

The 2011 Printers Row Lit Fest in Chicago

Throughout the year Chicago proudly hosts several prominent literary events, and a popular favorite is the Printers Row Lit Fest. This past summer more than 150 exhibitors, including booksellers, publishers, writers associations, book clubs and media organizations, along with countless authors and celebrities, converged onto Chicago's South Loop to offer 120,000 visitors two days of literary excitement.

This year's festival gave book lovers the opportunity to meet many of their favorite authors. Among the most anticipated fiction writers attending the fair was Marcus Sakey, introducing his latest crime novel, *The Two Deaths of Daniel Hayes*, and discussing with Sean Chercover, (author of *Trigger City*) Marcus' upcoming TV series on the Travel Channel about cities and their infamous crimes. Fellow Chicago thriller novelist Jamie Freveletti was also on hand, moderating a panel with authors Kevin Guilfoile and Andrew Gross on the topic of thriller-writing techniques.

The literary festival included dozens of expert panels, book readings and other literary programs touching upon a wide range of genres and market segments. Mystery and thriller fans were treated to two other interesting panels: A presentation titled "The Future of the Mystery Novel," offering insights into the evolving genre by authors David Heinzmann, Andrew Grant, Luisa Buehler, and Sharon Fiffer; and another panel discussion titled "And Murder Most Cozy", featuring fiction authors Betty Hechtman, Ellery Adams, and Joelle Charbonneau and moderated by Julie Hyzy.



A busy Dearborn Street during the Printers Row Lit Fest

Anecdotal feedback from exhibitors seemed to show higher sales than last year. This was attributable to higher attendance and perhaps more books purchased per visitor. The weather also may have helped — remember the downpour at last year's fair? But for those organizing the show, there are lingering concerns. Exhibitors remain sensitive to the cost of attendance, which for some includes much more than renting a booth or table. Costs of travel, custom signage and promotional materials and giveaways add to an industry already constrained by tight margins, at least for print books. We can only hope that exhibitors continue to see the value of this fair in broader terms than mere profit.

While Chicago is not about to take the premier location for the publishing industry, it can be proud of a substantial presence, particularly in the numbers of authors, small/medium-sized publishers and retailers. The Printers Row Lit Fest is one of the key events to highlight this local and regional strength in the marketplace, and many in the publishing industry are eager to foster this positive image. We hope organizers of this and other literary events in Chicago will continue to foster even more collaboration among industry participants in the months

and years to come. A good sign of this is the strong participation of local presses and authors at the upcoming Chicago Book Expo 2011, set for November 19-20 (for details, visit: <http://www.chicagowritershouse.org>). Avendia Publishing was thrilled to participate in the Printers Row Lit Fest and will be one of nearly forty Chicago-based publishing houses at the Chicago Book Expo. ☯



A.C. Frieden promotes his books at the 2011 Printers Row Lit Fest.

Marketing Tips For Authors

Today authors need to be more aggressive and resourceful than ever to promote their literary works and push their names and brands in the marketplace, particularly now that publishers have become more frugal with advertising and promotional activities. While this may seem like a daunting task for some authors, there are many reasons to embrace this marketing opportunity, even if it may take time away from writing a new manuscript. Many new technologies now enable authors to have more control over their book promotions and to reach larger pools of consumers. Discussed in this article are five key marketing tools that thriller authors consider as part of their marketing efforts.

Graphic Intensive Web Site

Over the past five years, most retail web sites have significantly enhanced their graphic features, adding many more videos, still images, and color/pattern schemes that make the user experience more stimulating. This is no less important for thriller authors. Many of the websites of *New York Times* bestselling fiction authors still fall way short in terms of usability and sophistication, particularly substantive content that is also visually appealing. Image-based navigation tends to attract and retain more user attention, such as using Flash animation, video, dynamic banners and buttons, and other captivating features that hook visitors to the site and, hopefully, onto a purchase.

Book Trailers

Book trailer videos are not yet the norm in the fiction industry, but they are more prevalent than ever before. The videos are no longer as expensive to produce and distribute. While it may not be sufficient to simply upload

your book trailer onto YouTube, the introduction of such a video into a comprehensive marketing campaign can be quite effective. It is also an easy tool to help promote a book virally, if it's done with sufficient creative genius.

Twitter

Fiction authors spend a good bit of time expanding the reach of their online promotional activities, with varying levels of complexity. Creating a following involves using a range of tools to bridge the literal distance between consumers and their favorite writers. Twitter is probably the simplest tool on the Internet and may also be one of the most effective. Short and to the point, this online networking site allows authors to connect instantly to a wide audience and to channel information to followers. While it is not the ideal platform for the content itself, it helps push an author's materials (such as newslet-

ters, blog entries, and other news) in a simple manner.

Newsletters

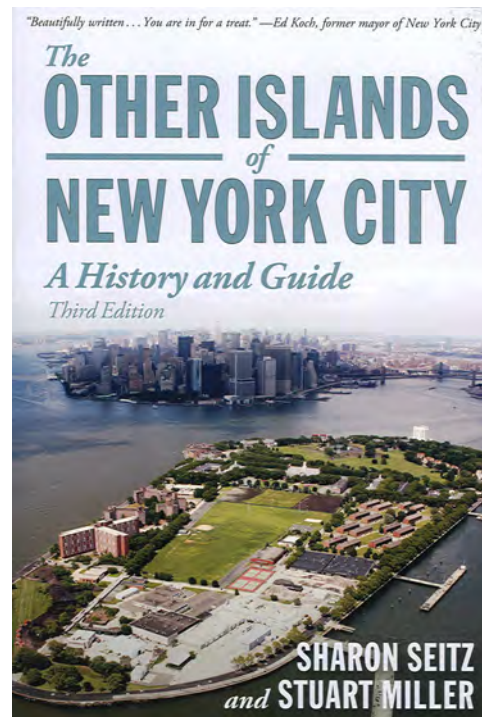
Authors should also consider reaching out to fans with a newsletter. It's also another way to strengthen an author's brand in the industry by reaching out to fellow authors, agents, editors and publishers. Even a 2-page electronic newsletter can generate welcomed traffic on the author's web site.

QR Codes

Authors should also take advantage of a simple technology called QR codes (short for Quick Response codes). They are a type of digital indicia or bar code that allows compatible digital readers to access data. An author may have a QR code on an ad that then automatically directs the viewer to a web site of the author's choosing. (See ads in this magazine for examples of QR codes used to promote books) ⊕

Photography: A Diverse Tool for Writers

Ansel Adams once said, "When words become unclear, I shall focus with photographs." Perhaps fiction authors can follow suit by delving into the visual arts to enhance their literary passion. Many fiction authors have transcended other forms of art, in particular photography, often as a hobby and sometimes as commercial endeavor to repurpose archives, as was the case with Avendia Publishing fiction author A.C. Frieden. To research an upcoming novel, Frieden traveled to North Korea and amassed an extensive collection of photographs showing a broad cross-section of life in this reclusive Asian nation. This collection eventually became the basis of a photography book on North Korea published in March 2011. "It happened unintentionally," said Frieden. "At some point when I was writing scenes in my novel and verifying the information in photos I'd taken, it hit me that I could do something more



Above: The recently published non-fiction book *The Other Islands of New York City* with a cover featuring an aerial photograph taken by thriller author A.C. Frieden (Countryman Press, 3rd Ed. 2011).



Aerial view of Burano island near Venice, Italy
taken from a helicopter by author A.C. Frieden.

North Korea

A Photographic Journey through the Hermit Kingdom
A.C. FRIEDEN

with those pictures.” This trend is likely to continue given the increasing ability to share photographs more widely online and the improved affordability, quality and simplicity of digital photography equipment.

Photography is a diverse art, much like writing. As an avid pilot, Frieden also tapped into his vast archives of aerial photographs to see which ones could be of use to other publications. Most recently one of Frieden’s nearly five hundred aerial photos of New York City appears on the cover of a

new book titled *The Other Islands of New York City* (Countryman Press; 3rd Ed. 2011). “Authors sometimes underestimate the value of the photographs they’ve taken over time, particularly if they were for purposes of researching a scene for a novel,” adds Frieden.

In some cases, publishing photographs can help to enhance credibility of an author’s fictional work. An espionage author could publish photographs of famous spy locales. A crime novelist could have a photography book of places associated with infamous murders. A fiction author who scuba dives could publish a photography book of underwater wrecks and marine life. A thriller author with firearms training could release a book on weaponry and tactics. The possibilities are nearly endless.

Authors can go online to market their photos, and some sites even provide a way of collecting license revenues for images selected by licensees. While not likely to be substantial additional income, some authors have found ways to earn money from photographs originally taken for non-commercial purposes tied to researching scenes. ⊕

Above: A photography book of North Korea, published by thriller author A.C. Frieden.

Below: Author A.C. Frieden in Uruguay, researching and photographing sites using a helicopter.



Below: An aerial photograph of Joliet Prison, near Chicago, originally taken to verify line of sight limitations for a scene in a crime novel.



Weapons: Top Five Errors by Novelists

Crime and thriller authors don't need military training or a law enforcement background to write credible scenes featuring weapons. However, today the average fiction reader is more knowledgeable than ever before and better able to spot technical errors. Access to weaponry information is only a click away thanks to the Internet, and with advanced ebook readers that link directly to dictionaries and encyclopedias, the chance of a glaring mistake standing out like a huge ink stain on a page is higher than ever. Authors quiet simply need to do their homework about weapons they write about, whether it's a knife, a crossbow, a pistol, a rocket launcher or a tank. A little research to overcome the top five errors will go a long way to enhancing an author's credibility, even for those who've never spent time in combat, on the streets or at firing ranges.

Nomenclature

Using the proper terminology is essential. There is a huge difference between an assault rifle and a sniper

rifle, or a pistol versus a revolver. Authors also need to know when to use lay terms or street names for certain weapons, depending on the character and setting. Weapons terminology is readily accessible online, but authors should also buy their own, more comprehensive resources as a backup.

Origin

Another error for authors to avoid is identifying the wrong country of origin or manufacture for a weapon, if that information is important to disclose in the story. For example, not all AK-47s assault rifles are made in Russia or the former Soviet Union. They've been manufactured in several Eastern European and Asian countries, and most recently in Venezuela. Furthermore, weapons produced in countries other than the first originating country may incorporate technical variations or improvements.

Mechanical Functions

Proper understanding of a weapon's technical capabilities is also important for authors. Whether it's the rate of fire, ammunition type, magazine capacity, common malfunctions, disassembly, or the compatibility of

aftermarket components and accessories (night vision, stocks, grips, etc.), authors need to get this right. Keeping a small library of weapons books is a good way to validate the information available online.

Hit Probabilities and Effects

Even with characters that have super-human skills and great luck, weapons typically cannot accomplish what they are not designed to do. A Mini Uzi submachine gun most likely will not take down a human target 100 yards away; an AR-15 round will not penetrate all bullet-resistant glass; and the wound profile of a victim hit by a 7.62mm round will be different than one by a 9mm. Authors need to understand the hit probabilities, non-penetrations, and the differences in effects for targets hit with different ammunition. This kind of information is difficult to get right consistently, and its accurate scenario in a novel depends on the ammunition, the weapon and the environment. Ammunition comes in different calibers and has varying shapes, material and explosive power, with different velocities and penetration profiles. Authors need to do this research, especially if the story includes forensic evidence collection and analysis. ⊕

Below: Author A.C. Frieden handles a U.S. Browning .50 caliber machine gun on board the captured USS Pueblo in North Korea.
Far right: Three pistols used by Kosovo rebels against Serbian forces and now on display at a military museum in Belgrade.





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Oliver Ernst, CFP®
Financial Advisor
Franchise Owner
Dearborn Station
47 West Polk Street
Suite M-1
Chicago, IL 60605
(312) 542-9639
oliver.x.ernst@ampf.com
ameripriseadvisors.com/oliver.x.ernst