



WLOV NEWSLETTER

June 1, 2018

REGISTRATION OPEN TO ALL VILLAGERS AND NON-VILLAGERS FOR HOLIDAY EXPO '18 — ALMOST FULL!!! SEE JIM MEYER, PAGE 3



Message from Your Newsletter Editor

By Larry Martin
drlarry437@gmail.com

This issue contains information about upcoming events, as well as contributions from several of our members. As always, if you have something you wish to contribute to the newsletter, please send it to me. This may include:

- a blog post about some subject related to writing/publishing
- information about your own book(s) of special interest to WLOV members (e.g., unique experience in publishing or marketing)
- an announcement about awards, books signings or other activities related to your book
- an announcement of services you can offer to the writing community, such as editing or cover design

Summer is a slow time in TV, with snowbirds gone and many permanent residents visiting family up north or taking summer vacations (including yours truly). While our next regular meeting is not until August 1st, we do have some activities planned for June and July (see Events Listing). The Newsletter will be on hiatus during the summer, and resume with the September issue. Until then, anything important for our members to know will be communicated via email.

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WLOV Calendar of Upcoming Writing-related Events

DATE	EVENT
Wed, June 6	No regular WLOV meeting. On this date there will be a WLOV-sponsored field trip to Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings home and State Park; see President's Message, below.
Sat, June 23	Florida Writers Association all-day workshop Altamonte Springs, FL: Do It Yourself Marketing . Open to non-FWA members. https://floridawriters.net/conferences/focus-diy-marketing/
Thurs, July 12	WLOV Ice Cream Social , 6:30 – 8:30 p.m., Laurel Manor Rec Center, with skit produced by Mark Newhouse; see President's Message, below.
Wed, Aug 1	General Meeting, Laurel Manor Rec Center, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m. Lt. Siemer, Sumter County Sherriff's Office, will speak on police procedures. Should be of interest to all who write crime fiction.
Wed, Sept 5	General Meeting, Laurel Manor Rec Center, 8:30 a.m. Initially there will be a half-hour business meeting. From approximately 9 a.m. until noon, Anne Dalton, General Counsel for the Florida Writers Association, will speak on copyright and contract issues for authors. There will be a nominal charge for non-members (no charge for WLOV members).



Message from Your President



Our May 2nd meeting was informative, somewhat sad, and full of bittersweet fun. In addition to a presentation by Barbara Miller on the changes that Amazon is making to CreateSpace (see page 7), we threw a farewell party for Mary Lois Sanders, who is moving to Texas. We presented her with a signed poster and a book of tributes entitled "Mary Lois Sanders – This is Your Life" (for more pics from this event, see page 4). Mark Newhouse (and friends) put on a skit, "Mary Lois, Where Are You." The skit chorus was sung to the tune of "Car 54, Where Are You" (trust me, you had to be there!). We did our best to let Mary Lois

know how much she will be missed.

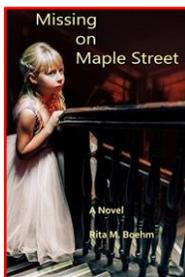
Lots of activities to announce for the next few months:

On June 6th a group of WLOV members will make a field trip to Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings State Park. I'm embarrassed to admit I've never read any of Ms. Rawlings works. I took the easy way out to remedy that situation and borrowed DVDs of "Cross Creek" and "The Yearling" from the library. I was surprised to learn that The Yearling was filmed in 1946, and features a very young Gregory Peck and Jane Wyman. I enjoyed both stories.



Clear your calendars for July 12th to attend an ice cream social at 6:30 pm at Laurel Manor Rec Center. Like last year, spouses and significant others are invited to join us for ice cream and a special performance by our 'skit-meister' Mark Newhouse. This year's skit will be Halloween-themed. The picture here shows participants from last year's hilarious skit.

Are you ready for "I Scream for Ice Cream"? If you are planning to attend, please RSVP to ritab1423@gmail.com by July 6th. We'd hate to run out of ice cream, so please don't forget to let me know that you will be joining us.



On August 1st we return to our regularly scheduled monthly meetings. Our speaker, Lt. Robert Siemer, Villages District Supervisor of the Sumter County Sheriff's Office, will discuss police procedures. If you've ever struggled with 'who does what' when it comes to the police and legal system (and I know I have), Lt. Siemer will try to answer your questions. I met Lt. Siemer when I interviewed him for my latest book, *Missing on Maple Street*. He was very helpful. Thanks to him, I believe I created a more realistic story structure by adding a detective in at the right time.

Our September 5th meeting will be a bit unique in format. We are fortunate to be able to schedule a 3-hour morning presentation by our guest speaker, Anne Dalton, General Counsel for the Florida Writers Association. Thanks to the Creative Writers Group's willingness to share their Wednesday morning space, we will have an uninterrupted session on copyright law and other related issues. If you have ever wondered about your liability if you quote song lyrics or another author's prose in your work, or if you are unsure about your own rights in regard to publishing, don't miss this meeting. Non-members of WLOV are welcome to attend for a \$10 fee. We will be sending out an invitation to other Villages writing and critique groups. *Note: we will take a short break at the end of our usual meeting time in case anyone has to leave.*

On a more general note, I am excited to announce that Penny Thomas has agreed to take on the role of President Elect. As you know, this important position has gone unfilled for almost half of 2018. A formal vote will be held at our August meeting to make it official. Her novel, *As the Prop Turns*, won a Mystery Writers of America award (for more about Penny, see below). She brings both experience and fresh ideas to the group. I look forward to working with her.

Stay cool (and hydrated) as the weather grows warmer. This will be my second Florida summer. As a hopeless optimist, I'm counting on last year's record-breaking heat being an anomaly.

Rita Boehm

ritab1423@gmail.com



Penny Thomas

Welsh born, Penny Thomas spent her first few decades in Egypt, Portugal, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates. Then, a stroke of luck took her to the United States. Corporate life in New York City provided her with a multitude of plot lines to indulge her passion for writing fiction. A spur of the moment decision, brought upon by an industry-wide layoff, prompted Penny to give up the pleasures of Gotham and move to Central Florida. Penny holds a B.S. from Pace University, New York, NY and a M.F.A. from Seton Hill University, Greensburg, PA. Her thesis novel, *As the Prop Turns*, won Mystery Writers of America, Florida Chapter's *Freddie Award for Writing Excellence*.

HOLIDAY EXPO Update – Waiting list when we reach 90 registrants

by Jim Meyer



The next Central Florida Book & Author EXPO, sponsored by the Writers League of the Villages (WLOV), will be held on Saturday, December 8, 2018 from 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Eisenhower Recreation Center in The Villages. WLOV is returning to a pre-Christmas date for the annual Expo, to take advantage of the holiday book buying season.

Registration for tables began May 2, 2018 for WLOV members, and now is open to any and all authors (whether or not Villages residents). As of Memorial Day weekend we had 80 authors signed up. **We will be accepting applications until June 30th.** If you haven't yet turned in your application, please don't wait. **Once we have reached our goal of 90 authors we will start a waiting list.** To sign up, go to www.wlov.org home page, download and print out the application, fill it in, attach your check and mail to Donna Beard, 110 Costa Mesa Drive, The Villages, FL 32159. The cost for WLOV members is \$45 for a 6-foot table (minimum of 3 books required) and \$35 for a 3-foot table (1 or 2 books). For non-WLOV members, the cost will be \$60 and \$45, respectively. **All questions should be directed to me at jacobsgrampy@msn.com.**

WLOV Meeting May 2nd



At the May 2nd meeting, WLOV member Barbara Miller spoke on recent changes in CreateSpace. The self-publishing platforms CreateSpace and KDP are changing rapidly. Information presented in her talk has been updated and greatly expanded, and is presented on page 7.

Tribute to Mary Lois Sanders

At our May 2nd meeting we also paid tribute to long-time member Mary Lois Sanders, who is moving to Texas. WLOV President Rita Boehm solicited tributes from club members and published them in a book, which she handed out to Mary Lois and all the contributors (cover shown in President's Message, page 3; below is a poster of the cover with signed good wishes from our members). Then, Mark Newhouse directed and presented a skit he authored, honoring Mary Lois. The pictures below from the May 2nd meeting are also posted on our Facebook page, courtesy of Rita Boehm.



Local Writing, Publishing Services

Editor's Note: WLOV members and local editors/publishers are welcome to announce their author services (writing, publishing, and/or marketing). The following WLOV members have submitted information about the services they offer.

WLOV Member John Prince



I have four decades of experience providing author services (that CreateSpace has recently abandoned). These include editing, proofreading, cover and page design, pagination/book set-up, photo/document scanning and enhancement, and file creation/uploading for CreateSpace, KDP, IngramSpark, iBooks, Nook and others. I offer discounts for WLOV members. For more information go to www.GoMyStory.com or call 757-439-7700.

Below are a la carte rates for individual services. I combine services to give you “best price” based on the scope of the project. I accept cash, checks, major credit cards and Paypal.

Author Services (WLOV members get 12% reduction off these rates)

Consultation	No Charge
Ghostwriting	\$79.00/hour
MS Editing	\$49.00/hour
Proofreading	\$3.75/typed, double-spaced MS page
Cover Design	\$399.00
Interior Page Design	\$129.00
Book Setup/Pagination	\$3.40/book page
Photo/Doc scans	\$7.99 per scan
Photoshop	\$39.00/hour

WLOV Member Mark Newhouse



My son and I have a new company, Newhouse Creative Group, that offers a range of publishing services. You may contact Keith at the email shown in the ad, or myself for more information, at mark@newhouse.net.

WLOV Member Paula Howard

EDITOR / PROOFREADER



Award-winning writer, journalist, newspaper editor with over 35 years' experience, now available for individual projects.

- Writing/editing
- Proofreading
- Interviewing/presentations
- Freelance Writer
- Full time resident of The Villages

Prices vary...consultation and quote at no cost.

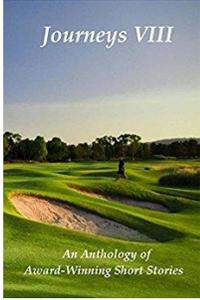
Please call Paula F. Howard, RN, APR

Cell: 407-432-9931 -- or visit www.paulahoward.com and send me an email.

I will respond promptly.

It's your project...let me help you succeed!

Journeys Deadline is June 30, 2018



There are dozens of writing contests for aspiring authors, some national in scope, others local. The Florida Writers Association RPLA and Collection stories contest deadline was April 30. There is still time to enter Journeys.

Journeys is an anthology of short stories chosen by a contest committee, with the winners published in a volume called *Journeys*. It is run by WLOV's Mary Lois Sanders, and is now in its 11th year. Maximum story length is 3000 words. The deadline for submissions is June 30, 2018, with the results announced in October, and *Journeys XI* to be published in December. The fee per story entry is \$20. Click on link below for contest guidelines.

http://wlov.weebly.com/uploads/2/4/3/6/24362452/cwn_journeys_xi_short_story_contest_guidelines.pdf

Another Writing Competition

Winning Writers

North Street Book Prize for Self-Published Books

Have you self-published a book? Searching for high-quality ways to honor and promote it? Enter Winning Writers' fourth North Street competition, co-sponsored by BookBaby and Carolyn Howard-Johnson (author of *The Frugal Book Promoter*).

We've expanded to five categories this year: Mainstream/Literary Fiction, Genre Fiction, Creative Nonfiction & Memoir, Poetry (new), and Children's Picture Book (new). The top winner in each category will win \$1,000, one grand prize winner will win \$3,000, and all will receive additional benefits to help market their books. Any year of publication is eligible. Entry fee: \$60 per book. Deadline: June 30.

Submit online via Submittable or by mail. Please see our guidelines, past winners, and judges' remarks at winningwriters.com/north

WLOV member Penny Thomas writes: "Hope Clark is a reputable person and has endorsed this competition." The deadline is June 30th.

<https://winningwriters.com/our-contests/north-street-book-prize>

Newsletter Editor's note: The winningwriters.com website provides links to other sites about writing contest and publishing scams, and how to identify and avoid them. Check out these two.

<https://winningwriters.com/resources/category/scam-busting>

<https://winningwriters.com/the-best-free-literary-contests/contests-to-avoid>

NORTH STREET BOOK PRIZE

FOR SELF-PUBLISHED BOOKS

WIN \$3,000

\$9,250 IN TOTAL PRIZES

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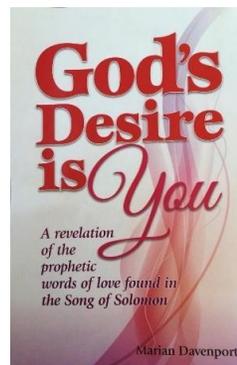
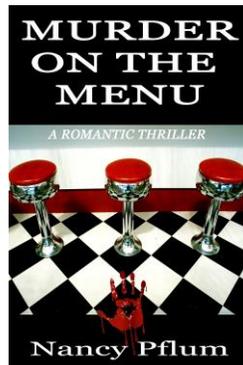
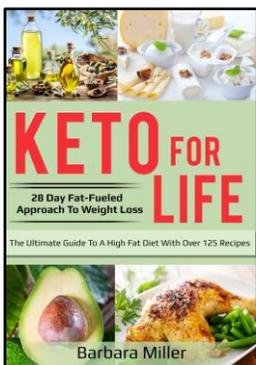
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WINNINGWRITERS.COM/NORTH

WITH BOOKBABY AND CAROLYN HOWARD-JOHNSON

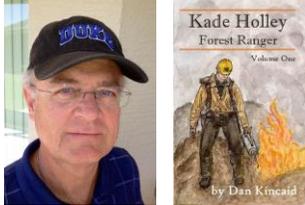
New Titles added to WLOV Catalogue since last meeting

If you wish your book listed in the catalogue, which is posted at www.wlov.org (under Villages Book Catalogues), please send me a high resolution picture of the cover, a short blurb, and the Amazon link (drlarry437@gmail.com). The catalogue is for books published 2016-2018. Books added since our May 2nd general meeting are shown below.



News Articles about WLOV Members

A new feature has been added to our website, www.wlov.org: News Items about our members. You'll find it by clicking on "WLOV Newsletters & News Items" on the home page Table of Contents (shown right). If you have a news article about your writing or a recently published book, send a picture of the full article to me (drlarry437@gmail.com); a link to it will appear in the next Newsletter and also be posted on the web site. Below are the first two entries.



Villages Daily Sun Newspaper article on Dan Kincaid

http://wlov.weebly.com/uploads/2/4/3/6/24362452/dan_newspaper_story_051018.pdf



Villages Daily Sun Newspaper article on Estella Shivers

<http://wlov.weebly.com/uploads/2/4/3/6/24362452/shiversnewsarticlejan172018.pdf>

In addition to the above print articles, WLOV member John Prince has authored a number of author profiles for the online Villages-new.com. Below are the links.



Rita Boehm: <https://villages-news.com/riding-writing-villagers-passions/>

Jolyn Burt: <http://www.villages-news.com/former-teacher-enjoys-rug-hooking-tutoring-found-new-husband-divorce/>

Jack Hayes: <https://villages-news.com/villager-treasures-baseball-glove-given-legendary-ted-williams/>

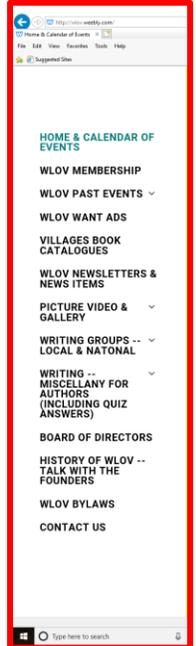
Mark Newhouse: <https://villages-news.com/villager-who-is-son-of-holocaust-survivors-creates-childrens-coloring-book-puppy-passover/>

Rosamond van der Linde: <https://villages-news.com/villagers-brought-together-through-online-dating-site-spend-their-days-writing-together-side-by-side/>

CreateSpace No Longer Offering Paid Author Services

By Barbara Miller and Larry Martin

- This spring Amazon laid off 58 employees in its CreateSpace headquarters (in North Charleston, South Carolina). As result, all CreateSpace *paid author services* were discontinued as of April 20. Thus CreateSpace no longer offers book cover design, editing, and interior formatting. If you don't use or intend to use paid services from CreateSpace, this change will not affect you; CS still offers print-on-demand publishing. They also still have the unique feature of instant call-back when you enter your phone number in the contact page.
- In addition to ceasing paid author services, CS also removed their eStore option last year. Speculation is that CS may eventually merge with KDP into a single Amazon-owned company.



- Books currently on CS will not be affected by the recent removal of paid author services. If CS does eventually merge with KDP, books you have on CS will (presumably) be migrated over to KDP, <https://kdp.amazon.com/>.
- Originally KDP was for ebooks only, but they now *also* publish print books if you use them for your ebook. KDP has a web page that answers questions related to print publishing your ebook. https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G202059560. As with CS, you will need to have your print file fully formatted before publishing it on KDP. (See following section on KDP.)
- In addition to CS, Ingram Spark also offers print-on-demand publishing to self-publishers: <http://www.ingramspark.com/>.
- Thus the self-published author has three choices for low cost print-on-demand.
 - <https://wwwcreatespace.com/>. Upload a fully-formatted, cover-ready book to CreateSpace; there is no charge. You may use CS's ISBN or your own. You can request a proof copy of the book for a small fee.
 - <https://kdp.amazon.com/>. Upload a fully-formatted, cover-ready book to KDP; there is no charge. See below for more on KDP. You may use KDP's ISBN or your own. You can request a proof copy of the book for a small fee.
 - <http://www.ingramspark.com/>. Upload a fully-formatted cover-ready book to Ingram Spark; they charge \$49 for this service. You must purchase your own ISBN, either from Ingram Spark or directly from Bowker (see below). You can request a proof copy of the book for a small fee.
- You can get a free ISBN number from CS and KDP, but there are drawbacks. CS and KDP will own that ISBN and consequently in *Books in Print* your book will show the publishing imprint to be CreateSpace or KDP, and not the author. This means you cannot get your book in book stores as the books are not returnable. It also (generally) means libraries will not order your book.
- Authors can remove their book from CS expanded distribution and purchase their own ISBN through Bowker or Ingram Spark. You must set yourself up as the publisher and change your copyright page, and then republish your book. If you want a greater reach, and more opportunities for getting into book stores and libraries, consider publishing with Ingram Spark with your own ISBN, purchased either directly from Ingram or through Bowker: <http://www.bowker.com/products/ISBN-US.html>.

KDP

By Larry Martin

Kindle Direct Publishing seems to be positioning itself as the new go-to site for low-cost/no-cost book production by self-publishers. However, unlike CreateSpace, at present KDP offers no real-time support, and does not have a number to call. Emails to KDP Support are answered in 1-3 business days, hardly conducive to solving problems while you're online. This is not a big hurdle with Kindle ebooks, as their software takes care of most formatting issues when you upload a Word document, and it's easy to see how the book will look on Kindle. However, for print books, formatting is critical; you should either be well versed in using Word, or hire someone who can help you. To use KDP, go to <https://kdp.amazon.com/> (screen shown here) and sign in with your Amazon account.

Self-publish eBooks and paperbacks for free with Kindle Direct Publishing, and reach millions of readers on Amazon.

Get to market fast. Publishing takes less than 5 minutes and your book appears on Kindle stores worldwide within 24-48 hours.

Make more money. Earn up to 70% royalty on sales to customers in the US, Canada, UK, Germany, India, France, Italy, Spain, Japan, Brazil, Mexico, Australia and more. Enroll in KDP Select and earn more money through Kindle Unlimited and the Kindle Owners' Lending Library.

Keep control. Keep control of your rights and set your own list prices. Make changes to your books at any time.

Publish in digital and print. Publish Kindle eBooks and paperbacks for free on KDP.

Get started today! Self-publish with KDP for free. [Learn how easy it is.](#)

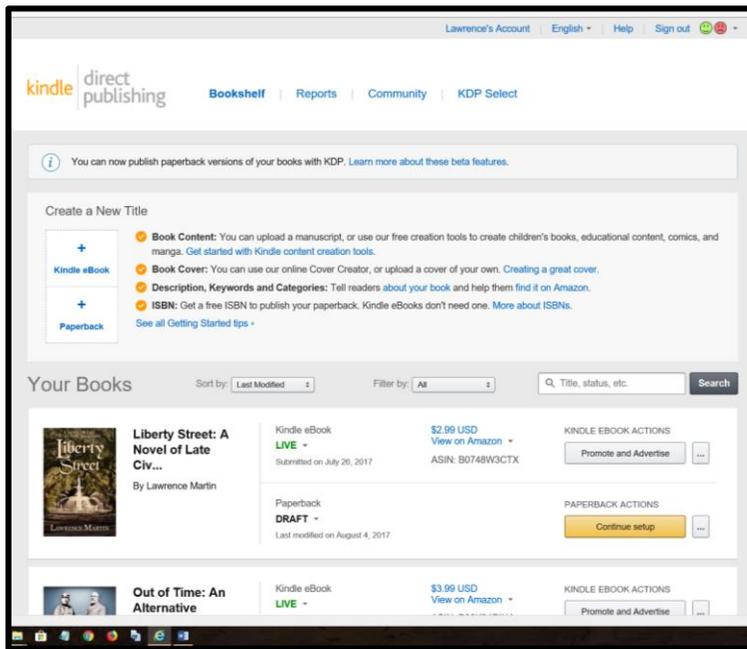
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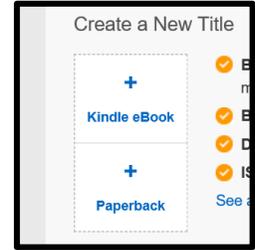
Not Licensed? Click [here](#) to sign in as a different user. You will be signed in using our secure server.

Learn more about publishing popular genres on KDP:

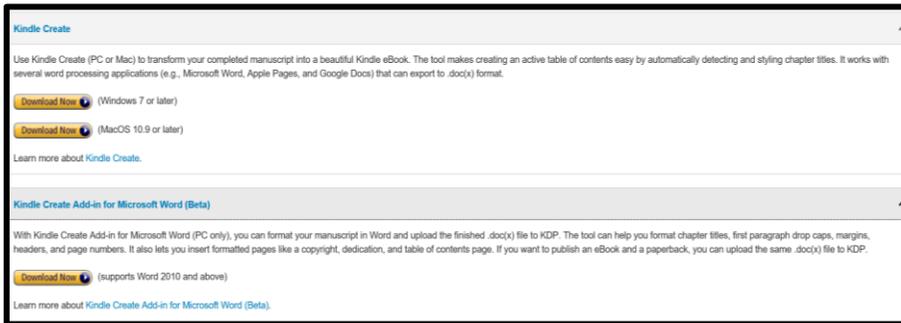
- Business & Investing
- Comics & Graphic Novels
- Education & Textbooks
- KDP Kids
- Literature & Fiction
- Mystery, Thriller & Suspense
- Non-Fiction
- Romance
- Science Fiction & Fantasy
- Teens & Young Adult



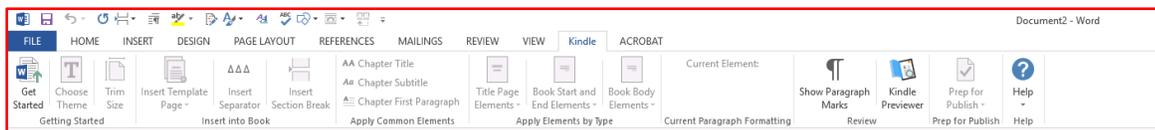
Once signed in, you will see important information at the top under “Create a New Title” and, if you have published with KDP, a list of your books at the bottom. You now have the option of clicking “Kindle eBook” or “Paperback”. In either selection, you will be asked for details about your book, and then can upload your file.



To the right of these two options is the link **Book Content** to access KDP Tools and Resources. When you click on this you get the screen shown below; it states you can download software to help with formatting for “Kindle Create” (for ebook only) and “Kindle Create Add-in for Microsoft Word (Beta)”, for ebook and print. For the latter, the software is supposed to allow you to “format chapter titles, first paragraph drop caps, margins, headers, and page numbers,” among other things.



Unfortunately, what ends up being downloaded is not intuitive to use. First, you get only Kindle Previewer on your desktop, a tool that allows you to see what your book will look like in Kindle. To do the type of editing promised under “Kindle Create Add-in for Microsoft Word (Beta)”, you have to go back to your blank Word screen, where you will now find “Kindle” at the top right (see below); click on that and you will then see pop up on the far left, “Get Started.”

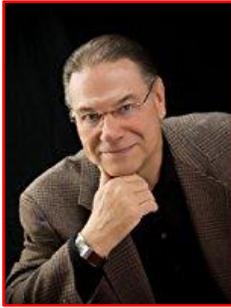


From here it gets more complicated, and is not in the least intuitive. The KDP website offers videos to help you navigate how to edit using these tools, but the process seems designed mainly for Word experts, who don’t need these download tools to begin with. In a nutshell, the downloads under “Book Content” seem overly complicated and confusing, and you won’t find easy support from KDP. Unlike with CreateSpace, there is no human available to answer questions right away, or help lead you through the process. Enter your phone number in CS, and they call you back instantly. That feature does not exist in KDP.

The lack of real-time human support is less of an issue with the ebook, because formatting isn’t so important in the Word file you upload; the Kindle software strips out headers, footers and page numbers (if you have them), and you can easily view the book before publishing it. Also, once published, you can easily make changes and upload a new file. The problem comes with a print book—it must be fully formatted when you upload it, which requires either significant expertise in Word, or hiring someone to help. Things are in a state of flux with CS and KDP. At this writing, the consensus advice is to still use CS for print, and KDP only for ebooks.

Summary recommendation for most self-published authors (subject to change):

- Kindle for ebook
- CreateSpace for print book



A Candid Conversation with WLOV Member David Bishop About His Books (continued)

By Larry Martin

This is part two of an interview with WLOV member David Bishop, about his books. Part 1 appeared in the May WLOV Newsletter, and is available on the WLOV website, www.wlov.org (Click on Newsletters).

LM: How much time did it take you to do these shorter works [two novelettes and a novella, described in last month's newsletter], and how long are they?

DB: I mostly wrote each one in a month and published it in the following month while writing the next one. As for word counts, the numbers for a novelette and novella are a matter of loosely defined professional standards. For me, short stories are under 10,000 words, a novelette is up to 20,000 words, and a novella is up to 40,000 words, with novels above 40,000 words. These are rough guidelines. Other authors may use somewhat different cutoffs for each category, but these word counts are solid representative word counts for each category of abbreviated fiction. As for the three of mine we're discussing: My novella, *The Twists and Turns of Matrimony and Murder* is about 35,000 words. It's interesting to note that the word count for these famous stories: *Double Indemnity*, 30,000 words; *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, 30,000; *Of Mice and Men*, 30,000; and *The Old Man and The Sea*, 26,000 words. All these great and famous stories have word counts which are quite similar in length to the size of modern novellas. Novels today (in my mind) are too long.

LM: Do you see yourself writing more of these shorter/abbreviated fictional stories?

DB: I think so, although I don't have any others currently in development. There are a great number of stories that can be told in a very entertaining fashion in far less than the mystery-novel standard of 60,000 to 80,000 plus words. Arguing against doing more of them is that novels sell better than abbreviated fiction. Six of my twelve indie-published novels have an Amazon store ranking better than 100,000th, with two over 100,000th and two over 300,000th [the lower the number the more units were sold. The rankings in the Kindle Store fluctuate widely. The rankings shown in this answer was accurate when written. I will write more novelettes and novellas as stories come to me that "feel" like abbreviated fiction.

LM: How do your recent shorter works compare with your most recent full-length novel, in terms of sales?

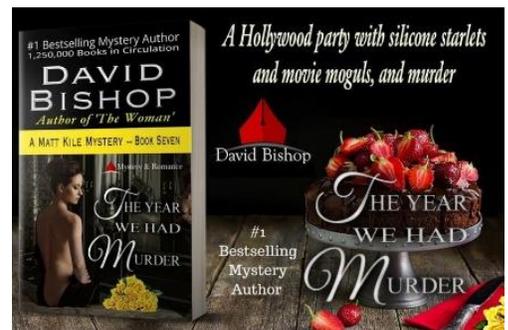
DB: So far the Kindle Store rankings of my novelettes and novella are holding generally in line with my full length novels. Some further contrast can be seen by comparing the three recent abbreviated stories to my latest full length novel released in May 2017. *The Year We Had Murder*. I only have Amazon sales data for the first 7 months, during which it sold 352 e-books, some print books (perhaps a dozen); in addition, during the giveaway period, there were 941 free downloads. This is a later story in the Matt Kile Series so I rarely put it on special. Most of the e-book sales were at its regular \$4.99 Kindle price.

Amazon: 73 reviews with 4.8 avg stars

Goodreads: 36 ratings at 4.3 avg stars.

<https://www.amazon.com/Year-Murder-Matt-Kile-Mystery-ebook/dp/B071LP7FHZ/>

The newer Amazon data by genre rates *The Year we Had Murder* 4.8 average stars as a "romance," 4.8 avg stars, as a "mystery," and 4.7 avg stars as a "thriller."



LM: You clearly have your finger on the pulse of data and sales. Is this something you recommend for all self-published authors? We hear so much about the importance of publicity and marketing.

DB: It's essential, in my mind. Without knowledge about sales and rankings, the opinions the author often hears about "how to market" or "how to publicize" simply lack any definitive support. I've heard far too many presenters talk on how you can have greater success selling your books. Then you look up and find their books have been out for years and have single digit reviews and are ranked 1.5 millionth in the Kindle store. To me, that always raises this question: "If this person writes books and gives presentations on to effectively increase book sales, why doesn't the sales of their own book reflect that knowledge?" That could also argue that their ideas have been proven incorrect by their lack of results. A word of caution: all too often existing books and also presentations on how to effectively write and market your genre fiction mix things that were traditionally true (and may still be) with respect to print books through a major publishing house together with things that are true with respect to modern independent publishing of digital books. The result being like a recipe for making applesauce that includes putting in oranges.

LM: But what, specifically, do you do to gain traction in sales. Blogs? Social media? Paid advertisements?

DB: I get a dozen or more blogs every month and delete nearly all of them without reading—not because I don't have interest but because I don't have the time. I've refused maybe a hundred invitations to subscribe to blogs and dozens of invites to be a guest writer for blogs. Based on my experience, a targeted newsletter is much more effective than a blog. I've seen no evidence showing blogging increases sales enough to warrant the investment of time needed to maintain a blog. Paid (sometimes free) advertising is what sells books in today book market. The email inboxes of today's book buyers are stuffed with offers of low/no cost books. Why go shop for a book when choices at low/no cost are brought to your inbox several times a week? This diminishes the number who read blogs and Facebook to discover a new book. The number one influence of which book most/many avid readers choose is still heavily influenced by friends and fellow book club members—and that brings us back to why "total circulation" is so important—more circulation leads to more sales.

LM: Other social media?

DB: I have a Facebook page, facebook.com/davidbishopbooks (see screen shot), and a Twitter page, twitter.com/davidbishop7, which I hardly use any longer due to the uninvited junk postings. On each I have something like 2,000 followers/friends or whatever each of the social media sites calls them. I put a lot of time into social media during my first couple of years writing. For me it's a good way to keep up with family members and some personal friends, and writing friends, but, as with blogs I've seen no evidence that social media increases book sales enough to warrant the substantial hunk of time it takes to stay active, especially on Facebook and Twitter.



LM: Do you have a newsletter?

DB: Yes, I do. Growing my subscribers count for my newsletter has been a major focus since about June of last year. My subscribers count is now approximately 8,000, a small number compared to many newsletters, but respectable for a ten-month effort. I've set a goal of having 12,500 subscribers by the end of this year. If the results from my newsletter continue as they have, I should reach 18,000 subscribers by the end of 2019.

LM: How do you manage thousands of subscribers? What software do you use, and do you use outside consultants to help with your marketing? How much do you spend on marketing?

DB: Readers can subscribe to my newsletter through my website. I use Mailerlite.com to maintain my subscriber list. As to consultants, I have a “webmistress” who keeps my website up to date and fresh. I use a marketing firm, but only to create and distribute my monthly newsletter. I also use a vendor to assist in the design of my covers and to format and upload my digital books and print books. So far, in my quest to expand all my books into audiobooks, I have retained the services of two different producers and narrators. Developing audiobooks requires a lot of time in addition to the costs.

My marketing costs vary widely from one month to the next. Excluding the producers/narrators of the audiobooks, for the above services I spend the amount that’s necessary for what I want to do each month. Most months it’s around \$800, but some months it’s much more. A few weeks ago I spent over a thousand dollars to buy a full-page color ad that will appear in the Mystery Writers of America’s Program for the 2018 Edgar Awards next month in New York’s Grand Hyatt Hotel. The Edgars are the Oscars of the mystery writing industry. In case any of your readers are wondering: no, I have not been nominated for an Edgar. I have never submitted any of my books to be considered for nomination. I may do that next year.

LM: So, in general terms, how much do you make a year from your writing, after deducting expenses?

DB: For the last couple of years my total marketing costs ranged from \$10,000 to \$12,000 per year.

After all expenses, I cleared more than \$1000 a week. However, I am altering my marketing plans, spending more on producing audiobooks, some full color advertising, and a recently-commissioned screenplay based on one of my novels. So this year I expect my net income will be somewhat less. I am confident the marketing changes will pay off in the future, so the net writing income should increase.

Here let me add something about the work involved. I spend 50+ hours in this job. Roughly half of that is actually writing stories. The other half is invested in: 1) writers groups, such as WLOV and critique groups; 2) planning and implementing marketing; 3) answering an average of 6-12 emails a week from readers; 4) getting out my monthly newsletter; 5) researching new or just different avenues (or vendors) for marketing; and 6) researching our industry so I can remain current on the changing landscape for Indie-authors. So many in our industry form unsupported and, often, inaccurate opinions. This research keeps me up-to-date with respect to the health and outlook for bookstores and the big publishers. Those two big players are the ocean on which our small writing boats float. I want the most current and factually supported opinions so I can reasonably navigate the changing conditions. This gives me the best chance to safely steer my small craft in the turbulence.

LM: With all your success, have you been approached by agents for traditional or royalty publishers?

DB: No. Could it happen? Sure. Will it happen? The odds against it are enormous. Traditional or royalty publishers are focused on getting more books from their major high-selling branded authors, not on finding new authors to publish. Many literary agency shops are struggling. Bookstores are trying to identify which current in-store authors they can discontinue as they downsize their stores. My research suggests that bookstores opened by Barnes & Noble during 2017 were less than half the size of their existing stores. Authors who are not already famous or celebrities have an all-but-impossible time getting a contract with a major publisher. And, those authors who do contract with a traditional publisher are faced with an ever-shrinking number of bookstores in which their books can be sold.

A related, but relevant, question remains: Is an author’s interests best served by contracting with a traditional publisher versus independently publishing his/her own stories? This question has many facets, but remains a critical one as each author decides which to pursue.

LM: Lots of authors love the writing but shy away at self-promotion. You clearly relish both.

DB: Like most Indie-authors, I prefer the writing. However, if we want to be a commercially successful writer, books must be sold. It isn't enough to just write a better book. We all know the old saying, "Build a better mousetrap and the world will beat a path to your door." The problem is, that's simply untrue. The truth can be made out of it by revising it this way: "Build a better mousetrap, and let the world know you have a better mousetrap, then the world will beat a path to your door." Marketing is the "let the world know you have it" part. Little or no marketing means little or no sales, which, in turn, means little or no cash flow from writing. Marketing of books is a constantly changing challenge.

For the past ten years I've heard some so-called experts on marketing books give the same tired spiel about "how." They've done this despite the pervasive changes that have occurred in different ways to market books. Applying old outdated methods, absent blind stumbling luck, is doomed to failure. Part of the problem is authors are hesitant, even reticent to say 'Here's what I do, here's the results I've gotten'. Part of the way I've answered some of your questions is to set an example of opening up with specific numbers to try and encourage authors not to keep playing an "island in a sea of competition." I currently have an open sharing exchange with a small group of Indies, but most hang onto their desire to operate in a vacuum. I hope the specificity of some of my replies encourages others to publish or otherwise exchange their efforts and results. I mean, Home Depot knows what Lowe's is doing to promote sales and what results they obtain. The old saying was, "Macys knows what Gimbels is doing." Unfortunately, Indie-authors have decided that secrecy best serves their interest. I don't agree. That's why I'm setting an example. WLOV could collect and compile data on marketing efforts, costs, and results from various sources. This would be a huge benefit to all its members, but to do it we would all have to be willing to take off our masks and bare our faces.

To be successful the Indie author must wear two hats: a creative hat for writing the stories, and a businessperson's hat to run their business and promote their product—the books they wrote. A writer can be an author and not market, but a writer cannot be a commercially viable author without marketing.

The best marketing is to produce another skillfully-written story. A great marketing strike can generate increased revenues for a few days, weeks at best. Another skillfully written, entertaining story can generate increased revenues for years, theoretically forever.

A great novel with no marketing is like a great racehorse with no jockey.

LM: What else is going on in your writing career?

DB: I commissioned a screenplay to be written for *The Woman*, book one in the Linda Darby series. The screenplay is completed, but so far I've not done anything to market it or to locate a film producer. Whether or not I will ever see it as a film is unknown, but step one, the screenplay, has been accomplished.

LM: What's your next book or books?

DB: I'm currently working on three books: 1) *Heart Strike*, which is book four in the Linda Darby/Ryan Testler series. It is about two-thirds done and I anticipate its release sometime in July or August. 2) A continuing story series which requires book one to be read first, then book two, etc. I will likely write the entire series—three or four novellas (about 100 pages each) before releasing the first one and then release one each month for three or four months. The first is 80% done. 3) An eighth Matt Kile mystery, just started. A fourth story, the third in the Jack McCall series is also bouncing around in my mind. I don't claim it as being in development as I have not yet typed a word of it.

LM: Thank you, David.

DB: And thank you for the opportunity to speak to these issues. I hope my fellow WLOV members will find my answers of interest.

Cartoons

We are all Snoopy...

