

SELF PROMOTION: IT ISN'T ROCKET SCIENCE

Kelley St. John (www.kelleystjohn.com) & Caren Johnson (www.carenjohnson.com)

Pre-Pubbed:

- Contests
 - Entering Writing Contests

Contests offer an excellent means of promoting your name and your work to editors, agents and fellow writers. Granted, your name is only seen if you final, but you can't final if you don't enter.
 - Offering Website Contests

By running contests on your site, you generate interest in your site. True, a person may visit the site to enter the contest, but more than likely, while they are there, they'll browse the remainder of your site and learn more about you and your work.
- Writing Articles
 - Chapter Newsletters

Writing articles for your local chapter's newsletter not only helps support your chapter but also broadcasts your name and your knowledge of the article's topic. RWA newsletter articles are shared via the EditorLink listserv and are typically picked up by fellow chapters' newsletter editors. Therefore, while you are writing an article for one chapter, you could very well be reaching a much larger audience...and future readers.
 - Romance Writers Report

Writing an article for the RWR is an even stronger method of showcasing your name and insight regarding a particular topic. There are multiple advantages to writing articles for the RWR:

 - You reach all members of RWA, as well as agents and editors who receive the magazine.
 - You can choose to receive payment for the article or apply your payment toward future advertising (my preference).
- Conferences
 - Networking

I assume one of the most intimidating feelings a person can experience is that "first day of school" or "fish out of water" frisson that occurs when you're first confronted with a new situation or a new environment. Rather than treat conferences as a place where you don't know anyone, look at it as the potential to meet everyone (fellow writers, agents and editors). Conferences typically provide a multitude of opportunities to meet and greet; use all of these opportunities to introduce yourself, meet other industry professionals, and get your name out in the writing community.
 - Agent/Editor Appointments

You never get a second chance to make a first impression, so when you meet with that agent or editor, make it count. This is a wonderful chance to meet an industry professional and to make certain they remember your name. Editors do read your name tag, so make sure you are professional at all times when at a conference event or editor/agent appointment.
- Website

Your website is your window to the world via the Internet. Use your website to show you are actively pursuing your goal toward publication. List contest finals and wins.

Provide biographical information without being too specific. You want your site to have something unique that will cause visitors to return periodically to see what's happening in your small portion of the web. On my site, I have a section on "The Call" that provides over 150 stories from authors regarding when they received the call telling them their book had sold. A contest giveaway is also a good means to draw traffic to your site and therefore promote your work. Excellent examples of pre-published author sites: www.writingplayground.com; www.carlaswafford.com).

- Workshops

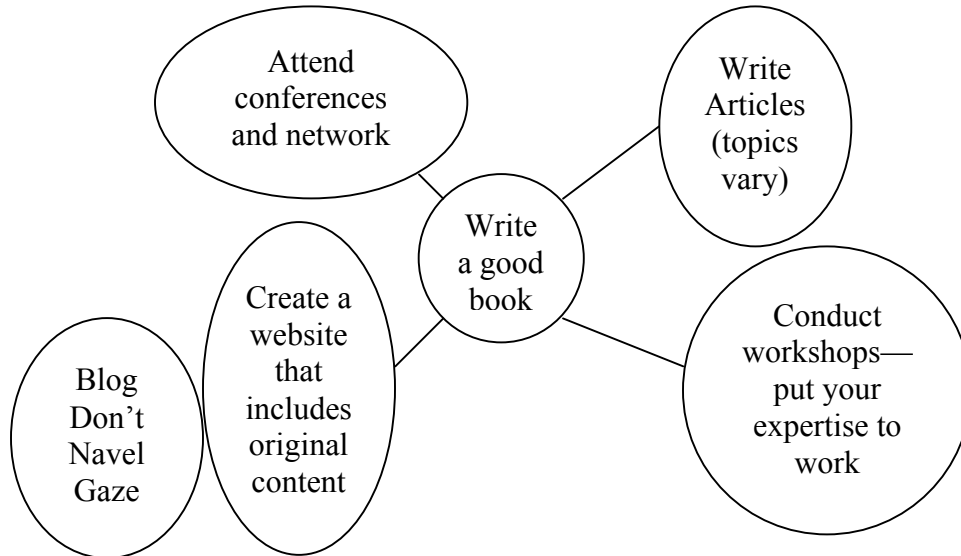
Like writing articles, presenting workshops at the local and national level allows you to promote yourself by sharing your knowledge with other writers while also showing your ability to confidently speak in public, a definite asset to authors.

- Blogs

A web log, or blog, can be a fun tool to utilize when you want to communicate freely with fellow writers and future readers; however, remember that agents and editors read blogs too. Please don't put anything in your blog that you wouldn't want the entire world to read (or that you wouldn't want copied and posted to every loop on the Internet). Remember that anything you type can (and probably will) be used against you. However, blogs can be an effective means for self-promotion, as long as they are used wisely. An excellent example of a pre-published author blog:

[\(http://www.writingplayground.blogspot.com/\)](http://www.writingplayground.blogspot.com/)

Pre-pub Author Promo Circle Graph



Pubbed:

- Contests

Prize giveaways are immensely popular with readers and are a great method for generating your reader mailing list (both email and snail mail). A contest giveaway on your website draws visitors to the site, and those visitors will inevitably peruse the remainder of your site while they're there. A contest giveaway at conferences serves two purposes:

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- Adds individuals to your mailing lists
- Provides a reminder of you and your book

Additionally, RT provides free advertising for authors who are running a contest that they deem unique and appealing to their readership. To take advantage of this free promotional tool, email the information about your contest to the editor of Romantic Times several months before the contest ends (this space fills quickly).

- Writing Articles

In addition to the advantages listed in the Pre-Pubbed section, writing articles also allows published authors the opportunity to plug their upcoming releases in their bylines.

- Conferences (same as Pre-Pubbed)

- Website (same as Pre-Pubbed)

- Sample Joint Author Sites – www.writerspace.com, www.booktalk.com, www.noveltalk.com, www.romancedesigns.com, www.avonauthors.com, www.intimatemomentsauthors.com, www.intrigueauthors.com, www.blazeauthors.com

- Workshops (same as Pre-Pubbed)

- Blogs (same as Pre-Pubbed)

- AuthorBuzz (www.authorbuzz.com)

This is a promotional website that uses several sites and newsletters working together to promote your novel. Limited to five authors per week, this \$895 package hits several target markets via several forms of existing networks (a great example of viral marketing). (***Viral marketing** refers to marketing techniques that use pre-existing social networks to produce increases in brand awareness. It can often be delivered and enhanced online and can harness the network effect of the Internet to reach a large number of people rapidly.*)

- MySpace (www.myspace.com)

MySpace is an effective (and free) tool for promotion. MySpace provides an opportunity to provide new release announcements, blurbs and news of book signings to a large group of readers quickly. Basically, MySpace is a terrific method for showcasing your work. However, like any other form of Internet advertising, you want to be careful with personal information on the site. Most authors do not supply their correct age on their MySpace profiles and most do not provide information regarding where they live. Unfortunately, like blogs, many people use a MySpace page as something similar to a diary and provide way too much information. Like your blog, keep your MySpace profile professional, and do not provide any information that you wouldn't want the whole world to know.

- Romance Sells Advertising (www.corncreative.com/romance.php)

Romance Sells is a magazine advertising current and upcoming releases that is mailed to over 8,000 booksellers and librarians. For merely \$195, your novel is advertised directly to those who will be purchasing it for their stores or libraries. And if you add \$15 (total \$210), you will also be advertised on RWA's www.storyforu.com website, where you receive a web page for every page of advertising you purchased in Romance Sells.

- RWR Advertising

In my opinion, advertising in the RWR is a no-brainer. This magazine goes directly to nearly 10,000 avid romance readers, as well as industry professionals including agents and editors. Plus, the prices can't be beat:

- RT Advertising

Advertising in Romantic Times BookClub magazine is much more expensive than the RWR. My recommendation for RT ads is to first utilize the ads placed by your publisher, then place additional ads if you are able to procure sponsorship for the advertising.

- Ads on Websites (www.roadtoromance.ca, www.likesbooks.com, www.freshfiction.com, www.romancedesigns.com, www.romancejunkies.com, www.coffeetimeromance.com)

Purchasing ads on websites can be fairly inexpensive, particularly if you stagger your advertising. Check out the average romance readers per month that visit a site to determine whether the price is worth the investment. Most sites provide this information on their advertising rates page.

- Sponsors
 - Personally Approaching Sponsors
Promoting your book can be very expensive, which is a good reason to approach potential sponsors for advertising and promotional items.
 - Sponsorwise Website
Several corporations have joined together to provide sponsorship to projects via one website, www.sponsorwise.com. This website offers a multitude of sponsorship options via a simple process where you generate a project proposal, then submit that proposal for sponsorship to one or more corporations that are actively looking to sponsor business ventures.

- Bulk Promo Items (Bookmarks, Excerpt Booklets, Cover Flats)

Typical promotional items are nice to have available at conferences and signings; however, be careful to watch the amount of money you spend on these products.

- Cover flats
- Bookmarks
- Excerpt Booklets
- Postcards
- Movie Trailer
- Author Newsletter
- Individual/Unique Promo Items
 - Top Accounts
 - Book Signings
 - Bookseller Goodie Room (RWA National Conference)
 - Book Pins
 - Book Tote

- Press Kit

Your press kit should be available in hard copy as well as .pdf format for downloading from your website. Provide copies of your press kit to your agent to be included with your submissions and have the downloadable version available via a “Press Kit” or “Media Kit” link on your website.

Your press kit may include:

- Professional Photo
- Biography
- Interviews (magazines, newspapers, newsletters, online sources)
- Advertisements
- Media Coverage
- Reviews
- Past and Future Events (Conferences, Workshops and Book Signings)

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- Book-Specific Press Kit
- Publisher-provided Promo

Don't hesitate to ask your publisher exactly what they will provide regarding promotion for your book. Learn the name of your publicist and correspond with him/her regarding the marketing plan for your book. Possibilities for publisher-provided promotions:

 - Advertisements in Professional Magazines (RWR, RT, Publishers Weekly)
 - Excerpts in Magazines (Vogue, Cosmopolitan, People)
 - Postcards
 - Movie Trailers
 - ARCs to Booksellers and Reviewers
 - Publisher Newsletter
 - Posters/Signs/T-shirts to Advertise Book Signings
 - Premium Positioning at Bookstores (B&N, Borders, Bookland, Books-A-Million, Waldenbooks)
- Agent-provided Promo

Your agent may offer additional forms of promotional help, particularly in the form of mailing promotional products and/or ARCs to booksellers. Your agent may also be able to get a college intern to help you with your promotional campaign.

An Agent's POV – Five Rules of Self-Promotion from Caren Johnson

1. The first rule is that you are responsible for 80% of your own promo. This is an important rule to acknowledge. Many authors complain that their publisher/agent isn't assisting them in their promotion efforts. The reason for this is the publisher/agent has many authors to assist with promo. Though this isn't necessarily fair, this is the reality. An author who takes the initiative to start promoting themselves is going to get the publisher/agent's attention rather than one who constantly asks what the publisher/agent can do for them.
2. The second rule of promotion is that not every promo idea will work for everyone. Not every promo idea will work for every book. This means that before any promo is done the author should assess how effective it will be in terms of exposing their book and promoting their career.
3. The third rule of self-promotion is good promotion pushes the author first and the book second. The reason for this is the publishing timeline has increased so that authors have more competition every month with other author's and their books. This means that in one month there may be three different books about a guy who dumps his girlfriend with the idea that he'll find something better only to realize what he had was ideal. How do you make yourself stand out from the crowd? Self-promo will push the author and then the book (and should include both).
4. The fourth rule of self-promotion is to stick to free for the first few campaigns. Even if you have money to spend on promo, resist the urge to take out ad space in the NY Times. You can spend thousands of dollars on a book campaign without convincing anyone to read your book. Save your dollars for when your career starts heating up and you have more than one book to promote.
5. The fifth rule of self-promotion is to let your publisher and your agent know what you're doing. This could be as simple as emailing bi-monthly or monthly updates.

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A former senior writer at NASA, **Kelley St. John** is a two-time National Readers' Choice Award winner and a member of the Board of Directors for Romance Writers of America.

Kelley's media appearances include the CBS Early Show and NBC's Daytime. Her novels have been featured in publications including the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Publishers Weekly, Pages and Writer's Digest Novel & Short Story Writer's Market.

She writes for Grand Central Publishing (formerly Warner) and Harlequin Blaze. The second trilogy of her Blaze series, *The Sixth Sense*, is on the shelves now. Her current GCP release, *TO CATCH A CHEAT*, is also available now.

Realizing promotion is a vital part of the publication process, Kelley is an active participant in promoting her books. Through her publishing career, she's learned how to generate a "buzz" using practical and out-of-the-box methods that have proven to be extremely effective promotional tools. Visit her website, www.kelleystjohn.com.

Caren Johnson began her literary career at the Peter Rubie Agency. She stayed for three years, working her way up from intern to agent. She worked at Firebrand Literary for a year before starting her own agency in early 2007. She works closely with each of her authors, not only acting as an agent, but offering career guidance and publicity consultation.

Caren is currently looking for women's fiction in the vein of Monica McInerney, Jodi Picoult, Alice Hoffman, Sue Monk Kidd, and Laura Moriarty, fiction in the vein of Lisa Lutz, Christopher Moore, Michel Faber, Kate Atkinson, Louisa Luna, Audrey Niffenegger, and Jeffrey Eugenides, and YA in the vein of Scott Westerfeld, Stephanie Meyer, Markus Zusack, Gabrielle Zevin, Libba Bray, and Kevin Brooks.

Send all queries to submissions@johnsonlitagency.com. Please check out her publisher's marketplace page at: <http://www.publishersmarketplace.com/members/carenjohnson>.