



Publishers Association of Los Angeles
EDUCATION • NETWORKING • RESOURCES

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UPCOMING MEETING

Teleseminar: How to Publish with Amazon

7PM, Tuesday, April 19, 2016

Amazon offers many programs and opportunities for authors and publishers involving print books, e-books, and audio books as well as sales tracking tools and promotional and marketing opportunities.

Neal Thompson, director of author and publishing relations at Amazon, will be covering these topics:

- The benefits of self-publishing
- Digital, print, and audio books
- Real-time sales tracking
- Free promotional tools
- Tips to improve your Amazon presence

Location: Phone seminar. You will be given the phone number and code upon advance reservation. **RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR THIS EVENT.**

Cost: Free for PALA members; \$15.00 for nonmembers

See the [full announcement on our website](#) for more details on the event and our speaker.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Opportunities with Crown Books

Dear PALA members:

When it comes to book marketing, all of us are always looking for new ideas and outside-the-box ways to sell our books.

Do you know about Crown Books at the Promenade in Woodland Hills (at Topanga and Erwin)? It replaced Barnes & Noble and has been there for at least two years.

The store is very open to working with local authors and offers them display and sales opportunities. Most of the books sold in the store are remainders or used, so your sales price will have to be low, but the store does not charge a high fee per book.

Think of it as an opportunity to take a few books out of the cellar if you have an edition that's out of print or is just not selling as well as you would like. If it catches on at the store, it could be a little bit of a loss leader for you.

Also, the store encourages group events. For example, the IWOSC West Valley

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President's Message (cont'd from page 1)

Satellite meets there once a month under Sylvia Cary's leadership. The store does not charge for the large space at the front of the store, and the space is quite conducive to discussion.

If you would like to check out what such a group event looks like, the IWOSC satellite meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 10:15 a.m. to noon. You do not have to be a member to visit the group.

Please e-mail me if you would like more information about Crown Books and the name of the contact person at the store.

And keep thinking outside the box—even a small idea might be worth a try.

Gary Young
PALA President

**INDUSTRY NEWS**

8 Reasons Your E-Book Price Promotion Didn't Work



Running an e-book price promotion can be an effective way to drive a high volume of downloads, increase revenue, boost a book up a bestseller list, drive series sales, and more. But running a successful book marketing campaign requires more than just dropping the price and hoping you'll catch readers' attention.

If you ran a price promotion for your e-book and it didn't go as well as you'd hoped, don't write off this sales tactic yet—you may be able to diagnose the problem and adjust your strategy for next time. Here are [some of the reasons](#) your price promotion may not have worked.

15 Instagram Book Marketing Ideas from Publishers

If you're looking to use Instagram for book marketing but aren't sure what kinds of pictures to post, take a look at what publishers are doing. Diana Urban at Bookbub has compiled [some great ideas](#) for Instagram content based on stunning photos posted by fifteen publishers.

Are You Making These Mistakes with Your Amazon Book Description?

What's the first thing you do when you search for a book on Amazon and find one that could be just what you want or need? If you're like most, you read the Amazon book description at the top of the page because you're looking for specific information. If you can't find it, you go on to the next book in the search results.

That book description is the reader's gateway to your book—it's what convinces readers that your book is the solution to their problem. Yet, so many authors and publishers slap up something quick and vague on the most valuable real estate on your Amazon's sales page.

Is it time for you or your publisher to revisit your description to make sure it

meets reader expectations? Here are [three common mistakes](#) you'll want to look for in yours.

Amazon Sales Rank: Taming the Algorithm

We're all familiar with Amazon's sales rank, those tantalizing numbers that have driven authors to obsessively revisit their pages over and over in hopes of seeing their book climb through the ranks. Amazon won't disclose their proprietary algorithms, but thanks to some clever analysis by indie authors, that formula has been reverse engineered. And once you understand that formula, the quirks of sales rank make much more sense, and you can use them to your advantage. Learn more about Amazon algorithms [here](#):

9 Free Tools That Can Help Build Buzz for a Book



Everybody knows buzz is an important part of book marketing. It can help catch book reviewers' and bloggers' attention, which can in turn drive sales. But how do you create buzz? How do you get people talking about a book?

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Tools to Build Buzz (cont'd from page 2)

Obviously, one way is to get Beyoncé or Taylor Swift to post your book on Instagram. But if that's not in the cards, there are several tools available that can help. Some of these tools can help get a book exposure to relevant new readers, while others encourage existing loyal fans to spread the word. Diana Urban at Bookbub has compiled a [list of free tools](#) and some ideas on how to use them.

Where Do You Get Your Industry News?



As an author, it's important to stay on top of the latest trends, not only in independent publishing but in the publishing industry as a whole. Sabrina Ricci at [digitalpubbing.com](#) has compiled a [list of sites and blogs](#) that cover publishing industry news, trends, and speculation.

23 Ways To Pitch The Media

When you contact the news media, whether it be a national television show's producer or a blogger, you need a hook. Authors must think of many topics that they feel qualified to discuss and believe will be interesting and timely. Brian Feinblum at the Book Marketing Buzz Blog compiled a [list of 23 considerations](#) for pitching to news media.

Authors: How to Get Started on Social Media

Frances Caballo, a social media strategist for authors, compiled a comprehensive guide on social media best practices, covering user names, image preparation, author bios, etiquette, and more. On her website, you can also download a free 52-page e-book called *Twitter Just for Authors*. You can read her advice and download the e-book [here](#).

IBPA NEWS



How to Join the Audiobook Publishing Revolution

Audiobooks are exploding—Audible listenership was up over 35% last year.

Richard Rieman, author of *The Author's Guide to Audiobook Creation*, will be conducting a webinar on April 20 at 10 a.m. covering the following topics:

- How to make money with an audiobook
- Whether to narrate your own book
- How to engage a narrator (and what to avoid)
- How to produce your audiobook at the lowest cost
- How to work with Amazon's ACX (Audiobook Creation Exchange) and other publishers

If you can't make it to the webinar, a recording of this session will be available 24 hours after the live event. The cost to register is \$39, but IBPA members can use a special code to save \$20 at check out. You can register for the webinar [here](#).

MEMBER & CHAPTER NEWS

Do You Have News?

The PALA newsletter is a great place to announce your upcoming events, recent blog posts, new books, and other news. Send us a link, title, and a one- or two-sentence description, and we'll share your announcements with other members. E-mail Sharon Goldinger, pplspeak@att.net, with your info, and we'll announce it in the next newsletter.

PALA Listserv

The PALA Listserv is a private group where PALA members and guests ask questions and share news, resources, and info. It's a great way to tap the knowledge shared by our diverse group. To sign up, go to <http://www.groups.yahoo.com>. If you're not already registered with Yahoo, you'll need to do that first (it's free). Then search for PA-LA (don't forget the hyphen). Follow the instructions for joining the list.

PALA Online

The [members-only page](#) of PALA's website is user friendly and full of useful information—from transcripts of past meetings to upcoming events you won't

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PALA Online (cont'd from page 3)

want to miss. As always, your questions, suggestions, or other thoughts about our website are welcomed.

Recordings of Past Meetings

If you missed a meeting or need to hear the information again, we have recorded each of our meetings in MP3 format. If you would like to receive a copy via e-mail, please contact Gary Young (artsy12@earthlink.net) with the subject line: PALA RECORDING.

Please indicate which *date* AND *program* in your e-mail. He will get back to you with the simple procedure.

Meeting Transcripts Online

PALA members have access to the full transcripts from our meetings via our website. If you're new to PALA or want to get caught up on a meeting you may have missed, just click [here](#), to find a list of available meeting transcripts. You can download a Word file of each meeting, to read or save for future reference. Each transcript is full of useful information on a relevant topic, from the business of publishing to Google Analytics to print-on-demand and much more.



MEETING TRANSCRIPT:

Spinning a Book into a Series

by Joel Eisenberg, Erika Fabian, and Diane Vallere (Moderated by Ina Hillebrandt)

Here is a brief excerpt from our recent panel on the benefits of publishing books in a series. Click [here](#) to read the full transcript, which includes lots of information from our speakers.

Ina: We have a terrific panel. The first person is Joel Eisenberg. He's a writer and producer whose new book series, *The Chronicles of Ara*, was released by Incognito Publishing.

Joel: There are some writers in the room; there are some publishers here. Writing a series is a good bet. However, if you are a publisher, you need to make sure that your writer is willing to do the legwork and do whatever it takes to market that book. If you're a writer, you have a fiduciary responsibility to the publisher to make the publisher whole in terms of his financial output. A lot of writers don't look at it that way. A lot of writers will veer a little toward being bohemian, which is fine. Everything is for the art.

Ina: We're going to move to Erika Fabian. Erika's a versatile writer-photographer, and she's had 23 books and nearly 200 photo-illustrated articles published. Her varied career includes many years of travel on assignment for *National Geographic Magazine* and other publishers, which resulted in a six-book series on travel photography and a three-book series on the government of Indonesia.

Erika: I met a *National Geographic* photographer over dinner. He needed assistance because his assistant wasn't good enough. I said, "I'll do it!" because I liked him.

Suddenly, my whole life turned around! I discovered the freedom of running around, talking to people, convincing them to allow us into the most impossible places in Mexico City, so he could photograph. And I loved it so much that I said to him, "I want to do more of this." That developed into a 25-year career of traveling around the world.

Ina: After two decades of working for a top luxury retailer, Diane Vallere traded fashion accessories for murder. *Crushed Velvet*, the second book in the nationally best selling and Lefty-nominated Material Witness cozy mystery series, came out August 4. Diane started her own detective agency at age ten and has maintained a passion for shoes, clues, and clothes ever since. You can find out more about her works at the website DianeVallere.com.

Diane: I have three series. I have a self-published one; I kept that one for myself because I really do love the control, and there's a lot that I love about it, and I'll talk about all that more. But I have one with a small press and then I have one with a NY publisher. So I really have that good kind of compare/contrast of the three different publishing channels.

Ina: Would you guys address the question, Why is a series a good thing for a writer and a publisher to do?

Joel: When you do a series, you have more clout because now your intellectual property can carry past one book. You have that many more opportunities to build on your characters, to build on your audience, and so on. If you develop your network and you start promoting a series, now that network is engaged. The worst thing a person could do is solicit. "Will you buy my book? Will you buy my book? Will you buy my book?"

There are ways for you to get eyes on your books from people who you would not think would care. I created a brand for myself on Facebook. I'm a really nice guy with a big mouth, and I use that. I stir the pot on Facebook. I post controversial articles about everything. And I'll

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Spinning a Series (cont'd from page 4)

start debates. All of that gives me an audience, indirectly.

Erika: When I talked to this man in Indonesia, what he really wanted was for me to sign a contract with him to write about his state, that his company was going to sponsor. They knew what were the important places for us to visit. They gave me all the statistics they wanted us to publish. What I didn't know, I asked. I was learning how to publish.

Audience: What advice would you give people who wanted to do something like this today?

Erika: It depends on how much money they have. You go and find a place that is maybe accessible but not that well known. You contact tourist departments, and you tell them, "I'm coming to visit such and such a place, and I would like some help from you because I want to write about this particular area." You never go to a foreign country without getting a guide. A local guide who speaks some English can get you into peasants' homes, villages, the president's mansion, everywhere you can go. And whatever you learn you then write down and illustrate with pictures. Find out what tourist department, what companies might be interested in sponsoring your material and helping you print it and publicize it.

Diane: Joel mentioned earlier on that you really have a responsibility and a partnership with your publisher to do whatever you can to make books sell. I want to reiterate that. I know a lot of people who think, "I got a contract. I'm done!" That's not how it works. It's not just your job to write the book, to write the series, to come up with the hook. It's your job to get out there and market it in a variety of ways. You find what's comfortable for you. You don't do the things that make your skin crawl. You find the ones that are fun to you.

To the question of why it's a good idea to do a series instead of a standalone book: when you do a book 2 it helps to sell book 1. When you do a book 3, it

helps to sell books 1 and 2. If you just have one book, you can see how high the expenses ended up being. I thought "I'm going to do this, I'm going to buy 100 ISBNs from Bowker. I'm not just going to buy one for \$125." One is \$125, 100 is \$575. When you do the math, it's a lot smarter to buy 100. Especially when you think about the fact that one goes on print, and one goes on mobi, and one goes on epub, and if you want to do a large print, that's another one, and if you want to do any collections, that's another one. Audio is another one.

I've got the four books, but there's three additional things in there. There's a short story that I wrote: 4,000 words. I wrote it because I wanted to understand the backstory between my main character and her main love interest. I thought it was an exercise in writing. I didn't think I was going to do anything with it. I gave it away to all my newsletter subscribers. Then I gave it away for free on Goodreads. I gave it to everybody who wanted it. Now it's free on Amazon, 'cause it's kind of like that teaser to get you to get the story for free, and if you like the characters you go into the series.

Because I had these additional books, I bundled together books 1 and 2. No new content; it's just a different way to buy it. I put together books 1, 2, and 3 as a set. So on Amazon you can get books 1, 2, and 3 as a set. On Barnes and Noble and on Kobo you can get 1 and 2. So I kind of separated it because I like to experiment and see what performs in different places.

When I did the two-book set I tossed in some extras. Because my character is from Pennsylvania and she likes Pennsylvania food, I included a recipe for her favorite sandwich. I included a blog post from her cat. I popped in some extras just to say that there's bonus material. As a series you can think about things like that. Think creatively about stuff that maybe isn't part of your story, but you can do these other things that entice people. It's just another way to maximize your bookshelf.

Ina: When we first talked, I learned about the fact that you originally published on your own, then you were picked up by an indie publisher, and then you were picked up by a traditional large publisher. Can you talk about the advantages/disadvantages of each of those?

Diane: I can tell you with the books that I published myself, the biggest advantage is I make the most money from that series. The biggest disadvantage is I spend the most money on that series. It is the most expensive because it's out of pocket at the beginning. So you lay out the expense ahead of time, and you have to earn it back.

The small press: You can get into more channels. You have a little bit more leverage when you go to bookstores and they can get your book out of Ingram. There's a little bit more of a push, and the publisher is their own brand too. They have built who they are, so they're putting product out and you fall under their umbrella. So you're benefitting from their work on other people too. They have a higher profile.

I really don't spend any on the New York one. What I lose is the 15 percent that goes to my agent. But I really do trust her and that was something that I had wanted so long for myself when I was trying to get there that it was important to me for my career. If you're a self-starter you might not need to have the agent. It's in my contract with my agent that she doesn't get anything from my self-published series, and she doesn't get anything from the series that's with the small press because I kind of felt like I built that house. But it is nice to have a person who's a sounding board. And I have a fourth series starting in February that came about only because of her.

Joel: When you get an agent, there's a little bit of a trap. If you're a person just beginning and you're fortunate enough to get into a big agency, you risk getting lost. And the other side is, if you're just starting out and you get into a small agency, you risk signing with somebody who doesn't have the power or the ability

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Spinning a Series (cont'd from page 5)

to get you where you need to be. They have to really fit with what you're looking for.

Audience: Are your series written so that any one of them can be read independently?

Diane: Yes. My books are very different than what Joel is doing with his eight-book arc, which I think probably does need to be read in order. Mine, you get an overall story arc if you read them in order, but you can read any of them out of order and you're going to get a full story.

Audience: Is that what you suggest to people to do?

Diane: It depends what you're doing. I knew I loved series fiction. So when I wrote that first book, I thought, "I'm going to write about Samantha forever! She's going to be old in a walker with high heels." I just loved the character so much. I knew that because that's what I like to read. I think sometimes you know there's more to those characters. I mean, I write mystery fiction, and that really does lend itself to series more. There are mysteries that should be standalone. They shouldn't be series.

Joel: There are two types of series. Like Diana, you have like a recurring character with different adventures. And that's one way. The other way is like the Lord of the Rings, the Star Wars, where you have continuing. So when we talk series, there are different types of series. So keep that in mind as well.

Audience: Do you purposely plant hooks, and if you're trying to hook them into buying the next one, or the previous one, do you make references?

Diane: I do put references in there. I like my characters to change from book to book because I want them to feel like real characters, and we change based on what happens. If you're involved in a murder investigation, it's probably going to change you. Even though they're light and they're humorous, I am dealing with a heavy subject there. So I make

a reference back to what happened, just because if anybody read the book, there's that continuity, but I don't go into major detail about it because I would like someone to think, "Oh, that sounds interesting! I want to go back and read that book," if they haven't already.

Ina: Are there tips that you can share with the room about creating characters that people will want to read more about? They'll want to know about what happens next. One of you asked about whether or not you plant hooks. What other kinds of things can you do to craft the characters, and do you even think that way when you're writing?

Diane: I take a sheet of paper and I try to write down 20 things about my character. You get past how they drive and how they dress and what college they went to maybe, things like that, and you really have to start thinking about this person. Did they play an instrument in elementary school? Are their parents still alive? Do they know how to change the oil in their car or not? Just quirks, like real people have. And that kind of thing helps you see these people as fully formed. I think when the character feels real, that's when readers connect with them. People have said to me that they like my characters because they're flawed like real people, or they make mistakes like real people.

Audience: So you do a series; you do the first book and you put it out there for sale. You're still writing the next book, but then—at what point did one drive the other to be successful? Or did it happen right away?

Diane: In my case, when I finished writing the first book, I started writing the second book. When I finished writing the second book, I started writing the third book. And this was all happening during that time when I was trying to find an agent. Because I kept thinking, "I want to be ready."

The second series happened because I just thought—the first one wasn't selling, and I thought, "I have a different

idea. I'm going to write it exactly like the first one, except this one's a decorator. She's not in the fashion industry. This one's blonde. She's obsessed with Doris Day." I started writing and I realized this is a completely different character. It's a different setup. It's a different story. She's been through a different part of life. And that's when I realized, okay, there's a second series there.

Audience: You did a series of photography books. Some were more successful than others. Did you have a pretty good sense of which ones were going to do well?

Erika: No. No idea. As I said, the London book sold out in a month. I'm still sitting on books for Amsterdam because there aren't that many people going to Amsterdam. The thing is, you can't predict how successful a book will be. But if you want to do it, do it. You don't know which one will work and which one you'll just have to write off as "part of the series."

Joel: And then market the hell out of it.

To read the full transcript of this presentation, click [here](#).

PALA Officers and Board

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