

Planning your book release

After all the labor and love you have put into your literary work, it is published and now you can sit back and relax and watch the royalty checks come rolling in. Or can you?

Unfortunately, that isn't how it happens. Even the big names like Steven King must promote their own works to make sales. If this is your first book (or your fifth) and your publisher isn't putting the money they really should into promoting you, how are you going to make sales? The answer is you really won't make many sales. You have to be committed to promoting yourself shamelessly. This article covers the basics on getting started.

Ready to be shameless?

The first step for you is to recognize that any sort of preconception you have about not being worth the effort or that you are not an expert needs to stop right now. Even for a fictional piece, there is something you have experience with or talent that makes you deserving of attention. Love yourself. Love your creation.

The second step is to grow a thick skin. This is easier said than done because anyone who has created something wants others to appreciate it. The fact is you can't please everyone all of the time! Realize that at least one person in this world will hate your work and least one person in this world will love your work. Be OK with this reality before you move to the next steps.

Time for labor

Network

Go to writers workshops, join a writing group, write in a blog, contribute to other people's blogs, get featured with websites like www.sabrinareviews.com, go to book festivals in your area, do nice things for other people in your network. Take business cards everywhere and hand them out to anyone and everyone. This gives you name recognition to people in the industry and your area as well as gives you people you can ask for favors like writing a cover blurb.

Cover blurbs

Don't you love those quotes on the cover of books that are from big name people who absolutely love the book you've just picked up? These blurbs increase sales and give a sense of professionalism to a title. They truly are easy to obtain when you have established a healthy network. Before the final proof is submitted to the printer, send out a couple copies of your almost last proof to people in your network and ask them to read it over. If they like it, ask them to write a short blurb for your first page.

The names of the people writing the blurbs don't necessarily need to be big names in your genre but when you can get someone to write a glowing review, add it to your cover

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art and make sure to give the person credit. Do a good turn by mentioning what books they have written as well! You can also send out ARCs –advance reading copies –to websites who post reviews like www.sabrinareviews.com. If you are in a hurry for publishing, you may need to consider paying for an quick turn around. Many authors skip getting blurbs because they are impatient to get to publishing or don't know how to do it but this is a step worth taking.

Book launch

You have a great cover with a blurb or two (and the first page contains the blurbs that don't fit on the cover), the book is printed and bookstores can order it through distributors. The next step is a book launch! For a book launch, you want to have several things: a date, books, a poster, bookmarks, signs and publicity.

Date: To set a date for a successful launch, you want to give yourself time and peace of mind. While excitement makes you want to set a date for next week, you will be pulling your hair out by the end if you do so. The first consideration is when can the bookstore have your book –guaranteed –on the shelves? Remember that publishing houses are run by people and mistakes happen. Factor into your date the fact that the books could be delayed. If the books aren't there, the store will cancel the signing. You also want to make sure you have enough time to publicize and get some media about the event.

Books: The bookstore should order these for you. The hang ups you might encounter are: when using certain publishers that bookstores won't order from, the book event was booked too soon or the printer ruined a complete run and the books won't be there on time. Again, to prevent problems with the books is to make sure you set the launch out far enough that the bookstores will have the books for at least a week before. Patience is the key.

If your local bookstore will not order your book because of issues with your publisher's return policy or the cover price, you can try a work around. Ask if they will do a signing on consignment. There are a couple ways of doing a consignment book event.

Consignment #1: You bring in the books, the books are purchased through the register and the bookstore sends you a check in about a month for your percentage of the sales.

Consignment #2: You bring in the books, the books are purchased through the register and the bookstore orders the number of books sold and gives you the books.

Consignment #3: You bring in the books, sell from a cash box you are responsible for and give them their cut at the end of the event. The cut is usually 70% to you and 30% to them but can range to 60% to you and 40% to them. Make sure you discuss the cut so everyone is on the same page from the start.

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In the case that the printer ruined the run, hopefully you booked far enough out that it doesn't impact your event. If it does, you will have to reschedule your event. The way events calendars fill up in book stores, you may have to reschedule for a date a month out or more.

Poster: It is always a good idea to have a large poster of your book cover made to have at events. Many bookstores make their own posters but they may not and it looks more professional to have one of your own prepared. Your local print shop like FedEx Kinkos can make them but expect to pay \$40.00 or more per poster. There are several places online you can find with much lower overhead and lower costs. A simple google search for online poster printing gives you thousands of valid choices. Expect to pay \$20.00 or more per poster. FedEx Kinkos is a great place for peace of mind. You can go in face-to-face and ensure that the image you bring them will translate to a sharp poster. Also, you can ask them if they will price match. Online, you don't have that guarantee. Either way, always order 2 so you have a back-up in case the first one wears out or is lost.

Bookmarks: These are very simple to make on your own or order from someone. You want bookmarks at every location you are holding a signing for them to put on the counter and advertise the event. Make sure the bookmark has the cover image, your name, the event time and location and a short blurb about the book.

Signs: You will want to plaster stores, libraries and bulletin boards with the news of your event. It never hurts to have signs with the tear off tabs with the event, date and time and location printed on them.

Media: Submit the information on the event to every calendar of events you can find. This could be television, radio or print. Contacting media needs a complete white paper form to itself. Check our knowledge base for more articles on getting media coverage.

These are the main steps in launching a book event. If you need more information, please contact us with ideas on articles that should be in our knowledge base!