



DePaul Summer Writing Conference
July 17, 2010

Course: Promoting Yourself as a Writer
Randy Richardson
President, Chicago Writers Association
Email: info@chicagowrites.org
Website: www.chicagowrites.org

20 Promotional Tips for Writers

Don't wait until your book is published. It's never too early to start promoting yourself as a writer.

1. Join a writers group.
2. Join literary organizations.
3. Participate and volunteer in writers groups and literary organizations. Joining isn't enough.
4. Network with other writers. Attend literary fests, writers' conferences, reading series, open mics, slams and book signings.
5. Participate in public reading events: reading series, open mics and slams. Reading your work out loud can be a great way to gain confidence, get some feedback and hook readers.
6. Create a writer's website. Make it reflect you as a writer. Make it fun. Even though this is part of your business, you want it to be fun. If it's not, you're not going to want to work on it. But don't make it too fun. This is still a business website, and your website is going to be the main way to sell yourself to agents, publishers and readers. Keep those pictures of you dancing on the table wearing a lamp shade to yourself.
7. Use social media to promote yourself as a writer.
8. Blog.
9. Participate on other writer blogs.
10. Group blogging.

11. Never say no. If you're invited to be interviewed or to post something you've written, take it - assuming the written material is yours to post. Even if it doesn't pay. Remember: sometimes you get paid in exposure.
12. Join a critique group.
13. Teach. Share what you know. Libraries, schools, senior/retirement centers, nursing homes, writers groups are always looking for people to come and talk to them. Some even pay, but don't turn it down just because it doesn't pay.
14. Join a Speakers' Bureau.
15. Think small. Many of us want to write the GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL. Many of have been writing that GREAT AMERICAN NOVEL for longer than we like to admit. Don't restrict yourself to writing big. Sometimes small pays big dividends. Write essays, columns, poems, shorts, articles.
16. Submit. Submit. Submit. If there's an opportunity to get published, take it. Even if it doesn't pay. Remember: sometimes you get paid in exposure.
17. Enter writing contests.
18. Carry your business card everywhere you go and pass it out to everyone you can.
19. Make connections with the news media. Write articles and send press releases.
20. Pay it forward. Always help other writers when and if you can. It will somehow come back to you.

Don't expect your writing talents alone to carry you to success. Writing great stuff is just the first step in the professional life of a writer. The more you can develop your skills of self-promotion, public readings and networking, the greater your chances of getting noticed.

Come out of your writer cave: Don't be afraid to put yourself and your writing out there. You may be surprised by what happens!

**Now you're an author...just sit back and watch the royalties roll in.
Yeah, right.**

Don't quit your day job. The odds are stacked against you. More than a quarter million books are published EACH YEAR! The biggest mistake you can make as an author is thinking that anyone, other than relatives and close friends, is going to care about your book.

Read it and weep. ..

1,200,000 titles were published in 2004:

- **10** titles sold 1,000,000 + copies each
- **22** titles sold 500,000-999,999 copies each
- **64** titles sold 250,000-499,999 copies each
- **324** titles sold 100,000-249,999 copies each
- **767** titles sold 50,000-99,999 copies
- **23,047** titles sold 5,000-49,999 copies each
- **67,008** titles sold 1,000-4,999 copies each
- **202,938** titles sold 100-999 copies each
- **948,005** titles sold 99 or less copies each

10 Promotional Tips for New Authors The Case for Becoming Your Own Publicist

1. Create and send out bound galley or ARC for reviews 6 months in advance of the book being published. Authors benefit from having their books reviewed before publication so the reviews appear simultaneously with the publication date. Book reviews can often take months to receive, and because bookstores require quick turnaround for the shelf life of new books, an author usually cannot afford to wait for post-publication reviews. Authors and publishers should send out pre-publication copies of books to ensure timely book reviews.
2. Collect blurbs. Don't be afraid to call in favors and use your connections. People are often happy to help you out or take a look at the book with the potential to help you out, but if you don't ask, it will never happen.
3. Have professional author photos taken. Your photo should show you at your best. It will be used on your cover, on your website and other websites, in marketing materials, and in your press kit.
4. Create a press kit. Should contain a press release, synopsis of the book, pull quotes, an author bio, author photo, and excerpts from reviews. It can also include possible interview questions.
5. Contact local bookstores, set up book signings.
6. Contact local media: Again, don't be afraid to call in favors and use your connections.

7. Book swag: Bookmarks, postcards, posters, buttons, etc. Are they worth the investment?
8. Make Amazon.com your BFF. Create Lists and Guides, recruit customer reviewers, participate in Amazon forums and blogs.
9. Make libraries your BFFs. You can never have too many BFFs. Encourage family and friends to request your book at the local library, contact libraries for readings/presentations.
10. Hire a publicist. Publishers are doing less and less for their authors. They expect you to do a lot if not all of the promotional work. But there are many things we as authors just can't do. We don't have the time, the money, the resources, or the connections. That's when you should consider hiring a publicist. There are lots of publicists-for-hire out there. Be wary. Do not pay large up-front fees. Many will want \$10,000 or more from you. There's little chance you're going to get your money's worth when you invest that kind of money. A better alternative is a publicist that charges on a commission basis. In other words, if they book an event for you, then you get charged a fee for that booking.

***You've got to be fast out of the gates. The shelf life of a book is typically 3-6 months.**

Rules of thumb on shameless self-promotion:

- Don't be afraid to toot your own horn. No one is going to do it for you, and if you don't serve as your own best advocate, no one else will either.
- Don't be annoying while tooting said horn. Don't go overboard. Don't spam people. Don't take yourself too seriously.

Chicago Writer Resources Guide

Recurring Chicago Reading Series

- READING UNDER THE INFLUENCE, first Wednesday/month, 7:30PM, \$3, Sheffields
<http://readingundertheinfluence.com/>
- ESSAY FIESTA, third Monday/month, 7 PM, FREE, The Book Cellar
<http://essayfiesta.com/>
- UPTOWN POETRY SLAM, Sundays 7PM, \$6, The Green Mill
http://www.slampapi.com/new_site/mill.htm
- TWILIGHT TALES, most Mondays, 7:30, \$4 (suggested), Red Lion Pub
<http://twilighttales.com/schedule/>
- THE RECONSTRUCTION ROOM, first Wednesday/month, 8PM, FREE, Black Rock Bar
<http://www.recroomers.com/main.html>
- 2ND STORY, second Sunday/month, 7PM, \$10, Webster's Wine Bar
<http://2ndstory.serendipitytheatre.org/monthly>
- QUICKIES! second Tuesday/month, 7:30, FREE, Innertown Pub
<http://quickieschicago.blogspot.com/>
- LITERARY GANGS OF CHICAGO, third Tuesday (October-May), 6:30, FREE, Musuem of Contemporary Arts
http://www.mcachicago.org/programs/event_detail.php?id=87
- WINDY CITY STORY SLAM, last Tuesday/month, 8PM, \$5 (suggested), Quennect 4 Gallery
<http://www.windycitystoryslam.com/wordpress/>
- SUNDAY SALON CHICAGO, last Sunday/month, 7:30, FREE, The Charleston Bar
<http://www.sundaysalonchicago.com/index.php>

Writing Groups

- Chicago Writers Association
<http://www.chicagowrites.org>
CWA is a creative writing community of dedicated writers from Chicagoland founded in 2003 and organized as a not-for-profit organization in 2006. This Chicago-based organization meets primarily online through a Yahoo! listserve and sponsors literary-themed events throughout the area. The group publishes an online literary magazine, The Write City, and also is developing the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame.

- The Guild Complex
<http://www.guildcomplex.com>
 Although you may find many hyphenate writer/performers here, the Guild Complex is "independent, not for profit cultural center that serves as a forum for literary cross cultural expression, discussion and education in combination with other arts." This Chicago-based organization was founded in 1989, and their events and workshops seem to focus primarily on fiction and poetry. The Guild Complex also publishes books by local and national writers under the Tia Chucha Press name.
- Neighborhood Writing Alliance
<http://www.jot.org>
 The NWA is a non-profit organization that hosts free writing groups all over Chicago. The organization also publishes the quarterly Journal of Ordinary Thought, featuring works written by workshop participants. See the website for more information.
- New Town Writers
<http://www.newtownwriters.org>
 New Town Writers is a gay and lesbian writers' salon based in Chicago that holds bi-weekly meetings where writers can share and critique their works-in-progress. Visit the website for upcoming meeting times and locations.

Other Literary Organizations

- Open Books
<http://www.open-books.org/>
 Open Books is a nonprofit social venture that operates a bookstore, provides community programs, and mobilizes passionate volunteers to promote literacy in Chicago and beyond.
- 826 Chicago
<http://www.826chi.org/>
 826CHI is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting students ages 6 to 18 with their creative and expository writing skills, and to helping teachers inspire their students to write.
- Chicago Underground Library
<http://underground-library.org/>
 The Chicago Underground Library is a new model for open, location-specific archiving of independent and small press media. We are always seeking books, magazines, zines, journals, broadsides, newspapers, and art books of all types, genres, and print runs from the Chicago area.
- Literacy Chicago

<http://literacychicago.org/>

Advertising/Promotional Items: Business cards, bookmarks, postcards, t-shirts, etc.

- Earthly Charms: Specializing in Promotion for Writers
<http://www.earthlycharms.com/>
- VistaPrint
<http://www.vistaprint.com/>
- Iconix: Affordable Printing and Design Services
<http://www.iconix.biz/>
- CafePress
<http://www.cafepress.com/>

Book Design Services

- TLC Graphics
<http://www.tlcgraphics.com/>

Promoting Your Book/Manuscript

- BookConnector: connects authors and publishers with people and resources that promote your manuscript.
<http://bookconnector.com/Default.aspx>
- Book Catcher: a free website for book writers, book authors, book publishers, and book readers who need how-to information and expert advice to excel in all stages of book development.
<http://www.bookcatcher.com/>
- PRWeb: a free press release service
<http://www.prweb.com/>
- Bookhitch: a free book listing service
<http://www.bookhitch.com/>

Author Press Release Writing Tips

- Scott Nicholson's How to Write an Author Press Release
<http://hauntedcomputer.com/promo1.htm>

Self-Publishing Tips

- Dan Poynter's Self-Publishing
<http://www.parapublishing.com/sites/para/>

Watchdog Groups

- Predators & Editors
<http://pred-ed.com/>
- SFWA's Writers Beware
<http://www.sfw.org/for-authors/writer-beware/>

Finding an Agent

- Agent Query
<http://agentquery.com/>
- Everyone Who's Anyone
<http://everyonewhosanyone.com/index.html>
- J.A. Konrath's How To Find an Agent and Sell Your Writing
<http://www.jakonrath.com/AgentBooklet.pdf>

Creating Bound Galleys and ARCs

- <http://www.bloggersbase.com/literature/creating-bound-galleys-advance-review-copies/>

Literary Publicists

- Breakthrough Promotions
<http://www.breakthroughpromotions.com>