

The Guts of Your DIY Publication

One of the secrets of DIY publishing is all of the hidden work that goes on behind the scenes to attract, build, and collaborate with a community of writers and an audience. It can feel like a full-time job, but it can also be the most rewarding part of the process. This portion of the workshop deals with tools and strategies for managing this process with a minimum of frustration on the part of editors and publishers, allowing them to invest as much time as possible into the development of a community of readers and writers.

Before one launches a new publication, there are a few steps that should be taken to ensure that the strategies I discuss will be useful.

- Set up a web presence (even for print-only publications).
- Have well-formed submission guidelines.
- Have contact information and editorial policies (like a publication schedule).
- Set up Google Analytics [<http://goo.gl/bVxfLn> – takes about 10 minutes].
- Create associated social media accounts.

None of these need be perfect or in their final form at the time your initial call goes out, but you need to have a way for people to share your call, for people to contact you, and these tasks should qualify your publication for listing in the different call-for-submissions aggregators discussed below. Also, with Google Analytics enabled, you'll be able to see where traffic to your site originates.

Getting the word out

If your publication is going to be open to writers from everywhere, you need to let them know you exist. Thankfully, there are lots of options for getting the word out and becoming discoverable. I've listed them in the order that they have worked best for me, but your miles may vary, depending on the format, content, and genre of your publication.

FREE! CRWROPPS-B, the Creative Writers Opportunities List Group This list, which has existed in some form for over a decade, has over 10,000 subscribers. It is moderated by poet Alison Joseph, who deserves an award for sticking with it—sometimes circulating a dozen announcements a day. You simply send a message for your call or contest, and Alison will broadcast it to the list of writers, publishers, artists, and more (you can sign up for the digest version of the list to get a sense or to find places to submit your own work—googling “CRWROPPS-B” is the easiest way to find it).

FREE! Newpages.com - NewPages.com hosts news, information, and guides to literary magazines, independent publishers, creative writing programs, alternative periodicals, indie bookstores, writing contests, and more. They allow editors to post free classified ads for their calls for submissions, but they also review

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publications and keep listings of publications & will review your publication as well.

FREE! Duotrope.com – Duotrope is a paid submission management tool for writers who are actively submitting their work, but publishers are allowed to list their publications for free in their database of nearly 5,000 publications. Authors can search these titles by title, format, and guidelines, as well as statistical categories (most personable, fastest response time). Additionally, Duotrope promotes one market daily, and tweets (to 10,000+ followers) new submission periods when they are announced.

FREE! Calls for Submissions (Poetry, Fiction, Art) Facebook Group

[<http://goo.gl/bgMmUt>] This 29,000-member moderated Facebook group allows editors to promote calls for submissions for all varieties of submissions. This one is nice because you can place your call multiple times during a submission period.

ARGUABLY CHEAP! (but worth it):Featured classifieds on The Review Review

newsletter For \$20, you can place an ad in *The Review Review*, a website featuring news and reviews of literary publications of all forms. Classifieds also appear on the RR's weekly emails.

Managing the Deluge

You will get submissions; perhaps many, many more than you expect. If you are anything like me, the making of things is more fun than the organizing of them, so finding a workflow that is easy, fast, and clear for dealing with submissions is very important. Also, you need to focus on organizing your process in a way that is respectful of your potential contributors' time and attention. Here are a few approaches that can help.

FREE! A dedicated “editor@” email account. You definitely want to compartmentalize your personal email from the email associated with your publication. You may want to accept submissions via email, and it's helpful to have all of your publication's correspondence in a single place. An email account that is easy to search and organize (and keep free of spam) is what you are looking for here. Use tags and folders and mailing lists to organize submissions and keep a list of contributors and audience members—this is your community and your best bet for spreading the word about your publication.

ARGUABLY CHEAP! (but absolutely worth it): Submittable For me, the idea of managing and tracking submissions on my own is terrifying, so I pay for a Submittable account (about \$13 a month, with the 50% discount they give to literary publications). I definitely get my money's worth. Submittable provides a submission form, collects all of the documents and information about

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submissions, and accounts for all of the processes of reviewing and accepting/declining submissions. It also allows for collaborative work among editorial teams and blind review. You can also use Submittable to collect donations, fees, and to handle the purchase of issues (& perhaps have it pay for itself).

Keeping the Flow of Readers and Writers Engaged

The cycle of your DIY publication probably means that a few times a year, when new issues are released, there is a flurry of attention and activity. But perceived lulls in the publication cycle (you know, when you are actually doing the work) are often lost opportunities for engaging with your public. Here are some ideas I've used with *Really System* to keep it present in the world in between issues.

FREE! Twitter & other Social Media Tools Using Twitter and other tools, you can engage with your audience in between issues, and direct traffic back to your web presence. Check out accounts for publications like **@Caketrain** and **@GIGANTICsequins** for examples of ways to feature content from past issues and highlight work from your past authors in a way that keeps your audience engaged. Use Twitter lists to keep up with your contributors.

FREE! An automated Twitter Bot If you are a fan of automation, you can also program a simple Twitter bot to share anything you like. Some simple directions and resources for doing this can be found at **HandcraftedRhetorics.org**. I use **@ReallySystemBot** to preview issues, but also to tweet out word frequencies and remixes of the content published in *Really System*. Essentially, the bot will tweet every 140-character message you include in its source file until at a rate you determine.

FREE! (but requires collaboration): **Getting reviews** There are many venues for having your publication reviewed; this encourages both new readers and new potential contributors to check out your publication. Look at **New Pages**, **the Review Review**, and **Broken Pencil**—but depending on your genre, there are dozens more review sites to investigate.

FREE! (but requires work): **Blog about the process, hype the work you've published.** Another way to keep a continuous presence for your publication in the world is to write about what is happening, what is coming up, what your contributors are up to, and what other publications you admire are doing. Host a series of guest posts on a blog that keeps people coming back in between issues. Take a look at the **SundogLit** blog or the **Heavy Feather Review** website for examples of ways editors are using a blog as an additional space for content that supports, promotes, and builds community around the publication.