

# How to use Amazon's new Author Central feature to maximize book sales

Learn how these savvy authors make the most of their author pages

Like all of us, **Deltina Hay** likes her privacy. But the author of *A Social Guide to Media* and a Kindle version also recognizes the need to let her potential readers know some details about her personal life. That's why the biography she has on her Amazon author page not only talks about her education, work experience and presentations but also that she is an Alaskan native now living in Texas with her cats, Wolfgang and Ludwig, who enjoys hiking.

Hay says, "If a reader takes the time to read your bio, chances are they are looking for some sort of a connection or insight into you as a person." And she imagines that her potential readers might be thinking: "She sounds less clinical or less technical than other people out there."

Visitors to her author page can also read a blog automatically culled from her own Social Media Power Web site and watch a six-minute author video in which she explains the concept of social media and ways her book could help people. She posted the video shortly after Amazon announced in mid-December that authors could begin adding videos to their Amazon book pages. Since then she has noticed that her book's ranking is now consistently in the 15,000 to 30,000 range. Before, it had meandered from 15,000 to 100,000.

Next year, when the second edition of her book comes out, Hay intends to add book tour information to her author page—another new feature available to Amazon authors.

She advises other authors, "If there is a spot to put something in (on your author page), do it. It may be the only chance you have in that moment to sell the book."

Hay's attempts to maximize her author page are exactly what **Jon Fine**, director of author and publisher relations for Amazon, hopes all authors will take the initiative to do. Over the past year, Amazon has been putting increased emphasis on author pages as a way for book buyers to learn

more about authors and their products.



Fine, who formerly worked for Knopf Publishers, an imprint of Random House, says, "What we have learned is that customers want to be better connected to content authors." To that end, Amazon has set up about 1.5 million author pages using Library of Congress data and eventually would like to see all authors with books on the site have their own pages.

"Author pages are a sort of one-stop service for customers looking for everything about any author," Fine explains. But the onus on optimizing the page is on the author or publisher, and an empty author page may actually do you and your book a disservice.

**Phyllis Zimblar Miller**, author of *Mrs. Lieutenant: A Sharon Gold Novel*, observes that it doesn't take a huge amount of effort to use your author page to its best advantage. But, she adds, not doing so could have a negative effect if someone visits your page and realizes that you have not made the commitment to make it worth their while.

Like Hay, Zimblar Miller has a video on her author page in which she talks about her book's appeal as a book club selection and why even though her story is set during the 1970s it remains relevant today. She is hoping that this video will help draw book clubs' attention to her book.

## How to use Author Central to increase your sales on Amazon.com

Self-published authors can make changes to their author pages by joining Author Central, Amazon's author community, by visiting <http://authorcentral.amazon.com/gp/join>. Other authors who do not own the rights to their books will have to go through their publisher to update their author pages.

Once you have been verified by Amazon, you can follow steps to download your book cover, author photo, bio and, if you like, video. You can also import your blog or create an Amazon-only blog and opt-in to Amazon's free Search Inside the Book feature.

Fine says, "I think a lot of people think of Search Inside the Book as a browsing feature. It enables you to actually look at the pages, and that's fantastic. The other really powerful aspect that I don't think enough people know about is that when your book is in Search Inside the Book the entire text of the book is part of the search process."

If, for example, you've written a book about Himalayan photography and you have a section about a particular mountain range that is not mentioned in the short summary of the book or the title, he says, no one is going to find that connection in a conventional search. However, they would find the reference if the entire book was searchable.

One fan of Amazon's easy blogging format is New York Times bestselling author **Maggie Stiefvater**, whose young adult novel *Shiver* is No. 691 on Amazon. She had abandoned blogging on Amazon when she had to cut and paste her blog every time she wanted to update it; now she doesn't even think about it. She merely writes on her own blog (<http://m-stiefvater.livejournal.com>) about her life in books and it automatically shows up on her Amazon author page.

"I can see some results," she says. "It is doing its job. People are going to Amazon, buying the book and clicking through to my Web site."

Author Central is still in its test or beta mode. Fine says feedback from authors about the program is appreciated. In fact, there is a team dedicated to handling inquiries from authors. It can be reached at <http://tinyurl.com/yeym8qm>

### Tips for enhancing your Amazon author page

- Establish an Author Central account.
- Author pages routinely turn up when someone searches for particular books or authors. A blank author page might be a turnoff for readers.
- Make sure that your book titles, book covers and author information are accurate and correct anything that is wrong.
- Fine suggests using the blogging feature to announce awards you receive, call attention to reviews and media appearances, and talk about what you are reading. "It's the sort of connection with customers or readers that we find our customers really crave."
- Join Amazon's Search Inside the Book program to make it easier for potential customers to find and browse your book before buying it.
- If you have your own Web site, place a link to the Amazon sales page where your book can be purchased. Zimble Miller says, "Don't send (readers) to the homepage on Amazon where they can get distracted and forget about your book. Make it as easy as possible for them to say yes to you."
- Amazon imports book tour information from the Web site BookTour.com, a site also used by libraries and bookstores. By signing up at that site you can be sure that your book tour information will also show up on your author page.
- Videos cannot exceed ten minutes or 500MB and must be made in AI, FLV, MOV, MPG or WMV formats.
- If you write fiction, don't reveal crucial plot elements on your video. Concentrate on discussing your thoughts and opinions rather than what others have said about your book.
- Looking for ideas? Author videos don't have to be anything fancy. For inspiration, check out Amazon's own author videos. For example, watch Malcolm Gladwell's two-minute video for his new book *Outliers*, which briefly discusses why Asian students are so successful in math.