

Author Platform: Where do you Stand?

By Michelle A. Hansen

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In defining Author Platform, we are first going to look at what it isn't.

Jane Friedman, former Writer's Digest editor, said this about author platform:

- It's not about self-promotion
- It's not about hard selling
- It's not about being active on social media
- It's not about blogging
- It's not something you can create overnight
- It's not something you can buy
- It's not a one-time event.
- It's not more important than your story or message.

These are many of the things we think of when we talk about author platform. So what is author platform, and how do you build it?

What is Author Platform?

According to Jane Friedman, when editors and agents talk about platform, they typically mean:

- Visibility
- Authority
- Proven Reach
- Target Audience

She stresses that author platform does not have to be online.

TARGET AUDIENCE

- Who is your audience?
- Where will you find them?

Once you clearly understand your audience, you can tailor your platform to those people.

AUTHORITY

For nonfiction, you must have an established platform in your field of expertise.

For fiction, you don't need proven expertise, but you need to find readers.

VISIBILITY/REACH

Why go online?

- A strong online presence is cheap
- You can do it from home
- You can work around your day job and family life
- It has limitless possibilities.

Building Your ONLINE Author Platform

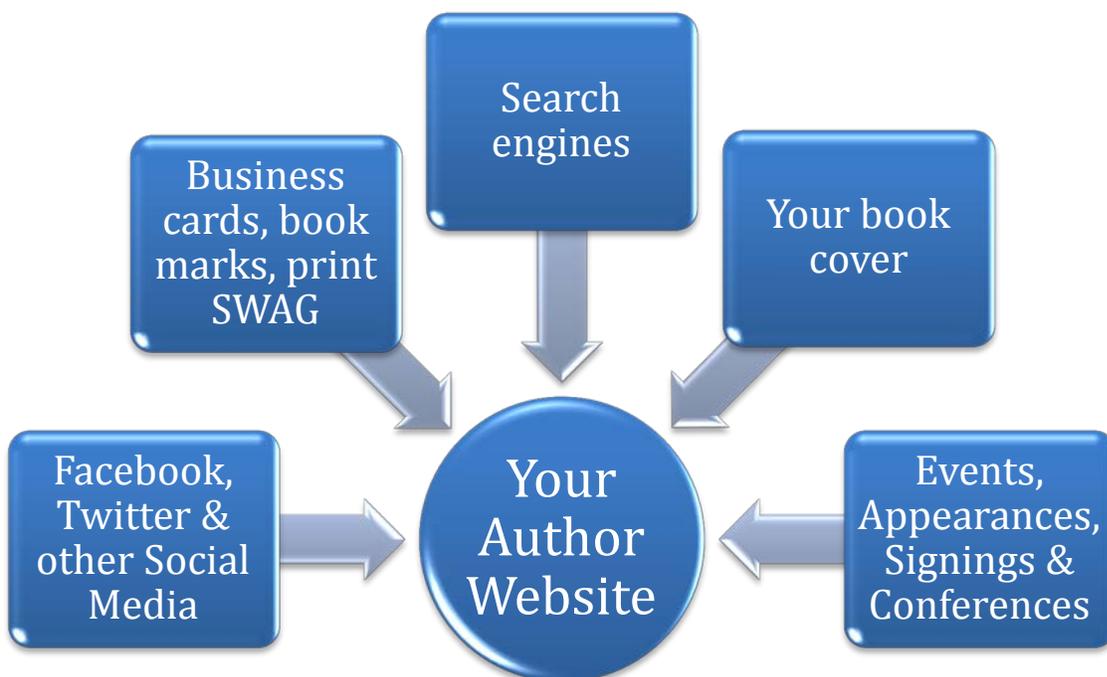
What are your goals?

- Extend your reach beyond friends and family
- Improve your SEO ranking
- Network with other professionals & potential readers

The first and most important thing for you to get is a website. Not just any website will do. Not, a Facebook page, not any old blog, but a professional website.

Why does it matter? You must be in complete control of your professional content.

Why is the website the most important first step?



Your author website should be the hub upon which the rest of your platform depends. If you make an appearance, and people want more info, you want to direct them to your website.

When someone Googles your name, the first thing that should come up is your author website. How do you make that happen?

Raising your SEO (Search Engine Optimization) Ranking

Google will list first the best match, BUT other things affect what pops up at the top of the list.

- Best match
- Most recent updates
- Photos
- Video
- Links to other websites

Keep that in mind when you post content on your website. The more your website integrates these elements, the better your chances of being at the top of the search list.

Facebook:

Yes, you can have an author page that people like, but that is not an effective way to network. Facebook constantly changes what people see in their feeds. All those pages you liked? They aren't showing up in your regular feed. They are in a separate "Pages" feed.

- No longer a divide between the personal and professional.
- Colleagues are your friends
- Fans are your friends
- Readers, librarians and teachers are your friends.

If it will reflect poorly on you professionally, DON'T PUT IT ON FACEBOOK!

Actively seek to friend other writers whom you have met at conferences and online.

Twitter:

- Twitter handles are the usernames people go by. @michelleahansen
- If you follow someone they will generally follow you back.
- It is easiest to start with people you know, so you can have a meaningful connection. This is where a hashtag and group list come in handy. (We'll cover how to do this.)
- You can make your own lists or subscribe to someone else's.
- On Twitter, it's okay to do two things you wouldn't normally do in person: eavesdrop and interrupt. You can join a conversation that was not written @you.
- You can read other people's conversation. All tweets are public. You can direct message on Twitter, but people don't use it. All I've ever gotten in DM are auto-response and spam.
- How do you find followers? Find people like you, and follow their list. Don't follow more than 150 people a day, or you'll get blocked from following more.
- When your list gets big, it's impossible to see everyone's tweets. That's why lists become important. You don't want to miss out on the tweets that matter more to you than the rest.

Now, let's go online

Twitter: @michelleahansen #riversofink

Groups often use hashtags to stay connected: #amwriting #yalitchat #whidbeymfa

Using a hashtag, you can have a twitter chat on Tweetchat, Twitterfall, Twubs.

Problem: Too much Social Media! I can't deal with all of it!

Yes, you can!

Solution: Hootsuite or Tweetdeck

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