WORDPRESS FOR AUTHORS

Betsy Cohen
WORDCAMP PHOENIX 2013
“History will be kind to me for I intend to write it.”

~ Winston Churchill
A good author web site establishes your credibility and your personal author brand.
A bad author web site could be worse than no website at all.
WORDPRESS FOR AUTHORS: Overview

1. DESIGN
   • For your goals
   • For your audience
   • For yourself

2. BUILD
   • Domains
   • Hosting
   • WordPress

3. UTILIZE
   • Update
   • Interact
   • Build Author Platform

4. Q&A
“Easy reading is damn hard writing.”

~ Nathaniel Hawthorne
1. Design the Right Site
1.1. Determine and Prioritize Your Site’s Goals. Then, design your site to drive visitors towards these goals.
Common Goals

• Sell Books
• Establish credibility as an expert
• Develop a loyal readership
• Garner media attention
Highlight awards and testimonials to establish credibility
To encourage interaction and develop relationships with readers, focus on your blog and prominently feature links to your social media pages.
For media attention, drive visitors toward you Press section with impressive quotes, extensive list of press mentions, and a complete press kit.
1.2. Consider Your Site’s Audiences.

Then, structure your site to provide easy access to what your audiences want.
Common Audiences

- Fans, readers, potential readers
- Reviewers
- Media
- Other authors
Fans come to find out about you, many to connect with you.

**book clubs**

I would love to participate in a phone/Skype conference with your book club about *Here, Home, Hope*. Please fill out the form below to schedule an author’s visit.

**Name of Leader**

First  
Last

**Email**

**Phone**

**Skype ID**

**Number of People in Group**

**Requested Date of Visit**

**Captcha**
Reviewers want to know more about you and the book’s backstory. Make sure your bio is engaging, and consider including fun extras related to your books.
Other authors want to know how you're doing it!
1.3. Design it to Reflect Your Personality.

Keep it simple, and focus design elements on the desired brand/image and the author’s creative preferences.
“Be yourself. Everyone else is taken.”

~ Oscar Wilde
Design Tips

- First and foremost, it must be intuitive
- Go for a simple, uncluttered layout
- Personalize with subtle accents, color and imagery
- Focus on you, the author, over the individual works.
- For DIY-ers, choose a theme that gets you most of the way there
What Not To Do: Make People Think!
If your website needs a user guide, you might want to simplify.
About Gillian

Gillian Flynn was born in Kansas City, Missouri to two community-college professors—her mother taught reading; her father, film. Thus she spent an inordinate amount of her youth nosing through books and watching movies. She has happy memories of having *A Wrinkle in Time* pried from her hands at the dinner table, and also of seeing *Alien*, *Psycho* and *Bonnie and Clyde* at a questionable age (like, seven). It was a good childhood.

In high-school, she worked strange jobs that required her to do things like wrap and unwrap hams, or dress up as a giant yoghurt cone. A yoghurt cone who wore a tuxedo. *Why the tuxedo?* It was a question that would haunt her for years.

For college, she headed to the University of Kansas (go Jayhawks), where she received her undergraduate degrees in English and journalism.

After a two-year stint writing about human resources for a trade magazine in California, Flynn moved to Chicago. There she earned her master’s degree in journalism from Northwestern University and discovered that she was way too wimpy to make it as a crime reporter.

On her short journey from a tech-support guy with a journalism degree—so she moved to New York City and joined *Entertainment Weekly* magazine, where she reported for 10 years, visiting film sets around the world (to New Zealand for *The Lord of the Rings*, to Prague for *The Brothers Grimm*, to somewhere off the highway in Florida for *Jackass: The Movie*). During her last four years at EW, Flynn was the TV critic (all-time best TV show: *The Wire*).
Build yourself up: Focus on you, the author, over the individual works.
A series author, or one who writes about specific themes, can get away with designing the site around the books.
A little color goes a long way to set this author’s tone.
2. BUILD IT RIGHT
2.1. Set Up Your Site.

WordPress, hosting, domains... oh my!
Domains

- Buy a domain from your registrar or hosting company.
- In most cases, author name should be primary domain name.
- Book name domains can forward to the site, or to the book’s page on the site.
Hosting

• Security is more important than ever
• Best: Virtual Private Server, Cloud hosting or WordPress managed hosting
• Avoid low-cost shared plans
WordPress

• Install: 5-min install or 1-click
• Create pages and menus
• DIY-ers: Install a theme or theme framework
• Extend with customization and plugins
Themes: Preferably Custom. If not, Select a Minimal Theme

- Look for a plain vanilla, super-clean theme
- Look for decent padding, margins and white-space
- Look for readable typography, font-styles that feel right to you
- Many themes allow you to customize color, header, and sometimes even layout and fonts
Hi! Welcome...

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, aliquam nec rhoncus amet amet sodales, quis ut augue nulla aliquam sed pretium, metus orhane esse et, praesent eros mi mollis. Ultrices porttitor ultrices tincidunt diam eet, lectus volutpat hac, ligula velit, pede a pretium tincidunt.

02 January 2009 – 0 COMMENTS

Testing the Typographical Elements

Lorem ipsum emphasised text dolor sit amet, strong text consectetur adipiscing elit, abbreviated text sed do eiusmod tempor acronym text incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut quid enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation link text ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat code text cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum.

Blockquote. Vellit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia

Free theme example: Mainstream by WooThemes
Premium theme example: Minimum by StudioPress
Low-cost theme example: Booker by ThemesKingdom
Low-cost theme example: BookPage, avail. on ThemeForest
Extend WordPress with Custom Post Types

Custom Post Types simplify the addition and formatting of complex content.

- Books - best for prolific writers
- Events/appearances
- Reviews
- Press mentions
Custom Post Types are great for a consistent format across multiple book pages.
This Reviews custom post type provides automatic formatting.
This reviews page is cleaner with pull-quotes that automatically link to full reviews, thanks to custom post types and custom templates.
Extend WordPress with Plugins

- **SEO**
  - WordPress SEO by Yoast, unless you are using a theme framework with built-in SEO features

- **Caching**
  - W3 Total Cache
  - SuperCache

- **Site and Database Backups**
  - BackupBuddy
  - Backup to Dropbox
  - Simple Backup

- **Forms**
  - Gravity Forms
  - Gravity Forms MailChimp Add-on

- **Redirection**
  - If moving from old site

- **Extend Further**
  - Slider
  - Editorial Calendar
  - Jetpack
  - and more!
2.2. Create and Organize Your Content.

Keep your site’s goals and audience in mind at all times!
Page Suggestions

- Book Info
  - (See next slide)
- About the Author
  - Bio
  - Photo
- Media/Press
  - Mentions
  - Audio/Video
  - Press Kit
- Appearances/Events
- Blog
- Contact
  - How to reach you
  - Who to contact for press etc.
  - Form
Book Info

- Book Cover
- Title
- Book Summary
- Short Quotes from Reviews
- Full Reviews
- Excerpt
- ISBN
- Publisher
- Reading Guide
- Buy links
- Share & Shelve
- Other fun stuff
  - Book Trailer
  - Character profiles
  - Author’s bookshelf
  - Extra/related content
Home page targeting multiple audiences, with focus on author and books.
Emily Giffin has a beautiful bookshelf page with lots of links.
Share & Shelve for each book
Peter Carey lists the books he read while writing. Interesting!
More fun: Stephenie Meyer has Playlists that inspired each book.

New Moon Playlist

(Note: this loosely follows the story sequence. I’m going to put a B, E, or J after each song, so you’ll know who’s perspective I’m hearing it from (that makes no sense). Mostly B’s of course, since she’s telling the story.)

1. "Do you realize?" - The Flaming Lips (B)
2. "Papercut" - Linkin Park (B)
3. "Hyper Music" - Muse (B)
4. "Apocalypse Please" - Muse (B)
5. "Time Stands Still" - The All-American Rejects (B)
6. "Empty Room" - Marjorie Fair (B)
7. "Unwell" - Matchbox Twenty (B)
8. "Pain" - Jimmy Eat World (B)
9. "Ride" - The Vines (B)
10. "Fix You" - Coldplay (J)
11. "Blueside" - Rooney (B)
12. "Over My Head (Cable Car)" - The Fray (B)
13. "Going Under" - Evanescence (B)
14. "Tautou" - Brand New (B)
15. "Be My Escape" - Relient K (B)
16. "Never Let You Down" - Verve Pipe (J)
17. "Sing For Absolution" - Muse (E)
18. "Ya Mamma" - Fatboy Slim
19. "D.O.A." - Foo Fighters
20. "Stare" - Marjorie Fair (B)
21. "Memory" - Sugar Cult (B)
22. "The Truth About Heaven" - Armor For Sleep (B)
23. "Sound of Putting Heaven Down" - Blue October (E)

Alternates:
1. "Drag" - Placebo (B)
2. "Hate Me" (radio edit) - Blue October (E)
3. "World Has Turned and Left Me Here" - Weezer (B)
4. "Best I Ever Had" - Vertical Horizon (B)
5. "My Immortal" - Evanescence (B)
More fun stuff: Tom Clancy has character profiles.

Tom Clancy has written sixteen #1 New York Times bestselling novels including The Hunt for Red October, Red Storm Rising, Patriot Games and The Sum of All Fears. Read more>

CHARACTER PROFILES

Jack Ryan

Jack Ryan's success is solidly based on the foundation of his middle-class upbringing and inquisitive mind. After graduating from Boston College on a Naval ROTC scholarship, he was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the United State Marine Corps. His military career ended when a helicopter crash left him seriously injured.

During his recovery he met his future wife Cathy, made millions in the stock market, and took a job teaching history at the US Naval Academy. On a trip to London, he thwarted an attempt on the life of the Prince of Wales. This led to a career with the CIA--first as an analyst, then a reluctant field agent, and ultimately, as the Deputy Director of the CIA.

His next post was as National Security Advisor. His actions during the brief secret military confrontation with Japan led to his appointment as Vice President of the United States. One tragic moment thrust him into the Presidency, from which he is now retired. But is his country done with him?

John Clark

The man known as John Clark was born John Terrence Kelly. As a Navy SEAL in Vietnam he was awarded the Navy Cross (later upgraded to a Medal of Honor by President Jack Ryan).

His life took a tragic turn with the death of his wife in a car accident. His subsequent relationship with a young runaway named Pam led to her death and resulted in his war on the drug dealers of Baltimore. A detective, one Emmet Ryan, who didn't care for a vigilante drug war on his beat was closing in on Kelly. With the help of the CIA, the former SEAL faked his death and started a new life as John Clark.

Since then, Clancy has worked for the CIA as part of its new active field operatives. He crossed paths with Jack Ryan for the first time in Colombia on the same mission where he met his future long time partner Ding Chavez. Most recently, he and Ding have headed the anti-terrorist force Rainbow Six in England.

He is married to Sandy and his daughter Patsy is married to Ding.

"Heart-stopping action... entertaining and eminently topical." - The Washington Post

Join Tom Clancy on Facebook
And more fun stuff: Gretchen Rubin has tips and quizzes
Secondary Content in Consistent Sidebar & Footer

- Email Subscribe Form
- Social Media/Connect
- Latest Blog Posts or Categories
- Twitter Feed
- Author Photo & Link to Bio
- Buy & Share
Sidebar with author connect, email subscribe.
Consistent footer with author bio lead-in and blog categories.
Betsy’s Guidelines for User- and SE-Friendly Content

- Lots of content: Good for SE’s, But can be overwhelming for humans.
- Break up content into bite-size pieces for easier digestion: Short pages, short paragraphs, short sentences... and don’t forget the short words (unless your audience is unusually erudite).
- Focus individual page content around a single keyword or phrase to enhance SE visibility.
- Properly tag headings — <h1> — and subheadings — <h2>, <h3> etc. — to break up longer passages and make content accessible via text readers.
- Add visual interest and enhance “scan-ability” with bullets, block quotes, links, and data tables whenever appropriate.
- Images are also great, adding visual interest and providing a queue to a section’s topic. Be sure to use high-quality images or your credibility will suffer.
A few of my guidelines are featured here, including block quotes, headings and links.
3. UTILIZE YOUR SITE
“The author is a start up. Indie and publisher-supported alike, authors are now wearing many hats to bring their books into the mainstream.”

~ Niya Sisk, BookDaily.com
3.1. Keep it Fresh.
Add and Update

- WordPress is a content management system, so manage your content!
- Add new book reviews
- Keep Events/appearances info up-to-date
- Add new press mentions
- Blog on a regular basis
Old events on Upcoming Events list? #FAIL
3.2. Interact.
Readers Want to Interact With You.

• Who me? If you’re the author, then Yes, You!

• Collect email addresses for a newsletter or for occasional announcements.

• Stay in touch with these people! It doesn’t have to be weekly or monthly, but at least every few months when there is book news, contests or other announcements.

• Encourage comments on your blog posts.

• Respond to each comment personally to develop relationships.

• When appropriate, follow up with these commenters via email to ask permission to add them to your email list.
Toby Neal responds to almost every comment personally.
3.3. Extend your Author Platform.
“Whatever your goal, whether to sell a series to a major publisher or to become a successful self-published author raking in the bucks, building an author platform is indispensable in today’s writing marketplace.”

~ Toby Neal, self-published author of the Lei Crime Series and a short ebook called Building an Author Platform that can Launch Anything
AUTHOR WEBSITE

- RETAIL WEBSITES:
  - Amazon
  - Barnes & Noble

- BLOG

- goodreads

- PUBLISHER WEBSITE

- Facebook

- shelfari

- YouTube
Your Website is a Hub.

- Cross-promote your content on social media and book websites.
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - Goodreads
  - Amazon Author Central
- Re-tweet and promote via blog when your followers, fans, colleagues have news worth sharing. They’ll repay these favors when you need them.
- Deals, giveaways, and contests are great reasons to reach out to fans across all of your networks and drive them to your site.
“If you want to be found, stand where the seeker seeks.”

~ Sydney Lanier, American musician and poet
Though Elise Allen hails from Philadelphia (home of Tastykakes, the best soft pretzels ever, and her beloved Philadelphia Eagles), she resides in Los Angeles, where it never has the audacity to snow. Elise has a wildly eclectic writing career, including sitcoms, kids’ TV shows, Barbie movies, and internet shows starring her heroes, The Muppets. She is Hilary Duff’s co-author for the book ELIXIR, and looks forward to the release of her first solo YA novel, POPULAZZI.
Summary: Design

• Prioritize goals for the site, and design accordingly

• Consider your audiences and provide easy access to material for each

• Keep it clean, subtly adding your personality
Summary: Build

- Setup self-hosted WordPress site with author’s name as the domain
- DIY-ers: Choose a well-designed minimal theme
- Customize with plugins to optimize, speed up, back up and extend your site.
- Create and structure your content with your site’s goals in mind
Summary: Utilize

- Keep content fresh, up-to-date
- Interact with your visitors to build relationships that you can leverage
- Cross-promote your content and others’ content throughout your entire author platform
“Just because you can create your own website, it doesn’t mean you should.”

~ Betsy Cohen (me!)
Resources

• **Self-Publishing Sees Triple-Digit Growth in Just Five Years...**

• **Essential WordPress Plugins for Book Authors**
  http://wpmu.org/wordpress-plugins-for-writers/

• **ePublishUnum.com**
  http://www.epublishunum.com/

• **Building an Author Platform that can Launch Anything**
  http://amzn.com/B007MJYJRM

• **The Ultimate Author Website Info-Pack (for the non-techie)**
  http://www.30daybooks.com/free-pdfs

• **Amazon Author Central**
  https://authorcentral.amazon.com/gp/landing?ie=UTF8&*Version*=1&*entries*=0
More Resources

Plugins


W3 Total Cache — http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/w3-total-cache/

BackupBuddy (Premium) — http://ithemes.com/purchase/backupbuddy/

Backup to Dropbox — http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/wordpress-backup-to-dropbox/

Simple Backup — http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/simple-backup/

Gravity Forms (Premium)— http://www.gravityforms.com

Redirection — http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/redirection/

Custom Post Types UI — http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/custom-post-type-ui/
