door-to-door.

This, however, isn't such a great idea for books. We'd go broke pretty fast if I had to buy every book I've got out, or coming out, on the market.

Book Promotion Tips for the Shy Seller

Virtual promotion is designed for you. Make sure you're professional about it. If you're going to go on a blog tour, have a headshot, pithy bio, and a book description of various lengths (50 words, 100 words, etc.)

Try a variety of different approaches on your blog tour: interview your character, throw a contest, post on the writing craft, and do a straight-forward interview. Try to mix it up online if you're going to lots of different sites.

You'll need to have more of an online presence than someone who does lots of touring. A website is the bare minimum—also consider a blog, Facebook, and Twitter.

You need materials to mail out—bookmarks and postcards are best. Postcards can be sent to libraries and bookstores. Bookmarks can be left at libraries and bookstores (get their permission first).

Have a business card that speaks for you when someone asks what you've written. Practice a brief synopsis of your book that you can say in a confident way.

Promote in groups. I belong to a promotional group here in Charlotte that does signings and panels and workshops together. It helps me out tremendously.

If you're part of a group, contribute to donations for raffled baskets for conferences. Many writing conferences raffle off baskets filled with donated books, bookmarks, etc. from different authors.

If you're tour-challenged (a mother of small children, or have any mobility issues), consider an author appearance via Skype. They're getting more popular and you may be more comfortable giving a talk while you're in your own home.

Now if I can set up a virtual method of selling Scout stuff, I'll be set... :)

Elizabeth Spann Craig is the author of the recent *Midnight Ink* release, *Pretty is as Pretty Dies* and the *Memphis Barbeque* series for Berkley Prime Crime. She's the mother of two and currently lives in Matthews, North Carolina. Between juggling room mom duties, refereeing play dates, and being dragged along as chaperone/hostage on field trips, she dreams of dark and stormy nights beside stacks of intriguing mysteries with excellent opening lines. Connect with Elizabeth on her blog and website:

<http://elizabethspanncraig.com/>

SLPA meetings move to Brentwood in September 2010

Beginning in September, the SLPA will have a new home for our monthly meetings: The Brentwood Community Center (Brentwood Recreational Complex), 2505 S. Brentwood Boulevard, Brentwood, MO 63144. At the SLPA Board meeting in late April, members officially voted to move the meetings to the Brentwood facility, citing the comfortable meeting space, easy parking, flexible scheduling and lower rates at the Brentwood recreational complex.

"No one in the world cares as much about your book as you do, not even your mother. Your publisher, your agent and the bookstore manager have lots of books and authors to worry about. As much as they may like you and/or your book, their time is shared with other authors and professionals. Your book's future depends on you."



— Gail Z. Martin, author of
The Thrifty Author's Guide to Launching Your Book

Novel ways to promote your novel



by Patricia Fry

For most authors of fiction, the very idea of promotion is distasteful. It's not uncommon for novelists to break out in hives or develop a nervous twitch when faced with the reality of marketing their books.

As a published author, you know that you must promote your book and you scurry to find your comfort zone. You'll sign up with Amazon.com, of course, put up a Web site and solicit reviews through the traditional mags and sites. Those of you with more nerve will try to arrange book signings and, uh—maybe attend a few local book festivals. And mostly, you're met with disappointment.

But there is so much more that you can do to draw attention to your book—to let readers know that it exists. Here are a few ideas that you may not have thought of (and they don't even require that you develop the persona of a hard-selling hawk):

1: Promote to organizations and sites related to a topic or theme that's even loosely woven throughout your book.

For example, let's say that your novel features a bird that makes occasional appearances in a few chapters. This might be a crow that appears just before the wicked woman is sighted, a hawk that, when spotted, gives the main character courage or a canary that lives with the protagonist and drives him crazy. Contact birding organizations, bird rescue and rehab Web sites, sites for bird fanciers, bird experts, sites dedicated to specific bird types (canaries, wild birds, parakeets, exotic birds, for example) and other authors who are promoting books related to birds.

Of course, the same concept works for any subject; cats, dogs, horses, an amputee, a diabetic, a transvestite, twins, homelessness, the nightclub scene, Hollywood, competition swimming, golf, car racing, carnivals, regions (New Hampshire, Chicago, British Columbia, Seattle, Kansas City), the college scene, gambling, the corporate world...

What do you do once you find these organizations or sites? After carefully studying the site, email the operator or director personally and make some solid suggestions for how your book would fit in to their scheme of things. Ask for a book review. Offer to contribute articles to the site. Request inclusion on their Resource List or Recommended Reading page. Offer your book as a prize in an upcoming contest. Suggest and head up a contest that would help to promote your book.

2: Participate in appropriate message boards. Many dedicated sites have message boards where like-minded people can communicate, network and share. Locate some of them through a Google search. Look for message boards when you visit various sites. Using the bird theme again, rather than just diving in and saying, "Buy my new novel. There's a bird in chapter three," adopt a strategy. Bring an interesting story or some new information or facts to the forum. Say, for example, "I was surprised to find that Ventura was among the top three California counties when it comes to wild bird species. Is there anyway to find out what species are involved in this count? I'm particularly interested in this subject because I've just published a novel wherein I feature an unusual species of wild bird." Then sign your name and add the title of your novel and ordering information.

Maybe your book is set in a small town in Montana. Find regional sites and get involved in Montana, Idaho and Wyoming-related message boards. Write, for example, "Is anyone familiar with Darby, Montana? I'm the author of a brand new suspense novel set in this historic town. Read excerpts at (your Web site address)." And then include ordering information. Offer up some interesting trivia. Ask what others know about this place. Your main objective in participating in targeted message boards is to make friends, build a rapport and get exposure for your novel.

3: Solicit reviews in magazines that have an element related to an obvious or an obscure aspect of your novel. You have probably contacted magazines and newsletters that typically review novels, but have you thought of approaching publications related to a lesser, but interesting aspect of your novel? Maybe your story includes a main character with Multiple Sclerosis. Seek out magazines and newsletters focusing on MS and those with an overcoming-disabilities-aspect. Perhaps yours is an ethnic novel. Solicit reviews in appropriate ethnic publications. Of course, if it has that bird in it, go after magazines the bird lovers read. And don't forget to take advantage of any regional aspect. There are a growing number of regional magazines these days. I located fifteen magazines for Ohio in just a few minutes time and about the same number for Texas.

How do you find specifically focused publications? Do a Google search. Use *Literary Market Place* and *Writer's Market* and thumb through *Gales Directory of Publications and Broadcast Media*. (All of these volumes are available in the reference section of your local library.)

4: Contact bookstores that specialize in a topic or theme present in your novel. I located ten bookstores specializing in bird or pet books in three minutes through a Google search. There are also bookstores dedicated to books on cooking and foods, cats, mystery, crime, fantasy/horror/science fiction, nature, economics and spiritual/religion.

Continued on page 4


Novel ways to promote ... *continued*

5: Approach specialty stores. You might convince some pet store owners to carry your novel that includes birds, a cat or a seeing-eye dog, for example. If your book has a women's fashion element, consider designing a point of purchase display for willing managers of small clothing stores. If your book does well locally, you can use your success to entice stores in other cities to carry it. Maybe one of your characters thrives on daily espressos or there are a lot of scenes occurring in a coffee house. You know the next step—solicit space for your novel in Starbucks and the many copycat coffee shops sprouting up everywhere throughout the U.S.

6: Take advantage of your memberships and status. Are you a college graduate? Send news of your book to your college alumni magazine. The editors are always hungry for information about successful alumni. If you don't belong to Sam's Club, Costco or other such membership-oriented stores, sign up today! These mega-stores love to feature special members achieving interesting things in their widely circulated publications

7: Build promotion into your novel. If you are only in the idea stage of writing your novel, you are in luck because I'm going to give you the key to promotional success. Write a nonfiction hook into your story. How? Involve the American Diabetes Association, the American Heart Association or the National Mental Health Association by developing a character with diabetes, a heart condition or a mental illness, for example. Give a character a Harley, a tattoo or send him cruising on the Princess Line. Make sure that you have permission to use the name of the company or organization in your story. And, with the right angle and approach, you might be able to get them to participate in promoting your book. At the least, they might give you a positive endorsement.

Tap into what's hot—something that's in the news or an emerging trend, for example. Is anyone involving their characters in a life-threatening storm? What about writing a story set during an extreme heat spell? More and more people are developing enjoyable and satisfying online relationships—women are creating friendships and some couples are even getting married. Is this an intriguing trend that might entice readers to purchase your novel?

Whatever your topic or thread of a topic which you've woven through your book, you can find organizations, publications and/or Web sites to support it. Tap into these resources to broaden the audience for your fantastic, soon-to-be successful novel. 

Patricia Fry is the author of 31 books, including *The Right Way to Write, Publish and Sell Your Book* www.matilijapress.com She is the Executive Director of SPAWN (Small Publishers, Artists and Writers Network) www.spawn.org and she works with other authors on their publishing projects: www.patriciafry.com.

The importance of book genre

by Gary Smailes in *Get Published*

When preparing your book for submission to an agent or publisher, it is essential that you define your book's genre correctly.


The reason for this is that the genre of your book will determine the agents and publishers you will eventually approach. Get it wrong and your book is doomed to rejection.

The reason is that publishers are set up to sell one type of genre, even large publishers are split into genre defined departments and imprints. The reason is that each genre requires its own set of unique skills in order to produce, market and sell a book.

You can see how selling a cook book is a very different prospect to selling a horror novel. They have different readers, but also different bookshop buyers, marketing approaches and design aspects. This means publishers have an internal team dedicated to selling one type of genre. It is your duty as a writer to correctly define your book's genre and then choose the agents and publishers who are set up to create and sell books of your chosen genre.

How you determine your book's genre is not straight forward. The development of online bookstores such as Amazon, have created some debate over a definitive list of genre. The reality is that though all of the publishing industry agree on the broad genres, there is much debate as we split into sub-genres.

My advice for a first time writer is to turn to Amazon to help define your book's genre. My tip would be to collect a list of five to ten titles you feel are similar to your own. Then plunge into Amazon and see how each is categorized. This should give you a pretty clear picture of your book's genre.

One word of warning—please don't get dragged into the rabbit hole that is sub-genre. In some genres, the sub-genre is important (I am thinking Sci Fi). However, as a rule of thumb, keep the genre as broad as possible. This will maximize your chance of success. 

Gary Smailes is freelance writer and historian who writes for BubbleCow, a literary consultancy that provides professional services for writers. BubbleCow: info@bubblecow.co.uk or www.bubblecow.co.uk

Why blog? "The main reason to blog is that you have something to say to the world—and you want to see what the world has to say back."



— Arianna Huffington, author of *The Huffington Post Complete Guide to Blogging*

Ten book writing tips for career writers



by Pearl Luke

The book writing tips here illuminate ten crucial habits and attitudes of successful creative writers. Career writers, those who live off writing income, treat writing as a vocation and a business, not as a hobby. To match their success, follow these practices. They're good principles in general, but they're

especially important in a writing career, in which it often takes years to be adequately rewarded.

1. Dream big. If you want a career as a writer, set your sights on big achievements, the best agent, a major publisher, and publication in a dozen countries. Imagine yourself living the life you desire. Don't settle. If you dream big, you'll strive harder. Be an optimist and refuse to consider failure. Successful writers don't think about failure. They spend time thinking about how to succeed with the story at hand. They acquire the necessary skills for success, they dream big, and they work hard without giving up, for as long as it takes.

2. Write about something you're passionate about. What interests you? If you spend most of your time thinking about abstract concepts, create a protagonist that is a mathematician or a physicist, so you can spend your time thinking about what excites you. If you spend most of your time thinking about relationships, write about complex relationships. If you live for your children, write children's books.

3. Commit to learning everything you can about writing. Of all the book writing tips listed here, this might be the one unsuccessful writers neglect most often as they learn a little and believe that is enough. The world is filled with wishful writers who think that anyone can become an author. With practice, anyone can write, but only a small percentage can write well. Author, screenwriter, and publisher Sol Stein claims that good writing is as complicated as brain surgery. I've been writing for twenty-five years and I'm still learning something new every week. A willingness to understand craft is the minimum requirement for success.

Understanding what makes a book good is more important than liking it. Understanding how to analyze good writing is crucial. Invest in your writing and literary education and commit to becoming one of the top writers in the country. It won't happen overnight. You may not find the success you dream of in two decades, but strive to learn everything there is to know about the art and craft of lasting literature, get experienced feedback, never give up, and it will happen.

4. Develop your strengths. Are you particularly good with dialogue? Then follow the example of Irish novelist Roddy Doyle

and write books heavy on dialogue. If exquisite diction is your strength, think of Annie Dillard or Anne Michaels and perfect each sentence. Don't neglect other skills, and strive to improve in the areas you find more difficult, but your main focus should be on doing what you do well. This is where you will shine and gain recognition.

5. Accept 100% responsibility for your success or failure.

Let others whine about the state of publishing, the weak economy, small advances, and dwindling readers. If your book is good enough, it will sell. Don't worry if it doesn't sell as many copies as you'd like. Once you publish enough good books that you have a large following, all your books will sell well, your new ones and your entire backlist. Many authors find that it takes five or more books to earn the money they thought they'd make with their first book. Be prepared for that and keep writing.

6. Stay focused. In the early years, when you don't earn as much as you'd like, it's easy to get sidetracked by the need to make a living. Do what you must to pay the bills in the fewest hours possible, and devote the rest of your time to reading, analyzing, and writing. This dedication is the price of success as a writer, so accept that you will take writing vacations while others lie on the beach. You don't have to work all the time, but you will need to make sacrifices and strive to make these book writing tips second nature. Refuse to consider the possibility of failure.

7. Spend time with writers who want to succeed as badly as you do. Find writers who will provide respectful but honest feedback. Let your spouse or parents tell you how wonderful you are. As a writer, you need the feedback of those with enough knowledge and experience to analyze your work and pinpoint its strengths and weaknesses, particularly its weaknesses. You're likely able to see the strengths on your own. Create your own writing group. Stay away from negative people who seek to undermine your enthusiasm. Writing has never been considered the best occupational choice. Instead seek out those who understand what it takes to be a career writer and who follow these book writing tips themselves.

8. Be prepared for setbacks. Every time something you write succeeds, something else will fail. Novelist and non-fiction writer Annie Dillard writes: On plenty of days the writer can write three or four pages, and on plenty of other days he concludes he must throw them away. Each breakthrough in understanding creates new, difficult demands. Writing success will always have its peaks and valleys. Once you're published, you'll find that one week reviewers will love your work, and the next week another reviewer will dismiss it. One book will win awards, and another won't. As with everything in life, expect to take one step backward for every two steps forward. Resolve to pick yourself up after each setback and move forward. Forget about sulking. It wastes time. Not

Continued on page 6

Ten Book Writing Tips ... *continued*

even the best writers can escape criticism and disappointments. Persevere, and accept all hurdles with the knowledge that “this, too, will pass.”

9. Set clear goals and think about how you will achieve them. Goals are useless if you do not have a plan for achieving them. If you want to sell 10,000 copies of each book every year, write down a dozen ways that might happen. Maybe you need speaking engagements. Maybe you need more traffic to your website. Choose the most plausible or the most enjoyable possibility and decide what concrete action steps would make the goal a reality. Then do something every day that moves you closer to the desired result.

10. Write honestly. Exceptional writers don't write what will make them acceptable to others. They write what others only think and few will say. Allow your characters to verbalize what goes unsaid, to act as many would like to act and dare not. Have the confidence to write what you know to be true. *The Emperor's New Clothes*, by Hans Christian Andersen, is remembered by everyone who hears it because the little boy says what everyone knows to be true and no one else had the courage to say. As a writer, have courage.

No one of these book writing tips is more important than any other. If you dream of publishing success, let nothing deter you. Practice these habits and keep practicing them until you succeed, as you will. 📖

Pearl Luke is the author of *Madame Zee* and *Burning Ground*, published by HarperCollins, and is a university writing instructor, and creative writing mentor. Her website, Be a Better Writer, assists writers in creating publishable material that is original and well crafted, through training, practice, feedback, and multiple revisions. Visit www.be-a-better-writer.com

Mark your calendars!

The SLPA will host a workshop at The Big Read this fall on October 9th, 2010. Mark your calendar for an extraordinary event that will celebrate authors and promote literacy. The Big Read, held on the



Clayton High School campus, will feature authors, costumed characters, interactive projects, panel discussions and book signings. The Big Read hours are 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. More details to come! 📖

Book learning

Every month, the SLPA invites independent publishing professionals to share their expertise with members and guests. In June, our guest speaker was Scott Ginsberg, aka “The Nametag Guy,” on the topic of building an author platform. A few meeting attendees share one thing they learned, below:



“Have extra books printed to give away to promote your book to your target readers.”
— Rebecca Olson, “The Card Diva” and Co-Facilitator of the St. Louis Chapter, Powerful You! Women's Networking Group



“Don't go after the ‘Oprah-sized’ exposure, but build your platform and the big opportunities will come on their own.”
— Kevin Hocker, author of *The Success Compass* and president of Success Partners Worldwide



“How important it is to not be boring—when everyone else is going one way, go the other way. It's crucial to stand out.”
— Kendra Wright, writer and music business manager 📖

You are invited to submit items and articles to *SLPA News and Views*.

Next deadline: July 20

Don't be late – no kidding!

Get your news and articles in EARLY! Send your information, articles and announcements to **Editor@stlouispublishers.org**.

Questions about SLPA?

Contact membership chairperson:
Christine Frank at **(314) 205-2679** or
e-mail **MemberChair@stlouispublishers.org**

SLPA News & Views is edited by: SLPA Newsletter Editor
Maria Rodgers O'Rourke Maria@mrocommunications.com and
designed by SLPA member Peggy Nehmen: pnehen@n-kcreative.com

