

## ALL ABOUT PUBLICITY: PUBLICISTS AND SMALL PRESSES

Publishing with a small press with a limited promotion budget can leave an author feeling adrift and alone when it comes to advertising and promoting their books. Some, who have the resources to do so hire outside publicists. This panel seeks to answer some hard questions about how to find the right publicist to promote your work, and how to gauge your success. What should a publicist cost? How many books will the author have to sell to cover that cost? Is it worthwhile in the long run?

**Kim Davis**, director of Madville Publishing, will introduce each of the four panelists, **Caitlin Hamilton Summie**, a publicist, **Gigi Marino**, a publicist, **Lee Zacharias**, an author who has worked with a publicist on multiple occasions, and **Michael Simms** a publisher and author with long experience of working with publicists.

### HERE ARE THE POINTS WE WILL ADDRESS IN THE ORDER IN WHICH WE ADDRESS THEM:

- What does a publicist do?
- What kinds of books benefit from the services of a publicist?
- How can an author find a publicist in their niche?
- How far out should authors start looking for a publicist?
  - Caitlin is booking for 2023 launches now
- So, what about promoting books that have been out for a while?
- What sort of earnings literary authors can expect?
  - Lee has a story—she should go first.
  - Kim has sobering stats <https://www.authorsguild.org/industry-advocacy/authors-guild-survey-shows-dramatic-42-percent-decline-in-authors-earnings-in-last-decade/>, from a survey <https://www.authorsguild.org/industry-advocacy/six-takeaways-from-the-authors-guild-2018-authors-income-survey/>.
  - But there is some positive news since Covid with increased book sales, primarily in textbook and children’s books. eBook sales and audiobook sales have increased as well since 2019.
- Who are the Big 5 publishing houses?
  - Penguin/Random House, Hachette Book Group, Harper Collins, Simon and Schuster, Macmillan. <https://almoossawi.com/big-five-publishers/> (This is a really cool graphic that shows all the imprints)
  - Versus small, independent and university presses
  - Versus self-published authors. Huge increase in the number of self-published books—but they still earn far less than traditionally published authors.
- The cost of hiring a publicist.
  - Michael has a story from his experience about book sales being higher for those who hired publicists.
  - Caitlin and Gigi each have comments here.
- Why hire a publicist if your book may not earn enough to cover those costs? The answer is Branding.
  - Lee asks for a definition of branding?
  - Caitlin gives a definition of branding that she attributes to *Dictionary* (online), indeed.com, and *The Branding Journal*.
  - Gigi responds: Creating Your Brand as an Author or Editor
    - How do you want people to see you? Irreverent? Intellectual? Witty? Romantic?
      - Write down 5 adjectives describing how you want your readers to see you.

- Who are your readers?
    - Write down 5 adjectives describing your readers
  - How does your self-vision align with your reader profile? Would there be other aspects of your personality (drawing from both the personal and professional) that would resonate more deeply with your readership?
  - Speaking of "being seen," you should have new professional headshot and environmental photos done before you start a PR campaign for your new book.
  - Line up your social media — the more the better, but not so many that you can't keep up.
  - If possible, use the same social media handles for all platforms (and use a name that describes you well)
  - Your website should have a good UX design and incorporate SEO best practices.
  - Choose your brand colors and stick with them
  - Create engagement on your site. What kind of topics can you blog about? Even if you are not an expert, you have several areas of expertise
- Can authors do their own promo and marketing?
    - Gigi suggests:
      - Contribute to guest posts
      - Write LinkedIn articles
      - Authority Magazine
      - Become a Medium writer
      - Podcasts ([Matchmaker.fm](https://www.matchmaker.fm) and Podmatch are great)