

# The Author's ADVOCATE



## Special Newsletter

May 2005

Published exclusively for the authors and associates of  
Infinity Publishing and Buy Books on the web.com

### 6<sup>th</sup> Annual “*Express Yourself...*” Authors’ Conference Sheraton Park Ridge at Valley Forge, PA, Sept. 29 – Oct. 2, 2005

Our 6<sup>th</sup> Annual “*Express Yourself...*” Authors’ Conference will be held at the Sheraton Park Ridge in Valley Forge, PA, on September 29 – October 2, 2005. On Thursday evening beginning at 6:00 pm, there will be an informal gathering at the Sheraton for participants arriving early. The official start of the conference will be at 9:00 am on Friday with welcoming remarks and introduction of presenters.

The full conference registration package costs \$639, including meals and lodging at the Sheraton for Friday and Saturday nights; the full package **without** lodging costs \$429. Discounted rooms will be available for Thursday and Sunday nights. Early conference registration is the key to not missing opportunities and increasing your benefits, such as guaranteeing you a one-on-one consultation with the publishing professional of your choice.

Come with a friend, share a room at the Sheraton, and we’ll register you both for \$869!!! If you divide it in half, your full packages will cost you \$434.50 each—and you’ll have a friend to share in the conference experience and to travel with.

Since our first very successful Authors’ Conference in September 2000, Infinity Publishing has assembled noted publishing professionals to present at our conferences. We continue to extend invitations to presenters who are directly involved in originating and developing new concepts in book publishing, distribution and marketing such as **Dan Poynter, John Kremer, Brian Jud, Melanie Rigney, Penny C. Sansevieri, and Bonnie Neubauer**. We select presenters who will gladly invest time interacting individually with conference attendees about their books and marketing goals. All attendees will have the opportunity to schedule a one-on-one consultation with a presenter at no additional cost. Your early registration will assure you a

meeting with your first choice. However, we also encourage all presenters to interact with attendees throughout the weekend. We rarely have a banquet head table so you might find yourself enjoying a meal while talking informally with a presenter or keynoter seated across the table from you.

Yes, we do have several presenters who are invited back each year because they continue to develop exciting new concepts, many of which are presented for the first time, using our conference as a platform to explain insightful developments in book marketing ideas and expanding avenues for distribution. All of our presenters are familiar with the ever-evolving publishing models, as well as being instrumental in influencing future changes in the industry. Book publishing models are changing in ways that prove beneficial to authors, and our expert presenters are in touch and in tune with the constant transitions that are reshaping the book publishing industry.

We are always on the lookout for potential presenters whose fresh and innovative ideas will provide direct benefits to attending authors. However, in favor of maintaining an affordable registration fee for participants we avoid those presenters with big egos that demand a high honorarium. As always, our goal is to assemble a highly diverse group of publishing and marketing experts who will provide you with timely, accurate, and exciting information and ideas on how to promote and market your book more successfully.

Visit our special conference website for updated information at: [www.authorsconference.com](http://www.authorsconference.com) To register, or if you have any questions, please call **Michelle Shane** at 1-877-BUY-BOOK and we’ll look forward to seeing you in September at the conference!!!

# The Benefit of Book Reviews

By Francine Silverman

The 1500 subscribers of my bi-weekly ezine, *Book Promotion Newsletter* are welcome to contribute articles, announcements, feedback, and queries. One reader has questioned the value of book reviews.

A compendium of the best marketing strategies of 325 subscribers, *Book Marketing from A-Z* (Infinity Publishing 2005) is in alphabetical order for ease of use, i.e. A for Advertising through Z for Zero Promotion - when the book sells itself. Since published in mid-March, the 400-page guide has garnered nine glowing reviews.

*How did I find these angels and are their reviews manna from heaven?*

Prior to publication, I began an on-line search for "book reviewers." On Amazon, I searched to see who reviewed books of the same genre and then "Googled" them. Some had websites so I was able to email my pitch letter. To my amazement, almost all were interested. In total, I collected 50 names of reviewers from both the U.S. and abroad.

The advantage of writing a book in the writing/publishing genre is that many reviewers are also authors and welcome the tips. In fact, five reviewer/authors have since subscribed to my newsletter!! Novelists and non-fiction writers on other subjects are urged to find reviewers likely to review their genre.

Some good sites for finding reviewers are: [www.geocities.com/ladyjiraff/reviewers.html](http://www.geocities.com/ladyjiraff/reviewers.html)

Reviewers International Organization <http://www.rio-reviewers.com>. Click "Our Members"

<http://webhome.idirect.com/~krmason/promo.htm#Reviewsites>

While rave reviews do not guarantee best sellers, they do have legs. Thus far, they've generated interviews, tele-seminars and invitations. Charlene Austin, founder/moderator of Writing Road, and founder/reviewer for Writers and Readers Network, featured her review of my book in the *Writing Road Newsletter*. As a result, I was invited to be guest author in her chat room.

Some review sites assign ratings to their reviews and authors whose books are highly rated can use this honor as promotional fodder. When Tami Brady's review at Blether ([www.blether.com](http://www.blether.com)) was first placed under "Latest Reviews," mine was the only book to receive a 10/10 - A Blether Gold Award. This represents "A truly exceptional read, the finest example of a genre, a book

in which the reviewer can find no fault, and which will usually have universal appeal."

**Liana Metal's** review at <http://lianametal.tripod.com> was subsequently accepted by Midwest Book Review (MBR) and featured as part of the "Reviewers Recommend" column in the April 2005 issue of *Reviewer's Bookwatch*, where it will remain for at least 12 months. The review will also be included in "Book Review Index", an interactive CD-ROM series for corporate, academic and public library systems.

In the interim, **Shirley Johnson**, senior reviewer at MBR, also wrote a beautiful review to appear on the site in May. I asked **Jim Cox**, its Editor-in-Chief, about the implications of two reviews of a book on the same site. "It's been my observation that the more reviews the better—even when appearing in the same publication or website," he responded. "That's because different reviewers bring different qualities, abilities, degrees of expertise, and experience levels to assessing the same books; readers will sometimes see one review but not the other. There's no such thing as too much publicity."

Is there a magic number? **Carolyn Howard-Johnson**, author of *The Frugal Book Promoter* (Star Publish 2004), maintains that an author is *branded* after 7 reviews. "In terms of branding, reviews are quite important," she says.

## MARKETING THE UNMARKETABLE:

AN APPROACH TO NICHE MARKETING

By Judith Trustone

When I was contracted to teach a creative writing class at Graterford, the 5th largest maximum security prison in the country, I had no idea that 6 years later I'd be running a national, non-profit organization dedicated to giving voice to the voiceless. Like most middle-class white people, I had no idea what goes on in prisons, though from my involvement in the civil rights, peace and feminist movements, I knew they were bad places.

As a writer, I thought I'd get some interesting scenes to use later and maybe some interesting tales. But when I listened, and my students presented evidence of their innocence, I was, as Sister Helen Prejean, wrote in *Dead Man Walking*, *cracked wide open*. I was shocked by the brutality, the dehumanization and the total ineffectiveness of our prison system, which I call *Shadow America* where we warehouse our *Thrownaway People*.

Let me state clearly that there are some violent people from whom the community must be protected, and there are many dedicated people working in prisons. But the

majority of those we incarcerate are poor people, mostly of color, 70% of whom can't read, 70% of whom have addictions and are imprisoned due to Draconian sentencing laws passed in the 80's.

After a few months, as I discovered brilliance behind bars, I was determined to wake up America with their stories. My goal wasn't just to publish a book about their lives but to awaken public compassion so we can create alternatives to this expensive, ineffective 19th Century system. The first half of *Celling America's Soul* is their stories and those of their loved ones. Involving the families was crucial, for I wanted to show how the broken criminal justice system impacts on all of us.

I selected **Infinity** because it was an easy drive from my house! Special Projects Director **John F. Harnish** was skeptical at first about there being a market for a book by and about prisoners. But I was on a mission and would not be discouraged. I was inspired by the 19th century journalist, Nellie Bly, whose insight into mental hospitals recorded in Bedlam proved crucial in improving conditions.

When prison officials learned that I was bringing out stories of the truth from behind prison walls, they began to harass me, and I began to feel just a tiny bit of what life behind bars is like. When they wanted me to submit to a full-body search, I refused, saying this was rape; I quit or was fired, depending on whom you ask. This only strengthened my passion for justice. My book project continued, with lots of letters and phone calls. When *Celling America's Soul* came out, prison officials confiscated it and the book was banned. I threatened to tell all on "**Oprah**", so they lifted the ban.

The prisoners were ecstatic; their families sold the books from the trunks of their cars in the inner city and in neighborhood beauty and barber shops where mothers autographed copies for their sons. Prisoners call it the best book in print that describes prison from most every perspective. They said they finally *exist*. In an Oklahoma prison, they read the only copy as a group. Parents use it as a prevention tool with troubled teens. College professors use it in their criminology classes.

Publishing a book is like starting a new business. While I was known and respected by the prisoners involved, I still had to establish credibility within the Black community and those involved in criminal justice reform. This has taken time, but I am now being invited to speak at conferences and have become nationally known as an advocate for imprisoned writers. Too often, people get material from prisoners and then leave and do their thing, leaving the prisoners feeling exploited. I've worked hard to keep this from happening

by maintaining communication and sending them each a share of royalties. A Washington-based foundation sent out e-mails about SageWriters books to thousands of college libraries. Through that mailing, I've connected with a criminology professor, a new SageWriter, who has two books in progress. An unexpected source of support has been inmates on death row, many of whom have international connections, especially in Europe.

**Tom Gregory**, Infinity's visionary president, gave his full support to SageWriters and Infinity has honored me as one of their Authors Who Make A Difference. Last year, SageWriters produced two more books, *Healing Our Imprisoned Minds: A People's Guide to Hope & Freedom* by SageWriters Senior Editor, **Patrick Middleton**, Ph.D., the ONLY prisoner in America to earn his B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. while incarcerated, and *Contemplations of a Convict: A Journey To Freedom When Innocence Isn't Enuf* by SageWriters Program Consultant **Anton Forde**. Each book needs its specific marketing approach, something I now know about thanks to Infinity's annual conferences.

Here's how it works. As much as possible, using prisoners' skills and expertise, we decide to accept a manuscript. Then I identify a volunteer Mentor, someone willing to type the manuscript onto a CD prior to publication. When appropriate, I use prisoners' art inside or for the cover. I approach sympathetic Patrons, who pay the cost of the set-up. I recruit Reviewers to read and review our books and to help get special sections of independent bookstores dedicated to the work of prisoners. The first \$500 in royalties goes back to SageWriters to fund a book by another imprisoned writer. Each of these volunteers is transformed as they connect with the humanity of the author. We have ten more books at various stages in the pipeline. After funding all of this myself, after six years I realized that I had to set up a non-profit and seek foundation support.

At Infinity's conference in 2003, **John Kremer** told me that *Celling America's Soul* was a national book, not to waste too much time on local press, and to write a screenplay treatment of the book and get it to Susan Sarandon's production company, that "she'll love this book!" I connected with an experienced screenwriter/producer/director, got a grant from the Leeway Foundation for women artists, and we're ready to have an agent shop the screenplay treatment around.

**Judith Trustone** is the Director of SageWriters.com, Box 215, Swarthmore, PA 19081; co-author with 7 prisoners, *Celling America's Soul: Torture & Transformation In Our Prisons*, published by Infinity in 2003. She has earned national acclaim for her efforts to expand awareness about the treatment of prisoners.

## How can I get my book into bookstores nationally???

This is perhaps the most frequently asked question, and while there's no single promotional avenue for reaching every library and bookseller in the nation, Bowker has created a program that has the potential for expanding a book's exposure. It's especially useful for promoting fiction because it provides what the buyer wants to see – a sample of the story - the most important aspect of selling novels.

The most critical chapter of a novel is the first chapter. Hopefully the author has skillfully baited the book-hook with enough enticement to compel the browser to buy the book and read more. The problem has been how to make the first chapter directly available to book buyers in a format that can be read and ordered easily.

Our online bookstore, [www.buybooksontheweb.com](http://www.buybooksontheweb.com), includes a sneak-peek of the first thousand words. However, some potential buyers want to read the entire first chapter before making a buying decision. R.R. Bowker has introduced **First Chapter** as new way for promoting books directly to bookstores and libraries.

**Hilda Maaskant, First Chapter Project Manager**, explained in a recent interview, "Placing your title in the **First Chapter Program** will expand your book's positive presence within the established library vendor and book buyer's arena. Professional book buyers are extremely loyal to their resources. Today's technology has made it possible to greatly expand the availability of your book on the Internet. However, finding the right resource sites can be very challenging and costly. Bowker is offering you an opportunity that will enhance your marketing efforts by assuring your **First Chapter** will be included in resource websites frequently visited by book buyers."

The book buyer resource websites include:

**BUY.COM** reaches 1 million hits & 10,000 unique users in single day and set first-year record with \$125 million in sales

**BN.COM (Barnes & Nobles)**: consumer site that provides online ordering for individual book orders.

**Title Source (Baker & Taylor)** distributor: will provide information for as many wholesaler as possible

**Ingram iPage**: adds additional ordering functions

**OCLC (Online Computer Library Center)**: library vendors (online catalogs: World Cat, First Search). OCLC Online Computer Library Center

The first chapter of your book will also be available for many to read at **BooksInPrint.com** and **Bookwire.com**

In addition, the author will receive an HTML/XML excerpt of their first chapter for the purpose of posting it on the author's website for viewing and downloading by visitors.

Excerpts will be included in the regular distributions of the **Chapter One** program distributed by **Syndetics, Inc.**, which will be integrated with library service vendors and its library clients. Additional **First Chapter** distribution includes all websites with annual agreements with **Dial-A-Book** to receive all files created for **Chapter One**. These websites currently include those of **Books-in-Print-on-Line, OCLC (for World-Cat/FirstSearch), Barnes & Noble, Buy.com, Baker & Taylor Title Source II, and Ingram's iPage.**

The cost of placing a book in the **First Chapter Program** is **\$500**, however, we have negotiated a special arrangement with Bowker. The price per title for Infinity authors is **\$275**, and Infinity will provide Bowker with the author's book. To participate in this new co-operative program call Michelle Shane toll-free at 877-BUY-BOOK.

## BookExpo America (BEA) Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, NYC

This year **BookExpo America** rotates to **New York** and the exhibition hall will be open June 3-5. Infinity Publishing will not sponsor a booth at BEA because it isn't a cost-effective means of promoting Infinity titles. The cost of exhibiting would be approximately \$15,000 or more. We have found the most effective use of our time at the BEA is spent networking and attending special seminar sessions for publishers. Infinity's association with Bowker is a direct result of networking last year at the BEA held in Chicago.

Registration for publishing professionals to attend BEA is \$110 for a 3-day pass, a single day pass is \$70. There is no discount available nor can we get free passes. This is an expensive show and we have discovered our best course of action is to walk the floor looking for book promotional and marketing ideas that can be adapted to work for Infinity.

**Writer's Digest Magazine** is putting on a special 1-day BEA Writer's Conference on Wednesday, June 1, and **Bonnie Neubauer** will be one of their presenters.

Take care and enjoy often...John