



INDIE AUTHOR MAGAZINE

THE FUTURE OF PUBLISHING Issue 30

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WITH
ZAPIER**

**AN ALLI FOR
TOMORROW'S
AUTHORS**

What's Your
AUTHOR ECOSYSTEM?

**BUILDING A LIFELONG
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10 Tips for:
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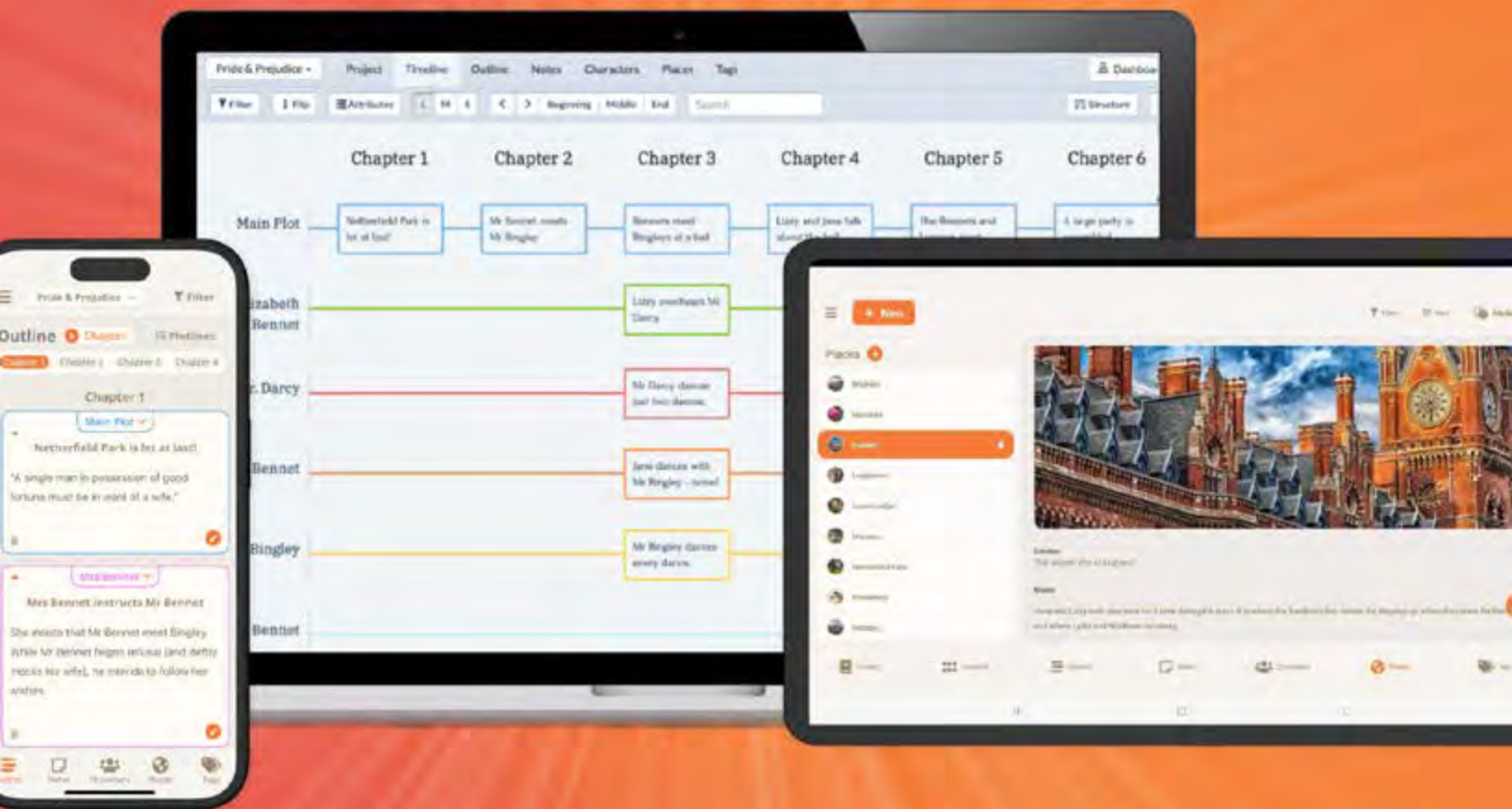
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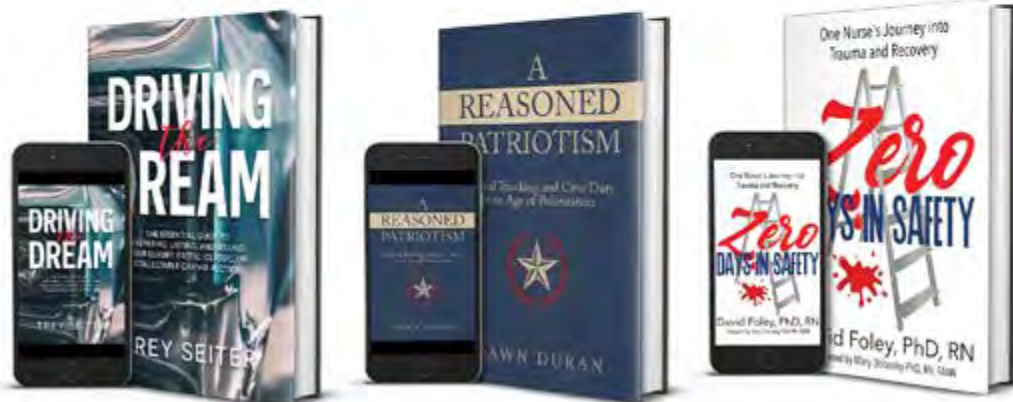
THE FUTURE OF PUBLISHING

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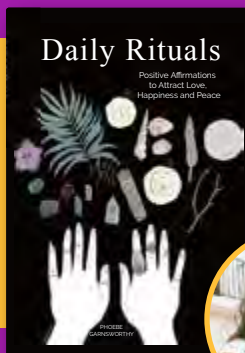


Authorpreneurs in Action



“I love Lulu! They've been a fantastic distributor of my paperbacks and an excellent partner as I dive into direct sales. They integrate so smoothly with my personal Shopify store, and their customer support has been top notch.”

Katie Cross, katiecrossbooks.com



“Having my own store has given me the freedom to look at my creativity as a profitable business and lifelong career.”

Phoebe Garnsworthy, phoebegarnsworthy.com



“Lulu has a super handy integration with Shopify. Lulu makes it so easy to sell paperbacks directly to readers.”

Kelly Oliver, kellyoliverbooks.com



“My experience with Lulu Direct has been more convenient and simple than I anticipated or thought possible. I simply publish, take a step back and allow the well-oiled machine to run itself. Most grateful!”

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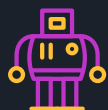
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From the EDITOR IN CHIEF

Why did you pursue independent publishing?

We could surely all answer differently. In my case, I knew traditional publishing could be a long and taxing process. I knew the book I wanted to write was in a niche genre and therefore would be harder to sell to an agent, even if I also knew it would have plenty of readership. I had a friend who had self-published already, and she was willing to answer my questions and lead me through decisions I needed to make.

It was only as I ventured further into the world of self-publishing that I realized how many opportunities it offered. I once viewed indie publishing as a “backup option” for putting my book into the world, but our industry is constantly growing and evolving as we adapt to new programs, platforms, and ways to connect with readers. It has been that way since I dipped my toe into these waters in 2021.

And it's only going to get better.

We partnered with Writer MBA for this special issue of *IAM* to showcase that future and all its many possibilities. One of our articles this month describes independent publishing as an open ocean in front of us, and it's such a great metaphor for the future of this industry and where it may take you. Come to think of it, it's a metaphor we use a lot—from the 20BooksTo50K® mantra, “A rising tide lifts all boats,” to the author who laments their exhaustion while trying to keep afloat in this month's letter to Indie Annie.

But even the best seafarers rely on maps, tools, and guides to get their heading. In these pages, we offer you just that: introductions to some of the most influential voices in the indie publishing world, resources for

automating corners of your business or identifying your ideal marketing strategies. Whether you decide to just tip your toe in or are charting a course for distant waters, we hope they can spark your excitement for what's out there.

After all, there's an entire ocean for us to explore.

Nicole Schroeder
Editor in Chief
Indie Author Magazine



From the CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

You're not doing marketing wrong; you're doing the wrong marketing. If there's one thing we've learned over our combined twenty-five-plus years of helping authors, it's that most people don't hate marketing; they hate the marketing they are forced to do. Whether that means putting your books in Kindle Unlimited, being on every social media platform, launching a Kickstarter campaign, building a huge mailing list, or learning paid ads, almost every author feels forced into doing something that doesn't feel right for them.

Unfortunately, success often feels like balancing on the head of a pin, so even though authors don't feel compelled to do certain things, they dive in headfirst either to prevent failure or finally find success.

This is the surest path to burnout. Luckily, we've also met thriving authors who run wildly innovative businesses that fly in the face of orthodoxy.

From this, we realized most marketing and sales strategies can't be generalized. They're an incredibly personal experience that must resonate with each author's natural tendencies. That's the basis for the Author Ecosystem, which you'll find detailed in these pages: to give you a sense of what matters to you in the core of your being. Once you develop the language to pinpoint what resonates with you, then you'll be one step closer to growing the business of your dreams—with the experts we've highlighted in this issue as leaders helping shape the future of publishing to guide you.

We hope somebody featured on these pages holds the message you need to hear to build an author business that resonates with you in 2024 and beyond. After all, that is the future of publishing: a personalized business that works for the author rather than a business the author is working inside of while struggling to stay afloat.

Monica Leonelle and Russell Nohelty
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Dear Indie Annie,

It seems like as soon as I have a handle on my career, something about the industry changes drastically—the rise of AI, changes in marketing strategies, a new program everyone’s suddenly using. How do I keep up with it all ... and keep from drowning?

Trying to Tread Water

DEAR TRYING TO TREAD WATER,

Oh, honey, I feel you. This industry is a fickle mistress, that’s for sure. One day you’re using TikTok to promote your book, and the next everyone’s moved on to Triller or whatever app the youth are gabbing on these days. But here’s the tea: you can’t control the waves of change. You can only learn to ride them.

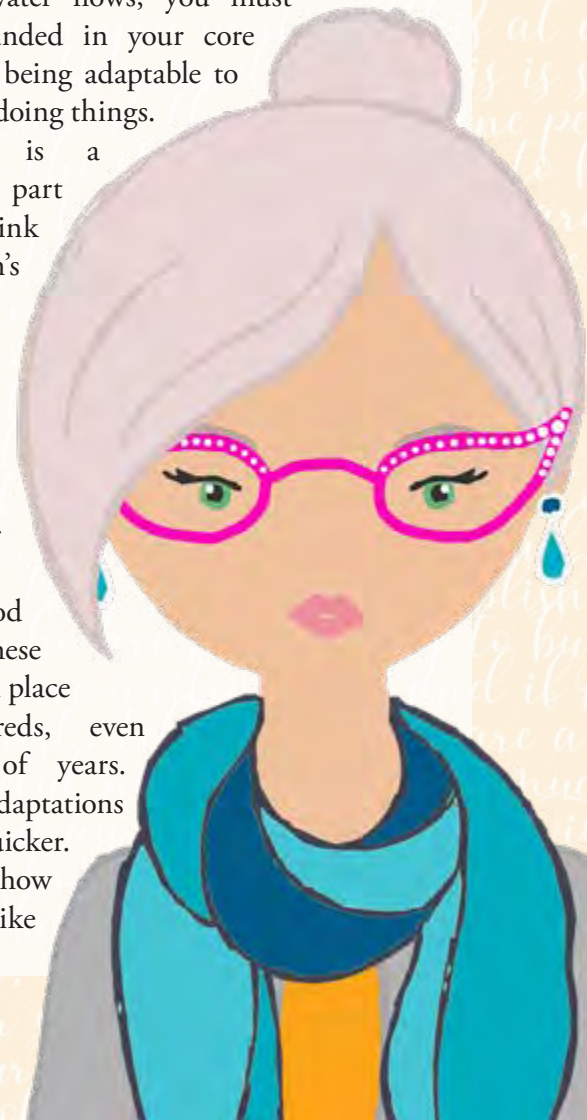
The secret, my dear, is being adaptable while staying true to yourself. Don’t just jump on every hot new marketing trend because all the other authors are doing it. Remember your mother’s taunts when you were young about jumping off a cliff if all your friends were doing the same? Mama always knows best.

Take the time to educate yourself, and choose only the strategies that truly align with your goals and strengths. Stay open and keep learning, but don’t spread yourself too thin chasing the next shiny object. Focus on building meaningful connections with your readers.

Change is as constant as the tides. As Heraclitus said, “No man ever steps in the same river twice, for it’s not the same river and he’s not the same man.” (I know, my darling one, a classical reference! I sometimes even

surprise myself.) But just as the shore remains while the water flows, you must remain grounded in your core values while being adaptable to new ways of doing things.

Change is a necessary part of life. Think of Darwin’s finches, adapting their beaks generation by generation to best suit their environment and food sources. These changes took place over hundreds, even thousands, of years. Human adaptations tend to be quicker. Consider how novelists like





Got burning questions about the wibbly-wobbly world of indie authoring? Eager to unravel the mysteries of publishing, writing woes, or anything in between? Give your quiz-zical quills a whirl and shoot your musings over to indieannie@indieauthoringmagazine.com - your inky quandaries are my cup of tea!

Jane Austen, Louisa May Alcott, and Alice Walker reinvented their writing while staying true to their visions.

Jane Austen wrote during a major transition in the publishing world, as novels were gaining popularity and prestige. Although she experimented with different literary styles, Austen ultimately crafted stories with her signature wit and insight that resonated with audiences. Despite the limitations for female authors of her time, she published innovative novels like *Pride and Prejudice* that are still beloved today.

Louisa May Alcott rose to fame during the American Civil War, when people viewed literature as a political and social tool. Though publishers and readers had particular expectations, Alcott drew on her own experiences to write *Little Women*, which broke conventions. She played with sentimental and subversive themes in children's fiction to create a new American classic.

Alice Walker wrote *The Color Purple* amid the racism, sexism, and violence faced by Black women in the early twentieth century. Though these issues were not considered mainstream literary material, Walker unflinchingly portrayed them through her powerful protagonist, Celie. She gave voice to marginalized groups and birthed a Pulitzer Prize-winning novel.

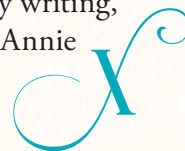
These women pushed creative boundaries and reinvented themselves as times changed. But their commitment to storytelling paved the way for countless future writers. They adapted and took advantage of changing times, and so can you.

Keep observing which tools and platforms your readers are flocking to, and be willing to tweak your approach accordingly, but never lose your unique authorial voice. Choose change when it suits you, and ignore the rest. Lay aside strategies that no longer bear fruit, but don't abandon the roots of your success.

And don't forget to come up for air once in a while! Take time to rest, recharge, and reconnect with the passion that drew you to writing in the first place. This work can be draining, but it's also deeply rewarding if you let it feed your spirit.

You've got this, sweetie. Just keep paddling, stay flexible, and keep your eye on the horizon. The tides will change again, but you'll have the resilience to ride out whatever comes next. Now go grab that life jacket and write! The world needs your stories.

Happy writing,
Indie Annie



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10 TIPS FOR AUTOMATING YOUR MARKETING

In the hushed solitude of the writer's room, the clatter of keys is the only sound. The author weaves worlds from nothing but creativity and caffeinated determination, crafting tales that possess the power to transport readers to distant realms. Yet a specter lurks, threatening to shatter this tranquil image. Its name? Marketing.

Often a daunting task for the lone writer, marketing has, until recently, demanded a vast allotment of time and energy, precious resources better spent on the art of storytelling. Fortunately, technology and automation tools have made it easier than ever for authors to streamline and automate repetitive marketing tasks. The right automation tools can free up hours normally spent on marketing, allowing authors to focus on what matters most: writing amazing books.

When used strategically, marketing automation allows self-published authors to compete with traditional publishers with large marketing teams. By using automation, indie authors can successfully balance both the creative and the promotional sides of their career.



CHOOSE (AND USE) THE RIGHT MARKETING AUTOMATION SYSTEMS

To effectively handle marketing emails, a basic email service provider just won't cut it. The right marketing automation systems don't just send emails; they can also monitor activity on your website, track clicked links in emails, segment your audience, and automate personalized follow-up emails.

Say you're gearing up for a book launch. You could create an email offering a sneak peek at the first chapter of your upcoming book. Once a subscriber clicks on this link, your marketing automation system tracks this activity, then automatically sends a follow-up email to these engaged readers with an exclusive preorder link. Those who didn't click the link receive a different email, perhaps a heartfelt note from you sharing the inspiration behind your book and encouraging them to learn more. By selecting a suitable marketing automation system, you can nurture leads from your website, tailor your reader interactions, and maintain an engaged and responsive audience.

There are several powerful marketing automation systems available. Here are a few to consider:

1. MailerLite (<https://mailerlite.com>): With an intuitive and user-friendly interface, MailerLite allows you to design custom newsletters, set up automated email sequences, and review reports about your audience and click-through rates.
2. ActiveCampaign (<https://activecampaign.com>): ActiveCampaign, with its advanced automation features, lets users create highly segmented audiences and sophisticated automation workflows. Plus, it includes customer relationship management (CRM) features to help manage customer relationships.
3. MailPoet (<https://mailpoet.com>): MailPoet integrates directly with WordPress and includes a feature that automatically emails your latest blog posts to your subscribers.
4. Brevo (<https://brevo.com>): Known for its comprehensive feature set, Brevo—formerly Sendinblue—offers not only email marketing tools but also SMS (text) marketing and live chat options, acting as a comprehensive solution for various communication needs.

2

SCHEDULE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS WITH BUFFER, HOOTSUITE, OR ZAPIER

Social media tools like Buffer or Hootsuite can help you manage your social media posts across multiple platforms. You can prepare a batch of posts in advance and schedule them to be published at the most engaging times.

For a more comprehensive automation, Zapier allows you to create complex workflows across apps. For instance, when you publish a blog post, it could automatically create a social media post across all your platforms, or when you upload a YouTube video, it can email your subscribers. This eliminates repetitive tasks and keeps your audience informed about your latest content.

3

LEVERAGE WEBSITE AUTOMATION TOOLS

Consider integrating your website with search engine optimization (SEO) tools like Yoast or Rank-Math. When you publish a blog post, Yoast can automatically check for SEO friendliness and suggest improvements to boost your website's visibility on search engines.

For your online store, platforms like Shopify and WooCommerce can automate direct sales and integrate with BookFunnel to handle e-book delivery, as well as provide support for your readers to "side-load" your book onto their e-reader.

4

AUTOMATE VIRTUAL AUTHOR EVENTS

Consider hosting virtual author events through platforms like Eventbrite. Once you set up your event, you can automate the registration process, reminders, and follow-up emails. You could even link Eventbrite with your email marketing platform using Zapier to add event attendees to your email list and send them personalized emails automatically.

5

USE PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS LIKE NOTION OR AIRTABLE

Managing your marketing activities can be a complex task, with different campaigns running simultaneously and many tasks to monitor. Project management tools like Notion (<https://notion.so>) or Airtable (<https://airtable.com>) can come to your aid.

You can use Notion to create a list of repeated tasks, as well as a comprehensive content calendar, outlining when and where you're posting on social media, sending newsletters, or updating your blog. Once you've completed all the tasks for one project, you can duplicate it as a template and use it again so you don't miss steps in the future.

Airtable can help with more data-driven tasks. You can set up a base to track book sales, see which marketing efforts are driving the most traffic, or manage your mailing list. From there, you can see patterns in your sales or traffic and adjust your efforts accordingly.

Automation doesn't stop at these tools themselves; you can also use Zapier, Make, or IFTTT to create workflows between these platforms and others. When you update a task in Notion, it could automatically send a message in your Slack channel, or when a new row is added in Airtable, such as a new book sale, it could trigger an email to that customer, asking for a review.

6

AUTOMATE TASKS ON NON-TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING PLATFORMS

On platforms like Patreon or Kickstarter, automation can help manage tasks like posting updates or sending digital rewards to backers. Set up automatic posts that go live once you reach certain milestones, or automatically send new patrons on Patreon a welcome email via your email platform using Zapier.

7

HARNESS AI TOOLS FOR CRAFTING EFFECTIVE MARKETING COPY

AI tools such as ChatGPT (<https://openai.com/research/chatgpt>), Bard (<https://bard.ai>), and Claude (<https://claude.ai>) can transform the way you create promotional content. They can automate the generation of blurbs, social media posts, and ad copy, and they can even draft blog posts, saving you time and mental energy.

Pro Tip: When using AI for marketing copy, remember the output is only as good as the input. Framing your prompt correctly is crucial for getting high-quality results. Start by prompting the AI with “ask me any questions you need to write the best blurb possible.” This encourages the AI to gather all the necessary information before it writes.

Elizabeth Ann West, from Future Fiction Academy (<https://futurefictionacademy.com>), suggests that you consider providing the AI a “pitch and hook” for your book. A “pitch” summarizes what your book is about, and a “hook” is a statement designed to grab attention. Language like this is familiar to AI models trained on large text datasets and can help generate more engaging and relevant copy.

Another trick to improve your prompts is to ask the AI to act like a specific persona, such as “the best book copywriter in the world.” Specify your desired tone and audience to guide the AI toward producing the copy that best suits your needs. The more explicit your instructions, the more aligned the AI’s output will be with your marketing objectives.

8

STREAMLINE GRAPHICS AND VIDEO CREATION AND POSTING

Automation tools like Canva (<https://canva.com>), VistaCreate (<https://vistacreate.com>), and Adobe Express (<https://adobe.com/express>) are revolutionizing how indie authors manage graphic and video design, as well as social media posting. They not only speed up the design process and ensure consistent branding but also offer options for direct posting and scheduling to various social media platforms.

Each of these services can save your brand colors, fonts, and logos, enabling you to maintain a consistent aesthetic. Their video creation features can also help you tap into the trend of short video content like that of TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts.

VistaCreate and Adobe Express offer similar features, including AI-powered text-to-image functionality that generates visually compelling social media posts that can then be scheduled or posted directly to your social media accounts. Their video editing capabilities make it easy to create engaging video content with no prior video editing experience.

Pro Tip: To make your visuals and videos truly unique, consider purchasing templates from sites like Creative Market (<https://creativemarket.com>) or Envato Elements (<https://elements.envato.com>). You can upload these templates into your design tool and customize them for each piece of content.

9

AUTOMATE PODCAST GUEST SEARCHES

Podcasts are a burgeoning medium for author promotion. However, finding suitable podcasts that can reach your readers, reaching out to hosts, and keeping track of scheduled appearances can be a hefty task.

Tools like PodMatch (<https://podmatch.com>) and PodcastGuests (<https://podcastguests.com>) are available to automate this process, functioning as matchmakers for podcast hosts and potential guests. Create a profile outlining your areas of expertise and the topics you can discuss as an author. The algorithm then matches you with suitable podcasts in your genre or industry.

Once you've matched with a podcast and set up a date for the appearance, these platforms can sync with your calendar and send automated reminders for your recording dates. They also keep a history of your past appearances, which can be useful for tracking your marketing efforts.

This automation can save you time and effort and help you reach new audiences in a personal, engaging medium.

Pro Tip: Make the most of your podcast appearances by turning your transcripts into blog posts, using quotes for social media posts, and highlighting key moments in promotional videos. This way, each podcast appearance generates a range of content to further support your marketing efforts.

10

PERSONALIZE READER ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUR OWN CHATBOT

Chatbots can be a powerful tool for automating reader engagement, and platforms like Chatbase (<https://www.chatbase.co>) can create a chatbot trained only on your own content.

Chatbase allows you to create a chatbot that doesn't contribute to any large language model (LLM) in existence, providing you with full control over the interactions. By uploading copies of your books, website pages, and blog posts, you can train your chatbot to answer potential readers' questions accurately. This personalized engagement can help confirm that your work matches their interests and encourage them to make a purchase.

For instance, if a visitor on your website or social media account asks about your upcoming book, your chatbot, well-versed in your literary universe, can provide detailed information about the book's plot, characters, and themes based on the content you've uploaded.

The benefit extends to handling common queries too. Program your chatbots to handle questions like when your next book is releasing, or where to buy your books, to ensure readers receive immediate, accurate responses.

The key to creating effective automations is determining which solutions best fit your unique needs and constraints. Start small by automating one or two key tasks, like email or social media. As you build out your marketing framework over time, you'll gain more bandwidth to devote to writing compelling stories.

Ultimately, leveraging marketing automation thoughtfully allows self-published authors to focus on their craft while engaging more with their readers. ■

Chelle Honiker



Writer MBA's Five Publishing
Archetypes and What They
Mean for Your Book
Business Strategy

What's Your **AUTHOR ECOSYSTEM?**

When the two of us started the Writer MBA, a company built to train authors on the ins and outs of the publishing industry, we knew we wanted to share the news with as many authors as we could. Our launch for the business was big and bold, as we were trying to drum up interest, excitement, and investment in the project all at once.

It nearly led Monica to burnout.

We'd launched the company using Kickstarter, something that Russell was accustomed to using for other projects. As a natural launcher with strong seasonality, he built his business by ignoring retailers and favoring in-person events or hosting Kickstarter campaigns.

Monica worked in the near opposite way—by drip, drip, dripping content and maintaining strong boundaries around time for research and experimentation.

Our differences at the time were the start of a larger realization. Now, after helping thousands of authors build more sustainable businesses over a combined twenty-five years, we've discovered the key to how we, and other authors we've worked with, can find success without burning out.

The answer? It depends on the ecosystem you've built for yourself.

Our observations distilled into five unique publishing archetypes that can explain how each of us best writes, markets, and grows our career. In April 2023, we mapped these archetypes onto five ecosystem biomes—desert, grassland, tundra, forest, and aquatic—to provide an easy-to-visualize metaphor for each type. We also identified healthy and unhealthy habits and developed guidance to foster a sustainable author career using strategies that align with your natural strengths.

Like any true ecosystem, everything in your author ecosystem must align with the environment you've created in order to thrive, and we believe focusing on marketing actions that work with your natural tendencies may be the surest path toward success as an indie author.

So what's your author ecosystem? Read on to learn more about the five ecosystems we've identified and decide where you fit, or take the official quiz at <https://authorecosystem.com>.

Superpowers: spotting trends before others, producing books that readers are excited about, making business decisions within writing the book

Challenges: writing generic books, building brand loyalty, chasing trends that readers abandon

Examples of Deserts: Dan Brown, William Shakespeare, Suzanne Collins, Michael Anderle, James Hunter, Martha Carr

Deserts are masterful at market research and trends and often are able to study the market and find pockets of underserved readers. More importantly, they are nimble and can pivot to that underserved market quickly.

Deserts tend to create products that are right in the middle of the market. If witches are more popular than angels, then their main character is a witch. If a male captain is more popular than a female captain, then the character is male. In doing this, they create stories that hit the market or trend dead-on.

Deserts tend to write and release quickly—usually every few months. This allows them to stay

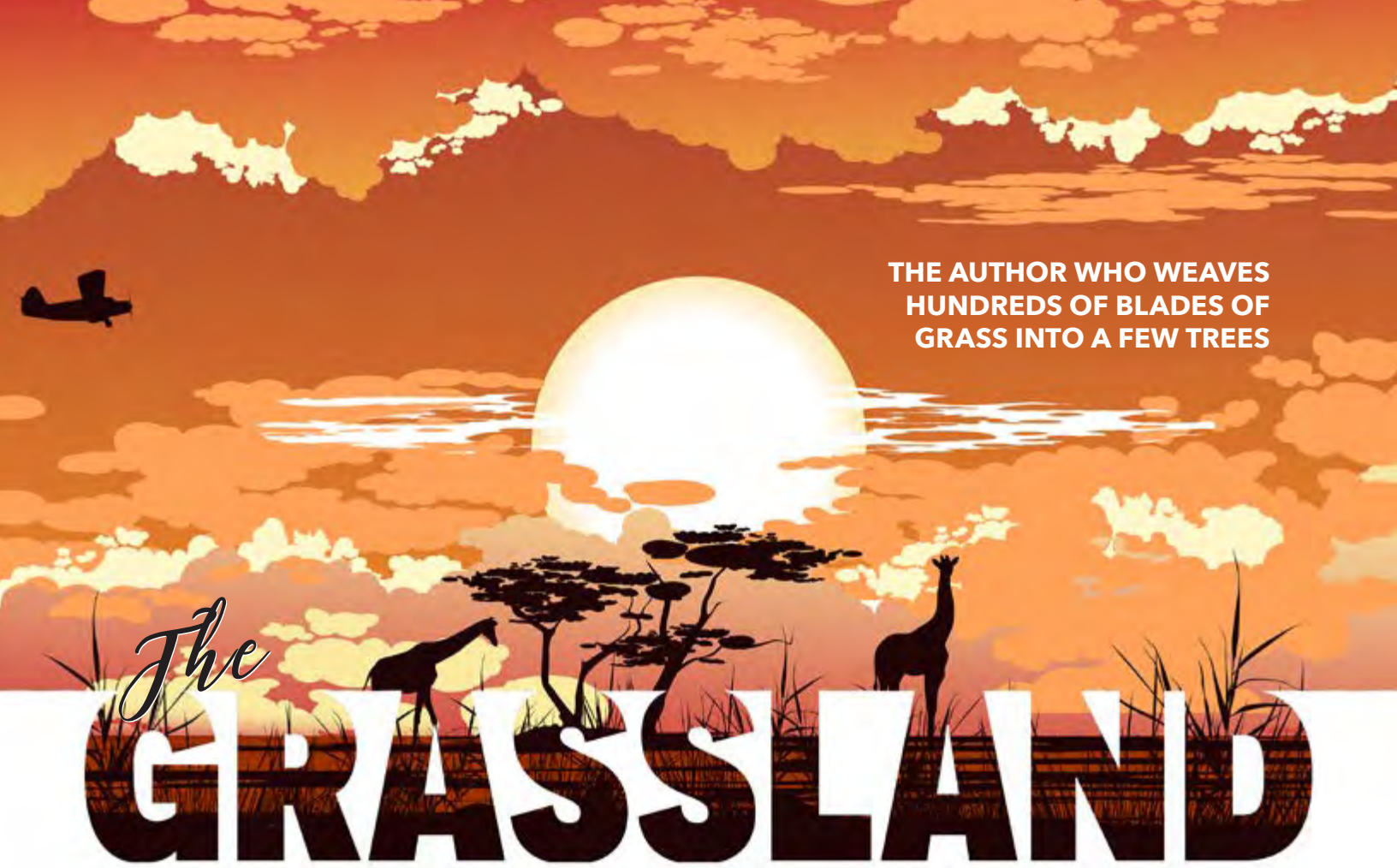
both fluid and flush with resources. Hungry readers demand their stories now, and deserts are usually the type that is willing and able to deliver.

Deserts are good at finding groups of people who are already looking for something specific. This type is best suited to join other communities or read other book reviews to see what readers are asking for. They are also more likely than other types to gravitate toward heavy advertising. Because they've made a marketable product, they can usually see quite a bit of success with their targeting, especially when they target specific genres and comparable authors or books.

The

DESERT

THE AUTHOR WHO ADAPTS
BETWEEN OASES



THE AUTHOR WHO WEAVES
HUNDREDS OF BLADES OF
GRASS INTO A FEW TREES

The GRASSLAND

Grasslands are good at feeling out trends and matching them to their interests, and they often go deep into one thing. Their commitments are often long-term—sometimes even lifelong—and they want to be sure that one thing is worth committing to.

Grasslands are vertical business builders, and even when they have multiple interests, they operate these interests in silos, usually starting multiple companies rather than uniting everything under one brand. Because they are willing to go deeper and explore longer in one area than other types, they are often considered to be among the greats in their chosen specialty.

Grasslands tend to be content machines, whether that means writing a ton of books in a series, posting regularly to social media, or creating more long-form content like serialization. They are the type of people who can produce endless content on the same story, genre, niche, or topic.

Audiences are loyal to grasslands once they understand what they are doing. Grasslands tend to get people invested in their niche over time, by putting pennies in the bank as they release content consistently over several years to build their expertise in a space.

Superpowers: persisting on one area of focus, creating the best of the best in the niche, repositioning themselves in the market again and again

Challenges: perfectionism, exploring too widely, getting things done on deadline

Examples of Grasslands: Terry Pratchett, Cassandra Clare, George R.R. Martin, M.D. Cooper, Laura Greenwood, Monica Leonelle



The

THE AUTHOR WHO WORKS IN SEASONS

Superpowers: launching, getting people excited, directing attention to themselves and their work

Challenges: getting stuck in a feast-and-famine cycle, predicting the size of launches, building audience

Examples of Tundras: Tim Ferriss, Sherrilyn Kenyon, Paulo Coelho, Rick Riordan, Melanie Harlow, Russell Nohelty

When tundras create content and products, they think in projects and do everything they can to get the biggest bang for their efforts. They want every project to hit its financial ceiling during the launch, knowing that afterward, they can be pretty much done with marketing it.

Tundras are seasonal. At their healthiest, they have a time for creation, a time for audience-building, and a time for launching. Some tundras can get this down to two seasons by doing some automation and systemization around their audience-building. But at the beginning of their careers, they tend to ramp up these three things quickly in order to establish

themselves and what they are trying to do.

Everything is a project to a tundra, and finding an audience is no different. A tundra is the most likely type to go from zero to five thousand people—subscribers, followers, backers, friends, supporters, patrons, whatever—in a short period.

Tundras scale faster when they connect all their disparate projects under one brand—and we often see tundras who reduce down to one pen name after finding something that they can go all in on. This type sees its backlist as either an audience builder or a launch stacker to help make the biggest splash possible when then hit the launch button.

Superpowers: injecting their personalities into their books, high competency and skill stacking, nurturing every project consistently

Challenges: watering things long past when they should have quit, getting one series to flower before moving to the next, writing to market, letting go of aspects of their business

Examples of Forests: Brandon Sanderson, Elizabeth Gilbert, Dean Koontz, Colleen Hoover, Neil Gaiman, RJ Blain, Claire Taylor, Skye MacKinnon

Forests are competent at doing market research about what is selling and what is not, but they may find it a struggle to execute on a trend in order to catch the wave. A big part of why trend chasing doesn't work well for forests is because they inject so much of themselves into their books. A forest might think: "Well, obviously—doesn't everyone do that?" It may surprise them to learn that the answer is no! Several other types can remove themselves from the creative process, which creates a lot of success for them. But when forests try to do this, it doesn't always work.

Forests tend to be consistent creators who have multiple pen names and/or several major projects going at once. Other types are unable to juggle these, but forests are natural gardeners, watering each project equally over time. This means a forest can explore several genres or niches competently and all at once.

When a forest is able to focus on their author career full time, consistency is a forest's middle name, and competency is their game. Forests hum along in production and rarely struggle to work, which is both a superpower and the thing that could undo them. They can also become work horses, potentially burning themselves out by taking on too much too quickly.

The saying, "All roads lead to Rome," is a strategy forests could consider for their own businesses. They often have great success when they bring their readers together around common interests—usually related to their books—and have stronger cross-over between pen names and product lines. Finding more ways to connect and create conversion between the silos in their book catalog will go a long way in scaling their audience.

The

FOREST

THE AUTHOR WHO STEADILY WATERS MULTIPLE TREES



Superpowers: huge vision, high energy, team building, brand management

Challenges: serving the current audience and bringing new people in at the same time, building within their means, creating things for disparate audiences

Examples of Aquatics: Stephenie Meyer, Stan Lee, George Lucas, Emilia Rose, Jennifer Frontera

Aquatics research the market differently than many other types of authors. They are less interested in reported trends, or even the trends they observe, and more interested in what their fans are telling them they want to see. This type rarely needs to pull reports or study successful books on retailers because they trust their fans above all else to keep guiding them in the right direction.

Aquatics build big, immersive worlds, regardless of their genre. This type is not only thinking of a story but also imagining it on a movie poster, on a product display at Target, and for a party of cosplayers at a genre convention. Because of this, many aquatics struggle to stay in independent publishing, and those who are attracted to writing may attempt to develop a huge fan base so they can bring it to other media, like television or film.

Aquatics are deeply in tune with their audience. They know many of their active readers by name,

and they treat every project as if everyone has read their entire catalog and knows all the inside jokes. Direct sales and the serialized subscription model are ideal for them because their fans will fuel them to get the story finished.

Aquatics scale their audience by going horizontal. They build a world, a story, an experience, and then they extend it to a new format or product category, a concept called “transmedia.” Ideally, this serves their current audience while helping bring in a new one. To do this, aquatics often need to work with a team of people who have complementary skill sets. It takes a lot of work to realize an aquatic’s full vision, and they can’t do all the work themselves, nor can they learn all the things they need to in order to execute each project well. ■

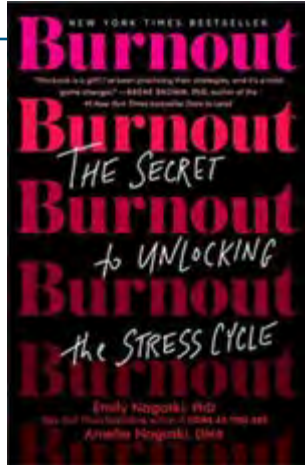
What’s your author ecosystem? Let us know at hello@indieauthormagazine.com!

Monica Leonelle and Russell Nohelty

The

AQUATIC
THE AUTHOR WHO IS NOT JUST AN AUTHOR

From the Stacks



***Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle* by Emily Nagoski and Amelia Nagoski**

Burnout not only explains the way burnout affects people but also provides science-based practices to help short-circuit the stress cycle before you experience it. Although the book specifically talks about how women experience stress, the exercises and lessons it recommends can be helpful to anyone, including: how to complete the stress cycle when your body is in the middle of an attack, how to monitor and manage your frustration, and how to befriend your inner critic.

<https://books2read.com/b/bw1y8P>

Drip and Beehiiv

The email game has come a long way since the days of MailerLite. Drip and Beehiiv represent a new generation of email service providers that integrate seamlessly into your existing sales pipeline and better monetize your email list. Drip offers a wide range of new tools to help from email capture to first sale. Meanwhile, Beehiiv's recommendation engine can help with organic growth and paid advertising features to help you scale your email list and make money advertising other newsletters while doing it. Whether you're looking for your first email service provider or want to upgrade to something more powerful, these two providers are worth checking out.

Drip: <https://drip.com>

Beehiiv: <https://beehiiv.com>



Planet Money's three-part series—"Can ChatGPT write a podcast episode?"

The writers at NPR's Planet Money attempted to create a full segment of their podcast using generative AI tools to see what the future of creative jobs might look like. In the first episode, they interview experts using questions written by a machine. In the second episode, they explore an AI-generated replica voice of a former coworker and interview a young singer who is making bank by letting amateur mixers create songs from her AI-generated voice. In the third episode, hear the world premiere of an AI-generated Planet Money segment, complete with the reactions of other Planet Money hosts. The end result surprises and confirms that AI used in creative careers brings a mix of pros and cons.

<https://npr.org/2023/05/25/1178290105/ai-chatgpt-artificial-intelligence-series-part-one>

THE FUTURE OF PUBLISHING

Nearly since the outset of the publishing industry, there have been authors bringing their stories to print themselves. As the industry has adapted over time, these indies have kept pace with their traditional counterparts.

Now, with the rise of artificial intelligence and growing pushback against large corporations, industries in almost every creative sector sit on the cusp of a major shift—and publishing is no exception. As the book industry prepares to turn a new page, we're speaking with twenty-six thought leaders about what this new era may hold for indie authors and gathering resources so you can keep up with the latest in the industry as it happens.

The next chapter in publishing is still largely being written, but at least when it comes to indies, the pen is in authors' hands. Read on to learn what these industry experts predict is in store.

THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY

For a career that is often portrayed as a lonely endeavor—one in which the author sits at their desk late into the night, a cup of coffee (or something stronger) beside them as they feverishly tap away at a keyboard or scratch pen against paper—writing rarely seems to be a solo act.

Author coaches, editors, cover designers, and beta readers work alongside authors to turn a rough-around-the-edges manuscript into a true book. Virtual assistants and accountants keep businesses running behind the scenes when writing takes priority. ARC teams and distributors help share the finished story with others. Other authors offer encouragement and advice for navigating the publishing industry. And, of course, readers sit at the helm of it all.

These connections have been building blocks for many self-published authors' careers, so it's no surprise many feel that community will remain important to the future of independent publishing for the same reasons. "Community matters because we are all that we have," says author Ines Johnson. "Traditional publishing, they have their empire in New York, where they have their floors and their buildings and their people. But we have each other."

Community doesn't just inspire individual writers, however; it also incites growth in the industry. In the past several years, self-published authors have banded together to influence changes in distributor policies, leveraged social media to foster online connections with readers through BookTok and Bookstagram, and grown in number and influence within

the larger publishing world. Still, it's their relationships with readers, writes author Anthea Sharp, that ultimately remind many authors why they pursued this career.

"Pretty much every author I know writes to tell a story. Without someone on the other end, to tell the story to, this path gets cold and lonesome and can lead to burnout," Sharp writes.

Author Jonathan Yanez agrees. "The art drives us to do it, but the commerce drives us to do it better too, right? So we're always striving to make it a little bit better. But I think ultimately you want to make it better for the people that are reading or consuming it or watching it," he says. "I think that's the difference—those that are successful, they have the right 'why.' They do it for the right reasons, and they're passionate and they love it."



Some genres even continue to see amazing results by networking via Facebook Groups. But just because these tools or communities are out there doesn't mean you need to be a part of them.

Whatever you do in your author business, do it authentically. If you hate Facebook Groups, don't start one. If you hate running a newsletter, don't force it. Put your energy where it shines to light your way ahead.

Our industry is one that changes quickly due to its creative nature. Educating yourself is crucial, but choosing whether to adapt your business or career to new tech, trends, or the like is entirely optional. If running a membership site takes away from writing ... or stresses you out so much that you end up with hives, just don't do it.

I think as authors we're always looking up at the forest canopy to the detriment of tending our own roots.

Melissa Storm

The long-term mindset is so important. For so long, we've been focused on gaming the algorithm and trying to get to the next level. And I think we've moved into an age now where everyone [thinks] the internet's saturated, and how you break through and cut through the noise is by connecting with real people—by just leaning into being a great human, a great storyteller. And leaning into what makes you unique and separates you apart is huge in building community.

Ultimately, it has to be about giving an awesome experience to readers—giving them something to care about, making the community an experience in and of itself, making your marketing a product, making your Facebook post a product, whatever tool you're using to facilitate that experience. You need to actually make an experience rather than just pumping your books constantly.

Michael Evans

I think the easiest places to build communities are in prebuilt locations where you don't have to make the whole system. Social media has, for a very long time, been the primary place to do that, with Facebook Groups being the main one. Some authors also leverage writer groups and whatnot. But I also feel less group community and more author-to-reader is also viable, such as using ... [social media]. I think that building your own community, your own site, is pretty tricky and requires a lot of time and investment so that you're really prepared to do it. It's likely not going to work. But I think ... one thing might be to focus more on one-on-one community building with your readers, more just straight relationship building and doing that via social media posts, by being active in places where your readers might be, and also obviously through the good old standby, the newsletter. It gives a lot of feeling of community that way. And it creates a one-to-one feeling or a one-to-many touch, which can be better uses of an author's time.

Malorie Cooper



Without community, you will have a hard time swimming in a market that is oversaturated.

Pierre Jeanty

Community is ultimately what gets us from blank slate to story.

S. J. Pajonas

Learn how to reach your readers directly. Own that relationship.

Damon
Courtney

We are helping each other. We have risen so high because of that, because of that community, and because of that collective. If traditional publishing had done this instead of being elitist, and holding all the information to themselves, they would be in a better position than they are right now. The reason that indie is booming is because of the community aspect.

Ines Johnson

I do understand that some people feel that building community with their readers [is the most important thing]. And usually, these are people who are really good at it. And this is coming from someone whose interpersonal skills aren't that great when it comes to building community with my readers. They are just like, "Well, community for readers, it's the most important thing." And that's often because they have great interpersonal skills and because they are comfortable doing that. But if you are not comfortable doing that, figure out how to make those really, really good books visible. That's all the community you need with your readers, and trust me, look at all the authors who don't have reader communities who are doing just fine.

Theodora Taylor



Making an author website, even though that seems so old-fashioned and so fuddy-duddy, is absolutely the core to your community. It is literally your storefront that is open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, no matter what. And [it] provides the links and everything like that for your readers to get into other spaces with you. Yes, you can build a Discord community. Yes, you can build a Facebook Group. Yes, you could have a Patreon. But as many of us who've been in the industry for longer than a decade know, the rules and regulations and terms and conditions of those other platforms and things like that can change on a whim. I even recommend blogging your chapters. It's crazy, but it works.

Elizabeth Ann West

Community is best when it's something that you control as directly as possible. That means you need the email addresses of the community and you need the payment information of the community. And if you don't have those two things, then you don't actually own your community. Somebody else does.

Kevin McLaughlin

Create a group (preferably not on social media) and show up daily to interact.

Steve Pieper

We need each other to navigate all the changes in our industry.

Dan Wood

In terms of building community, authors have some amazing tools at their disposal. One of the most powerful tools within that realm is an author newsletter. Email is still one of the most powerful ways that you can connect with your community, that you can reach the people who want to hear from you and find out about your next book. I don't see email going away anytime soon. It's been around for a long time. It's probably going to be around for a longer time.

Mark Leslie Lefebvre





Michael Evans

www.reamstories.com

I write sci-fi thriller novels for future-makers and nonfiction books for authors looking to get ahead in the new age of publishing. I am the co-founder and CEO of Ream, the subscription platform by fiction authors for fiction authors, a student at Harvard University, and am obsessed with experiencing, studying, and creating stories that can propel the world to a better future. When not writing, I can be found running, hiking, playing basketball, and embarking on real-life thrilling adventures.



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Melissa Storm

www.NovelPublicity.com

Melissa Storm is a New York Times bestselling author and Novel Publicity CEO. She is an industry veteran with more than fourteen years' experience under her belt. She currently juggles four active pen names (including Molly Fitz and SK Reign) and also serves as CEO and lead Facebook ads consultant for Novel Publicity. Her client list includes multiple NYT and Amazon top 100 bestselling authors in a variety of genres. Melissa has a particular fondness for #whychoose, lives in Alaska, and really likes cats.



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Sarra Cannon

www.HeartBreathings.com

Sarra Cannon is the indie author of more than twenty-five young adult contemporary fantasy novels, including her bestselling Shadow Demons Saga. Her novels often stem from her own experiences growing up in the small town of Hawkinsville, Georgia, where she learned that being popular always comes at a price and relationships are rarely as simple as they seem.

With close to three-quarters of a million books sold, Sarra is also passionate about helping fellow authors learn to self-publish in a way that puts joy and creativity at the forefront. She is the host of the successful YouTube channel and blog Heart Breathings, where she talks about everything from productivity to plotting. Sarra lives in Charleston, South Carolina, with her supportive husband and her adorable red-headed son.

Malorie Cooper

www.thewritingwives.com

Malorie is the author of over 127 books built in a far-reaching sci-fi universe she named Aeon 14. Over the past few years her focus has shifted to helping other authors achieve their goals via improving their launches and marketing. Together she and her wife Jill run The Writing Wives.

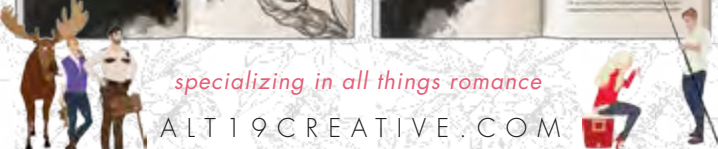
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THE FUTURE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Authors understand the power of a strong launch, but describing OpenAI's launch of ChatGPT simply as "strong" feels like an understatement.

In the first five days after an early demo of the generative AI chatbot released in late November 2022, the site amassed more than one million users, according to *Forbes*. That surge of popularity was just the start for the program and the age of generative AI technology it's come to represent. In a little under a year, newer iterations of its large language model, GPT, and increased use of the tools overall have improved the quality of AI programs' outputs, and the use of artificial intelligence has become even more widespread, filtering into nearly every industry—including publishing.

"In the last six months, I've watched this move from a single prompt giving a coherent four hundred words to a coherent two thousand to three thousand words," says Elizabeth Ann West, author and CEO of Future Fiction Academy. "And I'm not talking about a bunch of messy word salad with some coherent paragraphs here and there."

As with many creative industries, the explosion of AI has sparked mixed reactions among authors, with some embracing the programs and others sharing concerns about the ethics and legality of using their generated creations. "Storytellers will always find a way to tell their stories. But there are

shortcuts that can speed the process," writes author Tanya Hales. "To some people, that's important. To others, the more natural, handmade process is more important."

The tools themselves have quickly become more advanced and capable as well, with authors who've incorporated them into their workflow using them for artwork, audiobooks, marketing materials, help with story generation, and more. And as many current legal debates have yet to come to definitive conclusions—policy debates have struggled to keep up with advancements in the programs and have often raised more questions than they've answered—many authors agree AI is here to stay.

"We are only at the beginning of the opportunities of AI for wider society as well as for creativity and art, and it's important that authors, writers, and other creatives be involved in order to shape the future as we want it to be," said Joanna Penn, author and host of *The Creative Penn*, in a May 2023 episode of the podcast.

"There are so many tools. And some will resonate with different people, especially those who value speed or who, due to disabilities or personal circumstances, benefit from extra writing aids," Hales writes. "But there will always be those who want nothing more than a computer and a word processor. And neither choice is wrong."



In five years' time, [AI is] going to be the full instrument of production, where the idea is what gets put in and how you want that IP expressed, and it'll be able to produce for you a bunch of different options, and then you just choose which one is the best one. So I think AI is going to be our boom—basically the Industrial Revolution and how that hit manual labor. And then it's going to be on us to produce quality and luxury or this concept of what we're actually producing and why a consumer should care about that product, which is a book. ... Because while the technology specifically about AI can produce a heck of a lot of content, it's absolute rubbish at actually being able to evaluate that content right now. And I think that even when it gets better at that, a human is still going to need to be that final say so, or we're just going to have stuff that doesn't really move the needle.

Elizabeth Ann West

As generative AI development continues apace and new possibilities emerge every week, the focus of AI discussions in the author community has been centered around productivity gains and high-volume output; copyright, plagiarism and piracy; and the fear of losing the artistic human aspect of being an author.

But there is much to be excited about if we can move past fear and doubt, and approach these tools with curiosity and a sense of wonder. We are only at the beginning of the opportunities of AI for wider society as well as for creativity and art, and it's important that authors, writers, and other creatives be involved in order to shape the future as we want it to be.

Joanna Penn, from The Creative Penn podcast, "The AI Assisted Artisan Author"

In five years, virtually all covers will use at least some elements of generative art—with Photoshop having that baked in, I think more and more artists are going to begin using it. In terms of other uses, honestly, I'm not sure. I think we're going to see a divergence here, two sets of authors: one group focusing very, very hard on producing a whole bunch of content that's just good enough, and on the other end of the spectrum, another group of authors who is working to produce the best, most flawlessly targeted, best written-to-market, best "focused on exactly what the audience wants" literature that they can produce. And I don't think that there's room for those two streams to cross all that well. I think that those are going to be very divergent points of view and types of writing businesses. All that said, there's no reason why we can't use AI in both of them. It's just a matter of how it's being used.

Kevin McLaughlin

When it comes to AI and how it will affect the publishing industry, I believe I have to preface this by saying, first, I am a marketer and an author, so therefore, I always look at things a bit differently. ... Despite a lot of authors feeling that it may take their job or may dilute publishing in general, I think one of the things that they have to look at is how it can strengthen the author's journey, the author's creation process, the author's publishing career in general. I think there has to be a balance where it's not being misused. And there are also going to be negatives, where it does impact authors negatively. But I think they also have to look at the positives, which is where they can put it to use, because it's here to stay.

Pierre Jeanty

In five years' time, we're going to normalize the use of AI tools just like we've normalized the use of speaking to devices in our home today, just like we've normalized the use of GPS when you're looking for people, just like we've normalized the adaptation of checking grammar in a Word document. It's going to be part and parcel of the way that we continue to work and grow and write and be inspired. We're going to be able to leverage these tools that are going to do a few simple things in ways we can't even imagine possible, which is what technology often does.

Mark Leslie Lefebvre

Some readers will be satisfied with books/art/media that are good enough, an enjoyable escape. They won't mind if their books are largely a product of AI. But others will crave a more human touch. They will long for human connections and will gravitate toward creators who develop those direct relationships with their readers.

Tanya Hales

I use AI right now to help me with keywords, if I'm trying to find keywords for my books. I use it to help me with email subject lines. So if I'm going to send an email, [I'll ask] "What would be the best email to reach people about a new audiobook coming out?" And it will give me a bunch of different options.

Jonathan Yanez

I do think that AI will be disruptive, but the fact that we still buy vinyls indicates to me that the handcrafted book by a person is still going to be a thing. I think people are going to be looking for that handcrafted, curated experience. And so AI might become a tool, [or] it might become something that is a net negative. I'm not sure. I do think that this is going to be disruptive, but we just don't know how yet.

Brandon Sanderson, from a July 2023 interview with author Savy Leiser on her YouTube channel SAVY WRITES BOOKS

I draw a lot of parallels between AI and the automotive industry. Most people that wanted to move any distance where there wasn't a train took a horse, and even when you got there, you were likely to rely on horses for transportation. When cars first came out, a lot of people on horses would yell at people driving by cars saying, "Get a horse!" and [would] make all sorts of arguments as to why horses were better. Horse riding still exists, wagon making still exists, but they are niche industries that target much smaller needs and not general transportation. And I honestly feel like the same is going to be true for producing writing without AI. I think you can still do it. I just think that you'll either have to do it out of love and not expecting to make money or be targeting a super niche area, where people can charge a price that makes it worthwhile, worth the time it takes to make the product.

Malorie Cooper

AI has the potential to open the market for disabled writers.

S. J. Pajonas

Everyone needs to learn how AI can help them in their business. ... Technology will never be as important as telling great stories.

Damon Courtney

AI doesn't scare me. It is a tool. I use so many tools help my writing better. And that's what I think of when I think of AI, is "How will it make me better?" ... If you can take a tool and you can use that tool to make your art better, like if you use a better paintbrush, if you use a better hammer or a better drill, or if you if you have an instrument at its finest, a really fine instrument, that's what AI is. That's how I'm looking at it. This is an instrument that can make my art better, but I am the artist. I am wielding this thing.

Ines Johnson

I, personally, cannot use AI to write a book or even to cobble together a cohesive scene. I have tried, but the output is worse and takes three times longer to generate than if I'd simply written the words myself in the first place. And because I see AI's value in its ability to save me time with specific tasks, I do not plan to invest time in learning beyond my own needs. Each individual author will have to figure out their own comfort level and learn accordingly.

For those that are afraid of AI, I strongly recommend trying it out so you can laugh and cringe and maybe put some of that fear aside by looking at the current reality of the situation rather than worrying about the many possible futures—only one of which will actually come to be.

Melissa Storm

I am in the camp that it will look different in five years, just kind of like our laptops look different. ... I just adopted Grammarly five years ago. And now I have all sorts of editing things I do within Grammarly. My editing process looks a lot different. And so AI, hopefully, will work as seamlessly with my process, or it will be a help to me, not a hindrance. I'm not a purist. I'm certainly open to whatever AI can do to enhance my natural talents, just like I'd use a filter on TikTok or use Photoshop.

Theodora Taylor

AI, used as a tool for empowerment, is going to increase access and equity in this industry. I think it also has the dual effect of being able to increase inequality and increase a lot of negative things in publishing. AI is going to decrease the cost of creation, which ultimately will open up the number of stories that could be told and the different backgrounds and voices that could be heard. I think that's really, really beautiful. And it'll also be able to start taking on a lot of the mundane things of being an author and a creative that we might not like as much. ... In reality, technology is social. Technology is a byproduct of human activity, human values, and human emotions.

Michael Evans

Joanna Penn

www.thecreativepenn.com

I'm an award-nominated New York Times and USA Today bestselling thriller author as J. F. Penn, and I write nonfiction for authors as Joanna Penn.

I've sold almost a million books to readers in 169 countries and five languages. I'm an independent (indie) author publishing through my small press, Curl Up Press.

I'm also an international professional speaker and award-winning creative entrepreneur. In 2018, I was awarded Publishing Commentator of the Year by Digital Book World. My show, *The Creative Penn* podcast, has been downloaded over 5.6 million times in 220 countries.

I'm based in Bath, England, although I lived in Australia and New Zealand for eleven years. I'm a travel junkie and am often away on book research trips to interesting places, which I share on my Books and Travel site.

Elizabeth Ann West

www.futurefictionacademy.com

CEO of the Future Fiction Academy, author of over twenty-five novels across Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Apple, Google, and any other storefront open to indies, Elizabeth has been making a living from her digital writing since 2007 and first published a novel in 2011. An innovator on all things new technology for indie authors, she has shared training and classes for years on dictation, selling direct, running a business, organic marketing, and now writing with AI. The EA in EAW might as well stand for Early Adopter. She has been a speaker at RWA's national conferences, 20Booksto50K®, and on numerous podcasts and YouTube channels over the years.

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Stephanie (S. J.) is a writer, knitter, Capricorn, Japanophile, and USA Today bestselling author. She loves summer, downtempo beats, yoga pants, foxes, owls, dogs, sushi, pasta, and black tea. She lives outside NYC with her husband, two great kids, and her dog, who always wants to play. When it comes to her work, she writes about everyday women and uncommon worlds.



SJPajonas

Tanya Hales

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Tanya Hales is an author, illustrator, and lover of fantasy, nature, ice cream, and wholesome, uplifting stories.

Kevin McLaughlin

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Multiple USA Today bestselling author of over one hundred Sci-Fi and Fantasy works, Kevin loves teaching about writing, playing with his puppy, and procrastinating.

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THE FUTURE OF DIRECT

When Fantasy author Brandon Sanderson smashed Kickstarter records in March 2022—earning more than \$41 million over the course of his campaign, almost half of that in the first seventy-two hours—he sparked a shift in the indie author world.

Sanderson was not the first to discover the potential for crowdfunding as part of an author's launch strategy. But beyond opening the wider public's eyes to the support that exists behind independent publishing endeavors, his campaign shined a spotlight for indie authors on the possible benefits of selling directly to readers.

"Direct publishing gets back to the core of indie publishing: taking the fate of you and your story babies into your own hands," writes author Paddy Finn. Selling directly to readers requires authors maintain their own sales channels, on their websites, through crowdfunding campaigns, or at events. Often, those who host their own sales channels also have books available through distributors like Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and the like. But these direct outlets offer authors a faster, more intimate way to approach readers and connect with those buying their books. Because they control the sales, authors also have access to more detailed sales data. And direct sales typically result in greater profits—in a March 2023 example from Written Word Media, a direct sale of a three hundred-page, 5 × 8

inch paperback would earn the author 49 percent more than a sale on Amazon of the same title for the same price.

Selling direct isn't without its challenges—as Finn writes, "It requires an investment of time and/or money" on the part of the author. But the freedom and flexibility it can offer individual creators, writes author Oriana Leckert, is one many will likely consider worth the cost in years to come.

"I think we're in a thrilling moment of creative autonomy, where authors and content creators of all kinds are seizing control of every aspect of their work, from writing what they want, to building the audience they want, to producing, marketing, and distributing books in precisely the ways they want to do so," she writes. "Authors have more avenues than ever to bring their books into the world, which I believe can only enhance the quality, quantity, and variety of creative work all across the industry."

Finn agrees. "Direct sales is a natural evolution in the industry lifecycle," he writes, "especially an industry built on a foundation of people who stuck it to the man. For many, direct sales is still an unknown, but that's what makes it so beautiful! It's like tapping into another gold vein very few have discovered ... [and] those who brave the risks and stick with the process will reap the rewards of another indie publishing gold rush."

Direct or direct-to-consumer [sales] is here to stay and will become a preferred choice more and more in the industry. It will also help a lot of authors mature in the realm of business or strengthen their perspective on business. Having more control, more return while also performing well in all the previous retailers is ideal. I believe it's here to stay and many who commit to figuring it out will see the benefits of it more and more.

Pierre Jeanty

Speaking as BookFunnel, direct sales for authors is growing like crazy. What we've seen is that most readers love their favorite authors a lot more than they love their publisher or platform.

Whether it's via Kickstarter, Patreon, or their own store, more authors are trying out selling direct to readers. And, with every reader who buys direct from an author, the whole pie grows for all indie authors.

It may take time to change reader behaviors, but it's already accelerating because of how many authors are jumping into the direct-sales waters.

Damon Courtney

I think we're in a thrilling moment of creative autonomy, where authors and content creators of all kinds are seizing control of every aspect of their work, from writing what they want, to building the audience they want, to producing, marketing, and distributing books in precisely the ways they want to do so. I believe this will continue the trend of fragmented creative spaces, where authors gather smaller but more passionate communities of readers around them, forging closer relationships with their audiences, often inviting these supporters to participate in shaping their creative output. Authors have more avenues than ever to bring their books into the world, which I believe can only enhance the quality, quantity, and variety of creative work all across the industry.

Oriana Leckert

I love seeing more authors move to direct sales! Whether it's putting up a Google Form and taking PayPal payments, setting up a Shopify-type store, or planning to launch a new title on Kickstarter (or all of the above), I think the move away from relying solely on the retailer platforms is a good one. And it will definitely have a ripple effect on the larger publishing ecosystem. While the well-beaten path (put your e-book on Amazon, you're done) is still viable for many authors, I think the opportunity to niche down, connect with your readers, and really get a solid ecosystem growing in a space you control is going to be amazing for authors. We're moving back to the "smaller number of true fans" model as a successful path to a viable career for folks who struggle for visibility in the retailer spaces. I do think that there are people this will work brilliantly for, but I also think that plenty of authors see good success with the retailer-platform model and will continue to stay there without branching out. Still, direct publishing will start to erode the power of the platforms, bit by bit. I also think that new ways of connecting with readers, like Ream, will open up new paths to success that aren't necessarily retailer-driven. And that's super exciting and empowering.

Anthea Sharp

We've found in the AMMO community that selling directly to readers is ironically the most reliable way to increase wholesale revenue from the retailers as well (this is due to cross-channel marketing effects), and selling directly to readers also gives authors significantly more control and flexibility. As algorithmic policy enforcement at Amazon continues to produce baffling account terminations and the per-author share of the KU pie continues to dwindle for most authors, direct sales will likely be an increasingly attractive option.

Steve Pieper

Direct publishing will be critical to the future of any writer going forward.

Dean Wesley Smith

Everything is "with" rather than "instead of." So new technologies and new opportunities open up, it doesn't necessarily remove the other opportunities. It just adds to them. So selling direct is going to add to it.

Mark Leslie Lefebvre

People who are very motivated to run their own businesses will especially love the control of direct. But I think a lot of people who are not built to run a big business (with a lot of moving parts) are going to get really overwhelmed and struggle. And I think some people will end up flaming out completely in trying to do all the things ... which direct sales is ripe for.

Becca Syme

We started selling direct from our site, [www](#) and paperbacks, but with the emphasis on paperbacks. And now from our website alone on paperbacks, we sell hundreds of books a month.

Jonathan Yanez

I do think we're going to see maybe the decline of the one mega bookstore and the rise of tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of many bookstores, for lack of better words, aka own author platforms. I think that ... the interesting part of that equation is not just a higher percentage of revenue, but oftentimes you're able to monetize in different ways that leads to a literal increase in the customer lifetime value.

Michael Evans

[Consider] patronage. Artists used to get patronaged by the people who wanted their art. And with writers, there was always someone in the middle. There was always a publisher in the middle. And now there doesn't have to be. So I think, when these artists and creatives realize they can have a direct impact on their reader and they don't necessarily need the middleman, they will embrace direct. I don't think that they're going to want to do it themselves. So I think that there's going to be a community in the industry for folks who can help be that agent, if it were, but not necessarily a publisher.

Ines Johnson

Direct sales [are] a relationship, and many of those fans can be served with knowledge and love for your book that they carry to those other, more traditional platforms. They want their favorite author to succeed, and when they buy an early release copy, they proudly leave a review and boast about being in the fan club that gave them early access. As more authors adopt direct sales, realizing the investment is worth the reward, it starts moving the needle back to the reader as the author's customer, not the storefront's customer.

Elizabeth Ann West

Direct sales will be an extra incentive to be non-exclusive, but I am skeptical it will change the industry a great deal. The majority of readers will continue to want to purchase and discover books on their preferred platforms that they are comfortable with. The real opportunity for authors is that ability to have a closer relationship with their most loyal fans. What we've seen play out in other creator communities, such as video streaming and music, will continue to grow in the book world. Savvy authors and publishers will offer special editions of their books, merchandise, and more, and their fans will love it.

Dan Wood



Direct publishing gets back to the core of indie publishing: taking the fate of you and your story babies into your own hands. Indie publishing began with a handful of authors who refused to let gatekeepers tell them what they could or couldn't do. In bravely exploring uncharted territory, those early indie authors discovered a horde of insatiable readers salivating for more books. And they delivered what that audience wanted, paving the frontier for those of us who followed. And as any author worth their salt knows, "The End" is just another way of saying "Next." Direct sales is a natural evolution in the industry life cycle.

Paddy Finn

Authors will become even more used to being in complete control of their product, and their marketing savvy will increase. They'll plan to write books that are super easy to market as opposed to writing books, then figuring out how to market the books they've written. They'll care less about metrics like Amazon sales rank and more about the overall health of their catalog.

I think indie publishing companies will start to look a lot different too. The ones that nail direct sales will be a lot more attractive to authors still wanting publishing contracts. So I predict several more indie publishing companies will be started by authors who have cracked the code of direct sales.

Theodora Taylor

Direct sales definitely favor authors with large, cohesive backlists. It takes quite a bit of work to learn and address the tech and taxes that come with selling through Shopify, WooCommerce, or the like—and for many authors it simply won't be worth the time and monetary investment.

Melissa Storm

Most sales are still going to be made on the big sites, which means that's where most book revenue will continue to be generated. But there's room for even a casual author to set up a fairly self-sustaining website with sales hookups. It might start off very slowly, but there's room for this to grow.

Kevin McLaughlin

I believe we are on the cusp of a sea change surrounding how digital assets are distributed and sold to customers. I don't have a (functional, yet) crystal ball, but I would wager that in five years, the traditional retailers will be far less important to book sales. In ten years, they may be largely irrelevant as direct sales systems mature and book advertising improves.

Malorie Cooper

I believe direct sales will continue to empower authors to think outside the box, build communities of readers, and expand their income streams. In return, I think this will inspire retailers to introduce more tools to help match the right readers with new authors. I also think we'll see a lot more author collaborations and niche communities that will help readers find the books and authors they're looking for, bypassing the retailers completely. It will be fun to see how it plays out.

Sarra Cannon

With the future rise of AI-generated works, I think direct sales will only become more and more important for authors.

For this reason, cultivating direct sales methods and doubling down on being human will become a huge boon to the authors who put in the effort to do it. Direct relationships are going to matter more than ever.

Tanya Hales



While I haven't personally delved into direct sales yet, I think this trend could dramatically shift the industry. When we as authors are no longer reliant on any single retailer to make a living, it opens up the door for creativity—both in the stories we tell and the way we run our businesses. We're no longer at the point where there's only "one true way" to make a good living in this industry, and direct sales will offer even more opportunities for us.

Ember Casey

Publishing direct will mean more money in the hands of authors, instead of larger corporations. It'll mean a deeper connection with readers, one where the wants and needs of readers can be better met by an author who is receptive to a changing market.

S. J. Pajonas



Steve Pieper

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Steve Pieper is the founder of Author Marketing Mastery through Optimization (AMMO) which helps authors build and scale a profitable direct-to-reader sales system.

Oriana Leckert

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I am deeply passionate about the written word, in all its wild and wonderful forms. I'm currently the Director of Publishing & Comics Outreach at Kickstarter, and I've long spent my time as a writer, editor, publishing and crowdfunding consultant, and cultural hipstorian [sic] in Brooklyn, New York.

I've worked in and around the media for more than a decade. Prior to this role, I was Kickstarter's Senior Journalism Outreach Lead (check out my top tips!), Creative Content Director for Per La Mente, Director of Matchmaking at Gotham Ghostwriters, Editor-at-Large for Hyperallergic, Copyeditor at MTV News, Associate Editor at Random House, and a store manager at New York's famed Strand Bookstore. I've also served as a freelance editor for more than one hundred publishers and websites, as well as offering a broad array of editorial services to individuals.

Anthea Sharp

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Anthea Sharp is a USA Today bestselling author of YA Fantasy, GameLit, and Steampunk. Her books are filled with magic, adventure, characters you can care about, and a touch of romance. Her short fiction has appeared in numerous anthologies, and she's been an enthusiastic indie author since 2011, when she left tradpub and jumped into the new world of publishing. Wow, things have changed in the last dozen years! She can hardly wait to see where they go next ...



AntheaSharp

Dean Wesley Smith

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Dean Wesley Smith is an American writer of science fiction, mystery, and fantasy. Smith has published nearly two hundred novels and hundreds of short stories. Smith has also written novels for licensed properties such as Star Trek, Spider-Man, X-Men, Men in Black, and many other gaming, television, and movie properties.



Damon Courtney

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I'm the creator and CEO of BookFunnel! And, to a lesser degree, a self-published author of my own Fantasy trilogy as well. So, while I'm mostly a tech guy, I'm also an indie author just like you.

Pierre Jeanty

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I am an author, marketer, and serial entrepreneur who loves writing poetry, talking about relationship, and teaching about book marketing.

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THE FUTURE OF WIDE

Since Amazon launched the earliest version of Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) in 2007, the business giant—which controls an estimated 50 percent or more of the online retail market in the US already—has maintained an unwavering influence over the self-publishing industry.

Sixteen years later, Amazon boasts 85 percent of the book market share, with Apple Books in a distant second place with only 10 percent, according to *Kindlepreneur*. Amazon’s royalty split with authors has also remained relatively unchanged—in 2010, the original offer of 35 percent royalties to authors for any book published with the program increased to 70 percent given an author met specific conditions, but since then has stayed the same.

Amazon’s control over the market, with its international reach and household name, is a boon to many in indie publishing, particularly in certain genres. But others feel the company has too much power over the industry, with little to no safeguards in place for authors when policies change or problems arise. Fantasy author Brandon Sanderson, in a July 2023 interview with YouTuber SAVY WRITES BOOKS, said Amazon’s lack of competition and the company’s overall size make it difficult for those using its platform to influence any change when it’s needed. “If you compare one

of the bestselling authors in the world to Amazon, I’m just such a small fry, I’m barely even worth noticing,” he said. And if Amazon were to suffer financially in the future, many worry authors whose careers are built exclusively on the platform may suffer with it.

For authors like Sanderson, however, wide publishing—publishing across multiple retailers, including through direct outlets—offers a potential path forward, with more freedom and business security if one retailer starts to suffer.

“We’ve been in a time of great upheaval in the book market with so many opportunities for indie authors over the past decade,” writes author Dan Wood. As time goes on and distribution strategies shift, it’s possible the definition of “wide publishing” will shift with it to include new formats or distribution models, he writes. Other authors agree, and still others say those who distribute exclusively through one platform will likely continue to see success through their own strategies as well. Even as time goes on, the debate is unlikely to resolve entirely. But even without a definitive “winner” and “loser,” as wide publishing continues to expand in definition and grow in popularity, the competition it sparks among retailers may broaden horizons for indie authors everywhere.

Publishing wide can mean so many things—different retailers, different distribution channels, different formats, different languages. For a long time, authors have been tied to one exclusivity program with one retailer and all the knowledge and training has been about that one publishing avenue. As authors go wide, they'll see that there are many places and opportunities to be successful. The industry as a whole will grow, and more authors will find ways to make a living doing what they love.

Wide is only going to grow until "publishing wide" just becomes "publishing." Authors are gaining greater control over their businesses and forging their own path through both wide and direct sales, based on their strengths.

Wide for the Win

We've been in a time of great upheaval in the book market with so many opportunities for indie authors over the past decade. As authors begin to take a longer view of their careers, I am confident they will recognize the long-term value of library discoverability in building lifelong fans and reject options that prohibit that. Beyond that, wide publishing will continue to grow as more retailers and subscription services enter the market and as new tools enable authors to sell directly to their most dedicated fans.

Dan Wood

The definition of wide to me has always meant way more than the simple debate of Kindle Unlimited vs. the other four or five major retailers. Publishing wide to me has always included numerous opportunities available to writers beyond just the indie author sphere. That includes traditional publishing, but it also includes opportunities for writers that come up via various social and digital media.

Mark Leslie Lefebvre

For more than a decade now, I have fought with writers old and new about relying solely upon Amazon. I've written blog after blog recommending that writers go wide, and yet many writers never listen.

Most of them give me the same song and dance: Amazon is the biggest retailer in the world. It'll never go away.

I have not gone back in my blogs to see when I started writing about going wide. I do know that I actually used the picture of eggs in a basket several years ago to encourage writers to go wide. And if you look at any of those old blogs, particularly from 2011 or 2012, you'll see the kinds of statements I mentioned above littering my comment field.

I kept saying that someday Amazon will change, and that change will hurt writers, particularly those who tie their entire writing career to Amazon. The writers who have gone exclusive through Amazon via Select are really going to be in trouble.

And the trouble has already started.

Kristine Kathryn Rusch, from a May 2023 blog post on her craft blog, kriswrites.com

Non-Amazon e-book retailers have been losing market share slowly for the past decade; I don't see that reversing. However, other forms of selling books are beginning to boom. I'm talking about subscriptions, Kickstarter, and direct sales, of course. I see these sorts of things as "the new wide!"

Kevin McLaughlin

As KU rates continue to plummet, more and more authors are scrambling to gain a "wide" footing. For me, "wide" has always meant "worldwide."

I tend to favor Kindle Unlimited as I learn a new market or genre, but then move away from the program once I have a solid handle and am ready to learn more and expand to broader audiences. KU keeps me lean and flexible when I may be testing covers, blurbs, and other aspects of branding. I also use their price promotion tools heavily to attract readers when I find myself in a brand new genre or market. It's always a short game for me though. The long game greatly favors diversification—whether by country, retailer, or even pen name.

The more levers I have in my author business, the more I can control where I want/need it to take me.

Melissa Storm

More than ever, the personal relationship with readers will be a bedrock of sustainability for creators. Publishing wide offers an author so many different platforms and opportunities to reach fans. Using AI as a time saver on rote tasks opens up more time to specialize in multiple platforms, not just one. ... Wide will mean meeting readers and fans of your content where they are. This means beyond the e-book store, and many authors now "Go Wide" with merchandise, special editions and formats, and membership or micro-transaction sites like Patreon, Royal Road, and more. This also shapes the future concept of a mid-lister, where making a wage that provides a living for an author requires multiple income streams.

Elizabeth Ann West

[Wide] is everything. Going with only one store with exclusive rights is just bad business. Go with as many stores around the world as you can get into.

Dean Wesley Smith

While Amazon's exclusive Kindle Unlimited platform has been great for a lot of authors, it's also a magnet for scammers and people who just want to make a quick buck. That is only going to accelerate as the AI tools that are coming online start to really ramp up. I don't know how much the other platforms like Apple, Google, and Kobo will play into the mix, but being able to reach your audience directly will only grow in importance. Having your own reader list and learning how to reach those readers directly will be the key to long-term author success.

Damon Courtney

[We were] in Amazon up until the end of last year when we decided to go wide from our website. Sometimes I think the market isn't ready for what we're doing. There's sometimes changes in the marketplace that make it a little bit more hospitable for when the time is right.

Jonathan Yanez

I don't subscribe to the idea of exclusive versus wide. It focuses too much on such a narrow sliver of your intellectual property's potential. The question should be: How do I make my IP work the hardest and smartest for me and my family? Sure, exclusive vs. wide is an important question for many and going wide can be a great tactic. But don't mistake tactics for strategy. Exclusive vs. wide is such a small part of the bigger picture that if you put it on a pie chart of potential, you wouldn't even see it.

Paddy Finn

Having our books available in as many formats and as many places as possible will continue to be a successful strategy for a lot of authors. I believe more authors will begin to explore wide as the visibility and cost of advertising on Amazon becomes more of a challenge. I've always been wide, and I think there are so many paths to success that we'll continue to see it as a major strategy for decades to come.

Sarra Cannon

I think the biggest change is that wide will be the default, and we're not going to think about it as if it's wide vs. KU but this is publishing. This is actually what we are supposed to be. We're supposed to think of ourselves as wide authors first by default.

Michael Evans

I think there will be people who will be successful wide and there will be people who can't make wide work. Wide is not the "answer," but it's also not wrong. There is no morality attached to being wide or not wide. But I think wide will likely always be a viable option. ... I feel like anything that isn't Amazon will continue to expand. We are nothing if not creative, as a group, and I anticipate that we'll continue to proliferate the definition of "wide" publishing.

Becca Syme

I strongly believe the future of publishing is wide—and more specifically, that it stretches beyond the traditional book retailers where most of us initially built our careers. My backlist has found a second life these last few years on serial fiction apps—platforms that weren't even on my radar (and some of which didn't even exist) even a few years ago. With the constant changes in our technologies, the way people read is shifting, and the ways readers buy books are constantly evolving, resulting in new and non-traditional ways for authors to share their stories with readers. While I don't believe that traditional books (or the ways people currently read or buy them) are going to disappear, we're in a period of publishing where there are more ways than ever to get our work out there, and being wide puts us in a position to experiment with new platforms that could take our careers in directions we never imagined.

Ember Casey



[Wide is] necessary. Putting all your eggs in one basket in the current state of publishing is scary. People are more loyal to brands and even authors currently, hence why so many social media platforms are incentivizing influencers. This is making them more loyal as well to where they shop. Authors not having their books available everywhere, especially on their own website, are losing those who are more loyal to convenience than themselves. Some people buy books anywhere; some buy in particular places. You need to be available to all. Diversification is often more helpful than detrimental.

Pierre Jeanty

I like to try new things. I don't like to be pigeonholed in anything. So I like publishing non-exclusively. And "non-exclusively" means not with one platform, not with one publisher. I don't want traditional publishing. If I did that, it wouldn't be the only thing that I did. The world is changing so fast that if you hold yourself narrowly, you're gonna miss so many opportunities and readers and ways to get your stories out there.

Ines Johnson

Wide still means "not in KU," but it has shifted from opening up sales on the other retailers to enabling authors to direct sell via systems like Kickstarter, Indiegogo, their own sites, and via co-ops.

Malorie Cooper

As authors can establish themselves on stores other than Amazon, they will help the business of writing flourish in areas other than the markets Amazon has a hold on.

S. J. Pajonas

As someone who went wide at the turn of the decade, during the pandemic, I can't tell you what an anxiety balm it's been to have a diversified portfolio in these ever-changing times.

But I was a huge fan of KU when I could only write and didn't have much time to attend to admin.

It was and continues to be an individual decision best made by the author, themselves, with a clear sense of their long-term goals and where they are in their career.

Theodora Taylor



As the retailers make "pay to play" an increasing part of discoverability on their platforms (whether through direct ad programs or the assumption that writers will pay to send readers to them via outside advertising), I think it's wise for authors to diversify. Platforms rise and fall (and sure, even the framework you build your direct store on will eventually crumble) but having the ability to control your work and use your advertising dollars to send readers directly to you without fear of getting your account terminated or running into other snafus is invaluable.

Anthea Sharp

The thing so many of us forget is that the indie publishing industry as we know it is so young. The digital stores/platforms we use for publishing (and view as the standard) aren't that old either. I can't imagine that Amazon, Apple, Google, etc. will be the only places where we sell books forever. Neither can we guarantee that they will be as strong as they currently are. - As new platforms, retailers, and even methods of human communication form and develop, the opportunities for selling wide will only grow.

Tanya Hales

"Wide" distribution is really a misnomer meant to convey non-exclusivity to the dominant retailer. In reality, "wide" authors sell to just three to five relevant customers, or retailers, rather than just one. Both situations are quite risky and leave authors with relatively little control over their career growth. Authors also have very little knowledge of who their customers actually are because that information isn't shared by retailers. As more authors learn how to sell directly to their readers, bypassing the retailers altogether, Amazon exclusivity may become less popular. ... "Wide" just means wholesaling to more than one distributor. I think many authors have experienced the serious drawbacks associated with purely wholesale channels.

Steve Pieper



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Dan Wood

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Dan Wood is the Chief Operating Officer at Draft2Digital, where he has spent the last nine years helping authors publish their books to stores, libraries, and subscription services worldwide. During this time, he has had the privilege to present at conferences across the world and speak with thousands of authors at various stages in their careers. With their acquisition of Smashwords, Draft2Digital now distributes over nine hundred thousand books. Dan is also a co-host of the Self Publishing Insiders podcast.

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Kristine Kathryn Rusch

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New York Times and USA Today bestselling author Kristine Kathryn Rusch writes in almost every genre. Generally, she uses her real name (Rusch) for most of her writing. Under that name, she publishes bestselling science fiction and fantasy (including the Fey series, the Retrieval Artist series and the Diving series), award-winning mysteries, acclaimed mainstream fiction, controversial nonfiction, and the occasional romance.

Wide for the Win

 [/groups/556186621558858](https://www.facebook.com/groups/556186621558858)

A group for indie and hybrid authors who are WIDE (i.e., not KU exclusive) and want to find other authors to talk shop with. If you're a committed wide author, welcome!

Mark Leslie Lefebvre

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Mark is a writer, editor, professional speaker, and bookseller with more than thirty years of experience in the book industry as a writer and industry professional. A huge advocate for how technology can further empower authors, Mark has been lucky to be at the helm of bookselling as it has transitioned from a print-only game to one that embraced digital publishing. He is the author of more than forty books, both indie published and traditionally published. But more than all of that, he is primarily a passionate storyteller and book nerd.

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A board game or video game adapted from an existing story world.

A fictional character's favorite T-shirt made in real life for fans to purchase.

Although the term “transmedia storytelling” may be unfamiliar to some, the concept is nothing new. Transmedia narratives use multiple mediums to tell a more complete story. Unlike adaptations, which retell an existing story in a new medium, transmedia allows for creatives to explore new areas of an existing world, expanding upon the setting or fleshing out characters beyond what's already on the page.

For independent authors, the practice can offer more than just creative storytelling opportunities.

“In a world where everyone is hungry for more (and more, and more) content, employing a transmedia strategy allows you to expand your IP into multiple income streams that have the potential to reach different audiences—plus it's simply fun to take such an expansive approach to your fictional worlds and stories,” writes author Ember Casey.

Two different ideas exist for how to approach transmedia, called “East Coast,” which deepens existing stories, and “West Coast,” which broadens the world beyond what readers might encounter in

one medium. Both can be effective for connecting a wider array of readers with your projects and turning your current readers into superfans, according to Kristine Kathryn Rusch.

“As writers, we create more than products,” Rusch wrote in a July 2023 blog post on <https://kriswrites.com>. “We create stories that people get lost in, stories that mean so much more to people than we the authors do. That's something important to remember.”

Of course, transmedia storytelling can benefit authors from a business perspective too. Although many authors, including Casey, agree it likely won't be required for an author to find success in the future, the concept offers another avenue for marketing your work and fostering brand recognition—both of which can pay dividends.

“There are many paths for indie authors these days—which means I don't believe that any one strategy is required for success—but I do believe that authors who stop defining themselves as ‘writers’ and start seeing themselves as ‘storytellers’ will see their opportunities (and creative projects) expand,” Casey writes. “And those who expand their IP across different forms of media will find their businesses more resilient to industry fluctuations in the long run.”

I'm excited about transmedia. Will indie authors ever need to be more than just writers to survive in this industry? I don't think so. There are plenty of seven-figure writers who do it with books alone, but transmedia will help you get to seven figures and if you do it right, you can absolutely thrive in ways that might feed you outside of books, if you want to produce other kinds of works and see your books as other kinds of things, that would absolutely help your business, and it will obviously mean that you make more money if you do transmedia in a way that increases your profit margins and gets more people interested in the books.

Theodora Taylor

I feel like, a lot of times, people see books as some mystical thing that's unique and doesn't get produced in the same way other properties do, and it always kind of blows my mind. And I think it's very smart to be looking at other industries and the ways they're evolving and connecting with their audiences.

Brandon Sanderson, from a July 2023 interview with author Savy Leiser on her YouTube channel SAVY WRITES BOOKS

My books are on a serialized website. My books have been turned into web comics. You know, some people are doing television, some people are doing audio plays and podcasts. So wide to me means, "What new opportunity can I use to get my story out there?" And that's what I think authors need to think about. "How many different ways can I get my story out there?"

Ines Johnson

I've seen fantasy authors ... create entire card games for their their story world and everything like that. So anything that gets people interacting with the story world in between book releases I think is a really great way to keep your story world alive. And I also think that indie authors are going to need to do that in order to survive in the industry because, as we all know, it's tougher and tougher these days to just write a book, release it, and hope that that's going to make enough money. The algorithms are tougher than ever. And there's just more competition. When I started off in indie writing, we had less than a million books in the store. Now there's many more—there's over a million published every single year. And so I think that transmedia serves your readership by giving them great quality content to interact with your story world. And then that also works as a marketing endeavor because it produces a bunch of different channels for people to come to know you and your product line.

Elizabeth Ann West

Storytellers, regardless of medium, will rule the world.

S. J. Pajonas

I feel like a lot of indie authors are already doing this—obviously expanding in both the East Coast and the West Coast way. I think that the East Coast way is much more common, where you provide additional content for people to dive into ... to provide more information. But I really do feel like the best, the really big advantage of the West Coast version of transmedia ... is that you get a bigger return because your superfans will go and consume all these mediums. And honestly, most of these additional mediums are not freebies. They have some sort of revenue stream built into them. And on top of that, each of these different transmedia mediums that you go wide with the West Coast versions, you can go deep, so you can have divergent or nested storylines in content across these other mediums that you would normally be able to get in the same volume as you could if you went just deep and not wide first.

Malorie Cooper

And if you're an indie author, you are an indie publisher, meaning you've taken all the responsibilities of that publisher on top of the writing itself. So, of course, there's way more already to surviving successfully as a writer. Transmedia is just the opportunity for writers to license their work well beyond the book. The book is yet one aspect of the IP that comes from a writer's imagination. I've already licensed books to publishers, the same content in a different manner outside of the contract with the publisher to other forms of media and apps. I've already leveraged tools like this, and I know I'm going to continue to, and other writers out there are going to continue to find ways to exploit their IP.

Mark Leslie Lefebvre

Do what you do, and do it well. End of story.

All the extras can be fun and attention-grabbing, but at the end of the day, the most important thing is to write the books you love. Readers will see that passion and join in. If you want to add in merch and audio and stageplays and interpretive dances (I kid!), do it wholeheartedly and the most enthusiastic readers will follow you there.

If you'd rather just focus on the books, then do that.

There are literally no musts or shoulds in the business, but there's an awful lot of flexibility for those who like doing backflips and cartwheels all the way to the bank.

Melissa Storm

Many authors won't need more to survive, but more will allow them to leverage, to gain new audiences, to pretty much just establish themselves a bit more. Again, it's not having your eggs in one basket. It's just exploring all of the options available to you and whichever one you can cross over to offer more to your audience because it's all going to be brand loyalty and brand recognition that will allow more growth as all marketing and social media platforms get more competitive.

Pierre Jeanty

Indie authors already have to be more than just writers.

Steve Pieper

As new tools make it easier for us to do transmedia, it's going to become increasingly important for us to look into that sort of thing. It's not like it's going to be essential—I don't think there's really very much that's essential for a writer to do except write stories. But I think there will certainly be a lot of opportunities for doing things like making our own movies, making our own soundtracks. ... Boy, there are so many different opportunities out there for us to explore. And as the technology makes this stuff more and more accessible, it's just going to explode, I think.

Kevin McLaughlin

I think the definition of wide is all-encompassing, honestly ... but that it's also easy to miss the breadth of possibilities out there. A lot of authors take wide to mean “on all the retailer platforms.” I'm seeing an increasing move in the publishing world toward cracking open the next level, which includes direct sales and storefronts, using platforms like Kickstarter, and also starting to think about your IP as more than just e-books or plain print editions. Serialization, gamification, audio, fancy illustrated special editions, StoryBundles, subscriber book boxes, multimedia, graphic novels, screenplays—the possibilities are out there and expanding as new technologies hit the publishing world.

Anthea Sharp

Authors can lean into what we do best and create great stories and use our imaginations. But those stories now can be used and converted to these different media formats, in fascinating ways. And I also think there's a huge role now for people to collaborate with other creatives. ... In this sort of West Coast vs. East Coast mindset, I think there's one opportunity we talk quite frequently about this industry going deeper with the superfans, providing them more interesting things. But at the same time, readers love to read, and I don't see a world where people stop reading fiction and wanting prose, wanting the audio. Not everything needs to be a movie, which is why I think the transmedia opportunity of anything presents an opportunity where you might not be able to get your book adapted to an official Hollywood movie or this or that, but you can create a version of your intellectual property as sort of offspring of what you're doing in the form of a comic book, in the form of a YouTube video that can attract more fans to your overall brand and stories and characters.

Michael Evans

Theodora Taylor

www.7figurefiction.com

Theodora Taylor is the bestselling author of the 50 Loving States series. Despite writing within a niche genre (interracial romance), she has earned six KDP All-Star bonuses and grown a fanbase of rabid readers through the power of Universal Fantasy.

Her book, 7 FIGURE FICTION: How to Use Universal Fantasy to SELL Your Books to ANYONE was an instant #1 nonfiction bestseller in the Writing Category on Amazon and has since been certified as Great by the world's largest online bookseller.

Most importantly, this book has become a valued and treasured resource for writers around the world.

Theodora has been invited to give presentations on Universal Fantasy by NINC (Novelists Inc.) Conference, RAM (Romance Author Mastermind), and Inker's Con. She's also a highly sought-after podcasts guest. She's made appearances on The Creative Penn (hosted by Joanna Penn), Six Figure Authors, #AmWriting, Wish I'd Known Then, and SPA Girls.

Jonathan Yanez

www.jonathan-yanez.com

Jonathan Yanez spent five years after graduating from college in sales and management before he realized life is too short to be doing anything but what you love. He lives in Southern California with his wife, where he writes everyday, grateful for the opportunity.

Ines Johnson

www.ineswrites.com/breakdown

I'm a television producer/novelist. My path to becoming a full time author wasn't a smooth one.

After pulling in an annual income of three- and four-figure royalties for years, and suffering through low or no reviews, as well as lackluster sell-through from book to book, I finally figured out what readers wanted.

Now I teach fiction authors how to write more binge-worthy books using pacing techniques from episodic television structure. Unlike other plotting courses, the Page Turner Pacing course helps writers craft their own plotting system that's tailored to their subgenre, so that they can increase sales by giving their specific readers the compelling, quality stories they crave in a timely manner.

Becca Syme

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Becca Syme (MATL) is a Gallup-Certified Strengths Coach and has been coaching success alignment for more than a decade. She is the author of the Quitbooks for Writers series and the popular Write Better-Faster course. She also writes mystery novels in her spare time and lives on one of the thousand lakes in Minnesota.

Brandon Sanderson

www.brandonsanderson.com

The only author to make the short list for the David Gemmell Legend Award eight times in seven years, Brandon won that award in 2011 for *The Way of Kings*. He has also won the Romantic Times Reviewers' Choice award for Best Epic Fantasy twice and has been nominated three other years. His novella *The Emperor's Soul* won the Hugo Award in 2013. Brandon has been serving as a judge for Writers of the Future since 2016. He has hit the New York Times Best-Seller List fifteen times, most recently at #1 with *Oathbringer*, book three of *The Stormlight Archive*, which is also Audible's most preordered book of all time. DMG Entertainment optioned the rights to the Cosmere universe shared by his fantasy novels, and Fox acquired the *Reckoners* trilogy for Shawn Levy's production company 21 Laps. Brandon's books have been published in thirty-five languages.



Paddy Finn

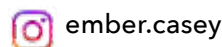
www.paddyfinn.com

I'm an author, online marketer, and business portfolio manager. I've made a living from income generated online since 2018, primarily through online sales and crowdfunding. Climbing Freedom Mountain is tough. I should know. I was born into poverty to a family torn apart by civil war. But I climbed that mountain peak and what I found there was unbelievable.

Ember Casey

www.embercasey.com

Ember Casey is the USA Today bestselling author of over forty contemporary romance novels. She also writes interactive fiction, poetry, and serial stories (where she branches into fantasy romance under the pen name Ember Blackthorn), and she's always looking for new ways to tell stories. She's the founder of the Writing and Selling on Fiction Apps group on Facebook, a community where authors can discuss strategies for publishing in this world of new media.



Zippier with Zapier

HOW INDIE AUTHORS CAN OPTIMIZE WORKFLOWS WITH THE AUTOMATION SOFTWARE

From writing and editing to marketing and administration, independent authors juggle an array of responsibilities. With so many balls in the air, automating repetitive tasks can be a game changer. This is where a tool like Zapier comes in.

Zapier allows users to connect various web applications and services and set up automatic actions and triggers between them. With the right Zaps in place, authors can streamline routine processes, free up creative bandwidth, and work more efficiently. Multi-step apps require a subscription, but basic tasks can be accomplished with a free plan. Here's an in-depth look at how Zapier works and its potential applications for indie authors.

UNDERSTANDING ZAPIER: THE CORE CONCEPTS

At its foundation, Zapier is integration software, acting as a bridge between the applications and platforms you already use regularly. Zapier establishes connections between these tools, enabling automations.

The automations center on two key concepts:

- **triggers**, or actions that kick off a Zap—for instance, a new email subscriber being added to your list; and
- **actions**, or tasks that Zapier automatically performs once triggered. Following the example above, the action might involve adding the new subscriber to a separate list in another provider.

By connecting triggers and actions across multiple applications, Zapier stitches together workflows tailored to your needs. The result? Processes that once demanded manual upkeep can now run on autopilot.

ZAPIER FOR INDIE AUTHORS

Although Zapier connects with thousands of apps, it can be especially useful for indie authors who rely on a core set of tools. Zapier's automations can work in several categories of applications, each with multiple programs popular among indie authors, including

- email marketing software, such as MailerLite, ConvertKit, Mailchimp, Mailpoet, or SendFox;
- e-commerce platforms, such as Gumroad, PayHip, Shopify, or WooCommerce;
- social media management, such as Buffer, Hootsuite, Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok;
- blogging and CMS platforms, such as WordPress, Patreon, or Medium;
- productivity software, such as Google Drive, Trello, or Asana;
- transcription services, such as Temi, Rev, or Otter.ai; and
- delivery services, such as BookFunnel.

Bridging these platforms is where Zapier's value lies. Here are just some ways authors can benefit.

AUTOMATED CONTENT SHARING

One of the most universal applications is repurposing content across social channels. For instance, when you publish a blog post, a Zap can automatically share the headline, excerpt, images, and links on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and more. This saves you the tedious work of manual sharing.

STREAMLINED LIST GROWTH

Building your email list is critical, but keeping subscribers segmented and organized takes time. With Zapier, new sign-ups on your website can trigger workflows to add those contacts to targeted lists in your email service provider while also backing up data to a Google Sheet.

SIMPLIFIED TRANSCRIPTION

Zapier integrates with speech-to-text services like Otter.ai, Temi, and Rev to make transcribing notes and voice recordings faster and easier. You can create a Zap so that uploading an audio file to Dropbox or Google Drive automatically generates a transcript, saved directly in Google Docs. You can also extend that to include a first-pass proofread edit from ChatGPT.

ENHANCED PRODUCTIVITY

Zaps can be used to assign due dates in Asana when an event is added to your Google Calendar in order to help yourself remember administrative tasks or track deadlines for your projects. You can also set up an automation to receive a daily email reminder of tasks due that day.

EXPANDED MARKETING

Leverage Zaps to breathe new life into old content. When a blog post is six months old, have Zapier ping ChatGPT for ideas on repurposing it into a refreshed social post with a new angle. Use Zaps to maximize content across marketing channels.

AUTOMATED DOCUMENT PREPARATION

Manuscript formatting can be tedious. Zapier can automate this process for an indie author. Authors can dictate first drafts, which Zapier will send to TranscribeMe. Zapier saves the transcripts to Google Drive, triggering another Zap. This Zap opens the file in Google Docs, edits it to align with *Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines, and emails the document to their editor for review.

ONGOING CONTENT CREATION

Authors can leverage Zapier to aid content goals. Start by using spreadsheets to track blog post ideas. Zapier can ping ChatGPT to draft full posts from these ideas, including images from DALL-E. After someone reviews and finalizes the articles, another Zap schedules social promotion over a six-week period.

AUTOMATED LIST GROWTH AND DATA BACKUPS

Authors can rely on Zapier for key list-growth workflows. When a reader subscribes to an email list via a website, Zapier can add their info to segmented lists in Mailer-Lite, as well as copy the data to Airtable or a Google Sheet as a redundant backup. It can also trigger “welcome” and “milestone” email sequences when subscribers reach certain stages.

REPURPOSED CONTENT

Zapier can help refresh evergreen content for an author’s blog or social media sites. It watches for blog posts over a year old with low recent traffic. When one is identified, Zapier passes the content to ChatGPT to create a new blog post, social posts, and graphics with a fresh angle.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

While Zapier offers game-changing potential, effectively leveraging it involves an investment on the front end. Here are some factors to consider:

- **Evaluate your goals.** Have clarity on what outcomes you want to achieve via automation.
- **Audit your workflow.** Break down your regular tasks. Look for repetitive processes ripe for automation based on your goals and the time commitment they require.
- **Research app capabilities.** Ensure the apps you use most integrate with Zapier. If not, research alternatives with Zapier integrations.
- **Enlist ChatGPT.** Use conversational AI tools like ChatGPT to aid in setting up complex Zaps. As new Large Language Models (LLMs) are added, Zapier adds support for them.
- **Start small.** Resist over-automating initially to avoid overwhelm. Begin with one to two foundational Zaps, then scale up.
- **Check security.** Review the security protocols of each app you integrate to be sure you understand how your data will be accessed and handled. Some apps ask for the ability to delete data, such as calendar events or docs.

MAXIMIZING ZAPIER FOR ONGOING EFFICIENCY

Setting up impactful Zaps is an initial hurdle, but the real payoff is long term. Here are some more tips for maximizing Zapier's value over time:

- **Continue evaluating workflow.** Periodically review your process for additional automation opportunities. Your needs will evolve, and new tools will be added to the Zapier universe.
- **Monitor Zap performance.** Use Zapier's dashboard to watch for broken Zaps or bugs. Proactively address issues.

- **Use notifications.** Set up your Zaps to notify you of task completions via email or Slack so you stay looped into the process.
- **Refine things over time.** Tweak your Zaps every once in a while to better suit your changing needs. As you get more comfortable with the program, try integrating new tools into your process to further extend capabilities or automate other areas of your business.
- **Learn from peers.** Follow other authors who are using Zapier innovatively. Draw inspiration from their solutions. Most Zaps can be shared among users.
- **Leverage Zapier support.** Use Zapier's customer support resources to troubleshoot and grow skills.

ZAPIER AS AN INDIE AUTHOR FORCE MULTIPLIER

At its core, Zapier is about multiplying output while minimizing effort. By weaving the tools you already use into automated workflows, Zapier massively expands what you can accomplish and enables indie authors to save hours weekly on repetitive tasks, reinvesting those hours into high-level creative pursuits only humans can handle.

Of course, an automation tool is only as powerful as the strategy behind it. The key is defining your goals, then methodically building Zaps that further them. With a thoughtful approach, Zapier can free you from the grind of routine tasks and allow you to thrive in the work only you can do. ■

Chelle Honiker

Free Your Time:
How Assistants
Supercharge
Successful Authors



Discover the benefits of an assistant and how to find one that suits your needs.

Grace Snook

Discover:

- How to get the most out of having an assistant
- Tasks to assign to an assistant
- Questions to ask yourself
- Questions to ask an assistant
- Ways to be a good client
- And more!



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An ALLi for Tomorrow's Authors

ALLIANCE OF INDEPENDENT AUTHORS SHARES ITS ROLE IN PAVING A PATH FOR THE FUTURE OF PUBLISHING

At the Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi), the global association for professional self-publishers, one of our ongoing campaigns is what we call Self-Publishing 3.0, or SelfPub3 for short.

The seismic shifts that the self-publishing sector has seen over the past two decades have all been driven by technology. SelfPub1 was the era of desktop and internet publishing. SelfPub2 saw the widespread adoption of digital e-books, audiobooks, print-on-demand, and e-commerce through digital publishing. Now we are in the era of SelfPub3.

Built on Web3—the “semantic web” of machine-driven intelligence, able to collate and interpret big data into digestible knowledge and usable tools—SelfPub3 has given rise to the following concept and campaign for ALLi:

- the concept that Web3 tools and technology makes it possible for any author with the requisite skills to create a good business from books; and
- the campaign for encouraging authors to embrace four drivers that make for good author-publishing business: direct sales, non-exclusivity, selective rights licensing,

and author collaboration. These four SelfPub3 drivers have already begun to trend in the self-publishing community.

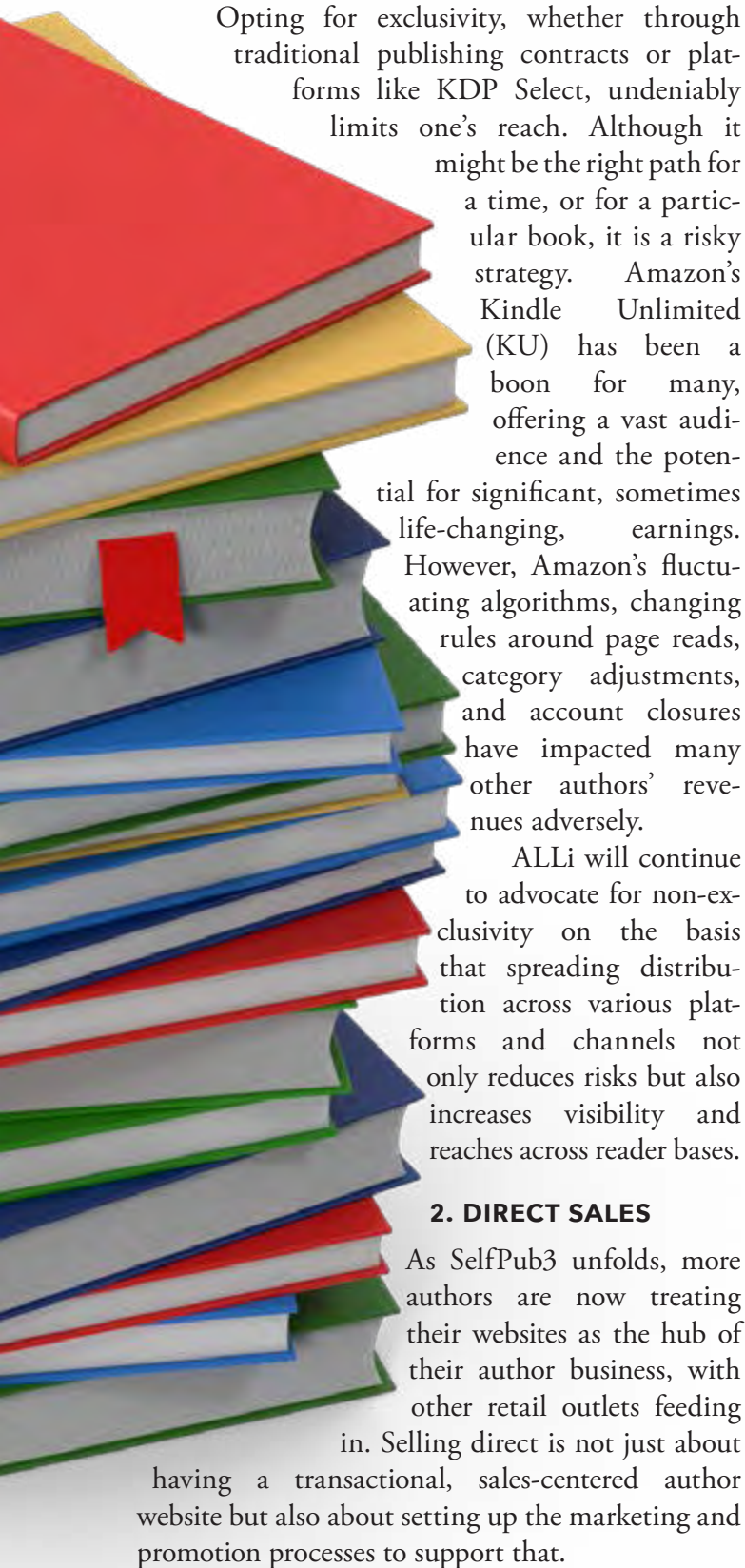
FUTURE OF PUBLISHING TRENDS

Here is ALLi's vision of these expected trends and how we're adapting to the needs of our members in the SelfPub3 era and beyond.

1. NON-EXCLUSIVITY

ALLi has always encouraged authors to adhere to the principle of non-exclusivity, making their books available to as many readers, in as many formats, and across as many territories as possible. This is often referred to as “going wide” in self-publishing, and ALLi expects wide to become the majority experience for indie authors.





Opting for exclusivity, whether through traditional publishing contracts or platforms like KDP Select, undeniably limits one's reach. Although it might be the right path for a time, or for a particular book, it is a risky strategy. Amazon's Kindle Unlimited (KU) has been a boon for many, offering a vast audience and the potential for significant, sometimes life-changing, earnings. However, Amazon's fluctuating algorithms, changing rules around page reads, category adjustments, and account closures have impacted many other authors' revenues adversely.

ALLi will continue to advocate for non-exclusivity on the basis that spreading distribution across various platforms and channels not only reduces risks but also increases visibility and reaches across reader bases.

2. DIRECT SALES

As SelfPub3 unfolds, more authors are now treating their websites as the hub of their author business, with other retail outlets feeding in. Selling direct is not just about having a transactional, sales-centered author website but also about setting up the marketing and promotion processes to support that.

As well as encouraging all members to have a transactional website, ALLi has also been at the forefront of exploring and explaining blockchain as a transparent, decentralized alternative to traditional sales channels. ALLi has a dedicated blockchain advisor and provide a regularly updated guide, titled *Authors and The Blockchain*, which is available at <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/bookshop>.

3. SELECTIVE RIGHTS LICENSING

Hybrid authors are those who have traditionally licensed all rights on some titles to third-party publishers while self-publishing others. ALLi encourages indie authors to adopt the principle of selective rights licensing instead.

Every book represents several sets of potential rights that can be traded by license: film, TV, international editions, translations, stage adaptations, and merchandising, as well as publishing rights. Selective rights licensing means offering only those rights that a rights buyer has the ability to exploit. It also means limiting the term and the territory of the license.

ALLi's guidebook *How Authors License Rights* is a comprehensive guide to the rights arena. We also work with a dedicated literary agent, partner with rights service DropCap, and offer contract advice for members.

4. AI IN AUTHOR PUBLISHING

AI is revolutionizing publishing, and AI tools can assist indie authors with a multitude of writing and publishing tasks, from generating text and images to proofreading and copyediting and finding tools for book marketing.

Whenever we see technological advancements across history, we see human creativity rising and expanding, unfolding excellence. But AI is a divisive topic in the indie author community. Some authors have leapt in to take full advantage of the tools while others are deeply concerned about ethics and outcomes for authors, narrators, designers, and other creatives.

After an open and assessed conversation with our members, advisors and other interested parties, ALLi has developed some practical and ethical guidelines to AI for authors, which can be found at <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/ai-for-authors-guidelines>.

5. AUTHOR COLLABORATION

When indie authors talk about comp authors, we mean comparable and not competitive authors, and we work on the principle of “co-opetition”—cooperating with other authors so that both parties benefit—rather than competition.

It’s no surprise that author collaboration is on the rise in the indie community, and we expect that to continue. When authors collaborate, we benefit in many ways. From a writing perspective, having a partner or a team can provide motivation and accountability, keeping us focused and productive, and we can learn new techniques, strategies, and perspectives from one another.

Collaborative publishing projects allow for the division of costs, such as the expenses involved in marketing, hiring editors, cover designs, and distribution, which can lead to higher productivity, more published work, and an expanded brand and presence.

At ALLi, authors collaborate for advocacy reasons as well. We’re stronger together, whether we’re negotiating with service providers and platforms, pushing back against unfavorable practices, implementing codes of standards, or advocating for fair payment and treatment.

As new self-publishing tools emerge, so does the need for new standards and best practices. ALLi is taking a leading role in ensuring that authors’ rights as users, readers, and copyright owners are respected. New technologies must respect the established precedent of no use without payment, and new tech must not erode or undermine authors’ established rights.

ALLi’s *Copyright Bill of Rights*, which can be found in the ALLi bookshop, outlines eight fundamental rights for the global author in a digital world.

GROWING AUTHOR CONFIDENCE AND INCOME

As the cap-in-hand, publish-me-please mindset fades in the author community, and as more of us take up the challenge of publishing independently and create successful author businesses, author confidence will continue to expand. And author incomes will grow with it.

A recent ALLi survey into indie author income found that self-publishing authors earn more, like for like, than authors with an exclusive trade publisher, and author incomes are on the rise. We expect that to continue.

The authors who benefit most from growing opportunities are those with an independent, creative, and empowered mindset. ALLi looks forward to informing, advising, aiding, and championing such authors through the era of SelfPub3 into SelfPub4—and beyond. ■

The Alliance of Independent Authors



The Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi) is a global membership association for self-publishing authors. As a non-profit, our mission is to preserve ethics and excellence in self-publishing. We offer advice and advocacy for self-publishing authors within the literary, publishing, and creative industries around the world. Find out more at <https://allianceindependentauthors.org>.



The Simple & Effective Solution for Global Independent Publishing



Apple • Google Play • Barnes & Noble • Esentral • Rakuten kobo • Gardners • Scribd
Spotify • Storytel • Amazon • Ingram • Audible • Baker & Taylor • Dreame • OverDrive
Hoopla • Tolino • Odilo • 24symbols

+ MANY MORE

100+
countries

400+
stores

1bn+
potential
readers

240K+
libraries



With PublishDrive, you can effortlessly self-publish ebooks, audiobooks, and print books to thousands of stores around the globe.



Say goodbye to the hassle of uploading your content to multiple platforms individually. Publish everywhere with a single click, reaching readers on various devices and platforms.



Our transparent flat fee ensures you keep more of your earnings because we don't take additional royalties from your profits.



Use our QR Code to get started on your journey, and receive

50% OFF your first two months on any plan!

FIVE WAYS TO KEEP 'CON CRUD' AT BAY

TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY THIS— AND EVERY— CONFERENCE SEASON

Coined “con crud,” the influx of colds, flu, COVID, and other illnesses that happen this time of year is often on the minds of conference attendees and a factor to consider when preparing for a work trip. Conferences can offer authors countless opportunities for career growth and connecting with others in the industry, but they can also bring exhaustion and general tiredness post-show. So ahead of 20Books Vegas and the rest of the conference calendar this winter season, we’re looking at a few tips for staying healthy, energized, and generally well while in attendance.

HYDRATE

You don’t need to be conducting rigorous outdoor activities to become dehydrated. Our bodies consume water just as they consume calories, and dehydration is a sure way to put yourself more at risk. The CDC recommends males drink 125 ounces of water a day, and females 91 ounces—that translates to about fifteen cups and eleven cups, respectively. Be sure to bring a water bottle, and keep it handy throughout the day.

2 TAKE ADEQUATE BREAKS

Conferences and events are exciting but can be mentally exhausting. Don't feel you must fill every hour or session and risk losing your mental energy and focus. Taking a break to eat, drink water, or even catch a power nap can freshen the mind and replenish your energy stores.

3 WASH YOUR HANDS

The germs that lead to “con crud” are passed through a variety of mediums, but with all the hand-shaking and door-grabbing you’ll do on the conference floor, your hands are especially likely to be a breeding ground for viruses. Wash your hands frequently, and use hand sanitizer to reduce the risk that you pass something off to your fellow conference-goers.

4 CONTINUE TO EXERCISE

As authors, our jobs are filled with countless hours behind a desk, and those hours of sitting are rough on the body. Consider short but purposeful bouts of exercise, whether it be power-walking outside the event center on break or a trip to the gym in the morning, to keep yourself moving while traveling, and try to get up and move regularly at home as well. Exercise is preventative, and taking care of your body gives your brain a nice meat sack to ride around in so it can continue functioning at peak performance.

5 GO OUTSIDE

The sun provides us with vitamin D, and long hours inside can lead to a deficiency. Taking a walk outside for five to fifteen minutes a day a few times a week—conference or not—can give your body all the exposure it needs to replenish vitamin D levels.

Whether you implement all or some of these techniques, take care of you. Conferences are loaded with information geared toward elevating your author career, and though it can be exhausting, you will need your energy stores directed toward learning and networking. Invest in your general well-being at the show, and it will pay dividends in the future. ■

David Viergutz

Building a Lifelong

Having coached more than six thousand individual authors, I see burnout on a daily basis. The biggest cause of burnout in this industry is not overwork. It's unrealistic expectations.

Let's look at the mental math involved.

One work equals one outcome in our brains—sort of like how if I plant, water, and weed one plot of ground, I expect to get one set of plants.

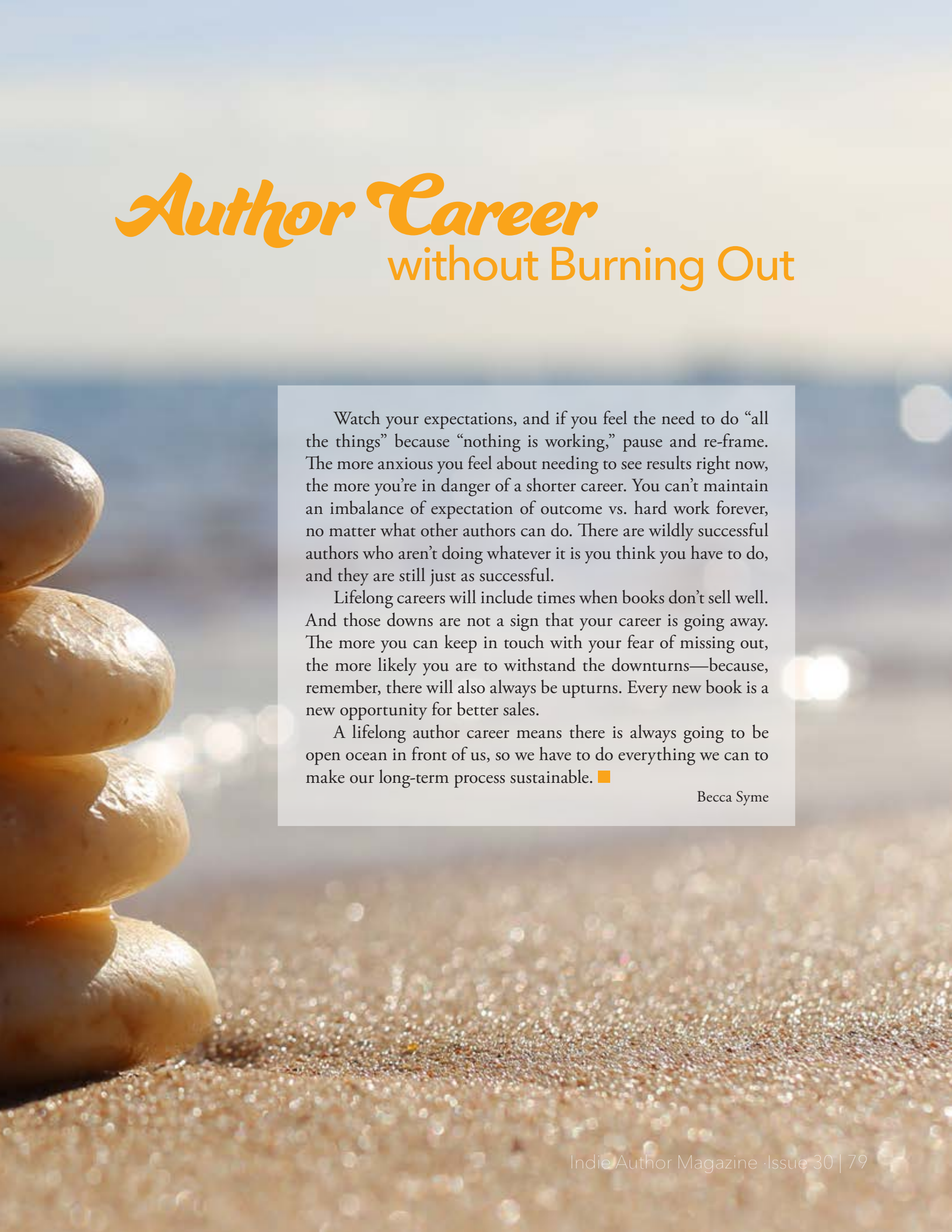
So when we put in two units of work—twice as much planting, watering, and weeding—we expect two units of outcome.

And when we put in four units of work, we expect four units of outcome.

It's natural for us, as humans, to have these kinds of expectations. The problem is, in this industry, the math doesn't work predictably, or when the math appears to work for other people, we assume it should work for us. And when it doesn't, we go looking for more work to do.

When we do “two” work and get “one” outcome, we start putting in three and four units of work. And if we continue to get the same outcome, we put in five or ten units of work, even if the outcome doesn't go up in response. This is burnout territory.

How can you prevent this?



Author Career without Burning Out

Watch your expectations, and if you feel the need to do “all the things” because “nothing is working,” pause and re-frame. The more anxious you feel about needing to see results right now, the more you’re in danger of a shorter career. You can’t maintain an imbalance of expectation of outcome vs. hard work forever, no matter what other authors can do. There are wildly successful authors who aren’t doing whatever it is you think you have to do, and they are still just as successful.

Lifelong careers will include times when books don’t sell well. And those downs are not a sign that your career is going away. The more you can keep in touch with your fear of missing out, the more likely you are to withstand the downturns—because, remember, there will also always be upturns. Every new book is a new opportunity for better sales.

A lifelong author career means there is always going to be open ocean in front of us, so we have to do everything we can to make our long-term process sustainable. ■

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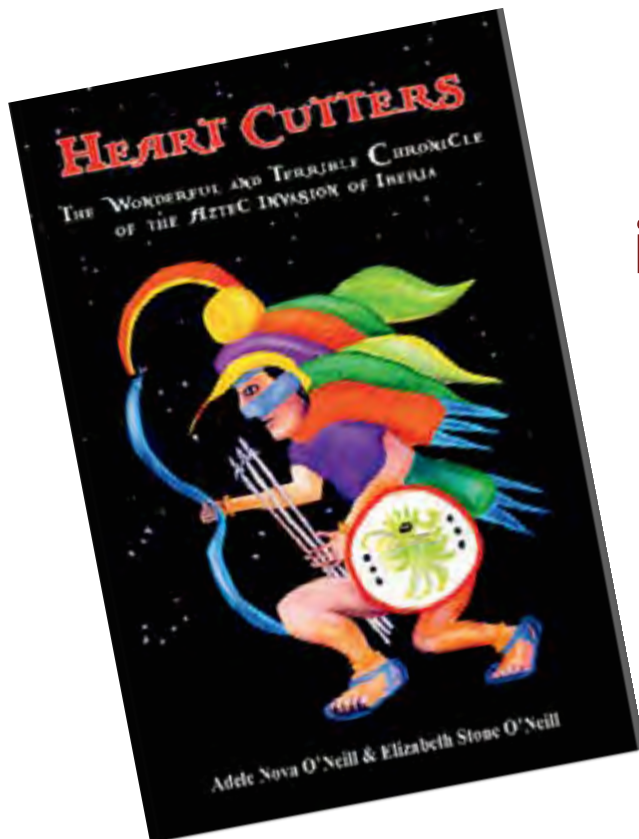


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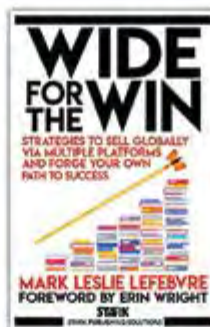


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