

COMMUNICATING IN CYBERSPACE

A BASIC PRIMER FOR THE INTERNET-CHALLENGED

By Robert E. Gelinas, Publisher, ArcheBooks Publishing

© 2007. All Rights Reserved.

E-MAIL WAS HARD ENOUGH—THERE'S MORE?

If you are a whiz of the Internet age, where email, text messaging, chats, forums, your blog, your website, etc. are all part of your daily routine—then this article isn't for you.

However, if you are one of the millions of folks out there (probably born before 1970) who owns a computer, uses it to write (with a word processor), surf the Internet (with a browser), and do a little emailing here and there—and are mystified by all the foreign buzz words you hear about new things on the Internet, then you *need* to read this article. For in it you will discover a wealth of practical insight into the communications mediums of the Internet age.

For the professional author, mastering communications in the Internet age is now indispensable in garnering and growing an audience. It's simply the most cost-effect and broadest scope medium in the world today—literally a global tool with the ability to reach over a billion people.

The good news is that if you've already learned to master email, you already know 98% of all the computer skills you need to do pretty much everything else. You just need to know how to apply those skills, what the various communication mediums actually do, and how to effectively use them. That's what this article is about. The primary boundaries we shall confine this discussion to are those aspects of these technologies and tools that affect the aspiring and professional writer. So let's learn some important facts about:

- Websites
- Blogs
- Forums
- Chat Rooms
- Instant Messaging
- Podcasts
- e-Blasts

WEBSITES

In the past, most authors thought they needed a website, and either hired a website developer or cajoled a techie friend or relative to build them one, or took the time to learn the basics of a simple website and did it themselves. Either way, they ended up with an Internet presence and Domain name with at least a home page to talk about themselves and their writings.

Unfortunately, what most authors didn't realize was that with a website only, there was nothing in the world, other than possibly a link on their signature block on an email that let anyone else in the world know that their website even existed. Consequently, their site traffic was near zero. This, obviously, leads to a lot of frustration, especially if you spent a lot of good money to have the thing built. The fundamental disconnect in this all-too-common scenario is a failure on the part of the author (or

any website owner for that matter) to realize that a website is a *product* in and of itself, just like one of your books. For people to learn of its existence and then come and visit the site requires other promotional mechanisms.

Ironically, in the days of not too long ago, when websites were about the only Internet-based tool there was, I routinely told authors that for the most part they weren't a terribly effective investment for a brand new author with little to no existing audience. This was due to the simple fact that if all the promotional effort applied to promoting a website were, instead, applied to promoting your book(s), your writing would directly benefit. That is, with a finite amount of promotional time, money, and energy, promoting one thing instead of two is better for the one thing. But times have changed, and so has the Internet communications model.

Now it is imperative for an author to have a website presence, whether that be your own website, or a page on your publisher's website or elsewhere. This is a destination for the Internet customer to go once they have been exposed to one of the other communications mediums that you have at your disposal, in order to inform them about your writing, and hopefully inspire them to want to purchase a copy of your book.

So as far as websites are concerned, you do, indeed, need one to be that common end-point destination for your fans to learn about your list of titles, you, your public events, and most importantly—how to buy your books. The latter can be a simple link to the product page of Amazon.com or your publisher's website where purchase links are offered, or you can set up purchase capability on your own, up to and including your own e-commerce system. The purchase and fulfillment logistics are up to you and your technical ability or financial wherewithal to hire someone else to do it for you. That's not our focus here. Here we're talking about the tools available to you, why they're important, and to some degree, how to avail yourself of them. Back to websites.

Bear in mind, there are really only two ways that anyone will ever find your website in the first place:

1. By seeing a link to it and following it to your website, i.e. *Seeking* it out on purpose.
2. By having your website come up in the results of a Search Engine, like Google or Yahoo!

The primary—and *crucial*—difference to note between these two methods here is that the former category are “Seekers” who have come into contact with *you and/or your work* elsewhere and are now armed with the information to find your website and visit it; the latter are “Browsers” who are typically looking for something *topical* and your site comes up as applicable to the search terms the browser was using. Recognizing these two distinct groups is essential to understanding the benefit and the utility of all the other Internet communications tools we shall discuss.

But before we talk about some of the other tools, I want to touch on a few other areas about websites you should know about. The first point is a little clarification of a few technical facts. You'll hear a lot of authors say, “I got fifty hits on my website today!”—thinking that fifty people visited their site. In all likelihood, what this statement means is that two or three people actually visited it, one or more of which may have been a search engine bot or spider from Google or Yahoo!. That is, a “hit” does not equal a human being. A hit is how many files were accessed in a given time period. If you have ten files displayed on your home page—and every graphic counts as a separate file—then for every ten hits only one person was viewing that page.

And, as noted, it isn't just humans visiting websites. The way the major search engines compile and index information is through the use of "bots" or "spiders." These are programs that literally go out and touch every website on the Internet at some interval. They do this by accessing every IP (Internet Protocol) address. IP addresses are four groups of up to three numbers, the smallest being 0.0.0.0 and the highest being 255.255.255.255. The programs just start at the beginning and "ping" every number possible. When they arrive at a website, the "web-crawler" (why they call it a spider) vacuums up several important items:

- The words of Text on the Index or Home page
- All the active Hyperlinks (URLs) it can find on the page
- The Title, Page Description, Keywords, and other Meta Tags it finds in the page's HTML

All of this information gets indexed and weighed for relevancy. The science of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has arisen out of figuring out the best ways to configure this information as to improve search engine results. From this step in the process, the bots and spiders then follow the active hyperlinks on your pages to the other pages of your website, again vacuuming up information and indexing it. Fundamentally, that's what search engines do.

Another thing search engines do is to take note of how many links on your site point to other sites, and conversely, how many links from other sites point to yours. The logic here is that sites with lots of links pointing to them must be more popular and therefore have more useful and relevant information. Consequently, they are given greater search engine weight. So exchanging links with other sites, or just having people point lots of links at your site helps its Internet visibility.

So let's now talk about all the other tools that help increase Internet visibility and drive people to your website, and hopefully to a purchase decision about your books.

BLOGS

A blog is a "web log," shortened to the word "blog." There's really nothing mystical or magical about them, but they have become increasingly important in the whole landscape of Internet visibility.

First of all a blog is nothing more than an electronic "diary" or "journal." The good news is that you can have one for free, set one or more of them up in a matter of seconds with no technical knowledge required, and start blogging immediately. The most common blog site provider is Blogger (www.blogger.com). Check it out. Start one today. It won't cost you a cent, and you'll have instantly doubled your Internet presence over just having a website.

What blogs are primarily used for is a public venue of chronological entries. These entries can be anything, from daily musings to formal articles. The "blogosphere" has emerged as one of the major forces in media and journalism these days. Why do you suppose that is? Wouldn't you rightly suspect that a blog is just as anonymous as a website, and have to be promoted, too? Not really.

You see, one of the secrets of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is that blogs, and their information, are given greater weight than a static website. One of the pieces of "meta data" that search engines note when the bots and spiders are doing their jobs, is the date modified of the information/page it finds. More recent information is more current, by definition, and therefore logically more relevant than perhaps what someone said a few years ago. At least that's how the machines think for the most

part. What this means is that blogs generate higher results in search engine searches. So the more blog entries you contribute to your blog(s), the more “lottery tickets” you’re buying in the drawing and improving your odds. The more blogs you have with hyperlinks pointing back to your website, the more relevant your website appears to the search engines.

Look at this example. For the Search Terms “relationship self help dr,” on 3/23/07, ArcheBooks’ author Dr. Molly’s blog entry referencing her book, *Matchlines*, came up on the first page of Google’s search results—not a sponsored link, but free information.



Note that the search term was not her name, nor the title of her book. If you do that for your own books you more than likely find results on page one of results, due to the fact that your name or the title of your book may be somewhat unique. And if someone were searching on your name or the title of your book, that would make them a Seeker, not a Browser. Entering “topical” search terms like a “relationship” or “self help” doctor yielded Dr. Molly’s result, due to her effective use of a blog. See?

Don’t be mystified or hesitant about using blogs. If you can write an email, you can do this. Once you go set one up, all you do is “post” to it. That just means making an entry. An entry, like an email, only has two important parts: a Subject line and the Text. That’s it. When you log into your blog, which is via a simple User ID and Password that you set up initially, you’ll hit a button to post a new entry, and then see a screen prompting you for a Subject and the Text of what you want to say. You enter the info you want to post, hit “Publish” and another entry is added to your blog. The blog site handles all the indexing, formatting, everything. You don’t have to worry about any of that. And the more often you do it, the more Internet visibility you gain in the eyes of the search engines.

I would highly recommend that when you post to your blogs (and please have more than one), try to use terms that you think Internet searchers would use to find information relative to your writing. The more often those terms are used, the more relevant they are to the topic and the more likely someone searching for those terms will find your site’s reference as a result.

I would go so far as to say that if you’re not blogging to promote your website, you might as well not even have one. This really is a *must-do* these days. It works, it’s free, it’s easy. So what’s holding you back? In fact, there’s probably an argument to be made that a blog is all you need and forget the website. You can always post graphics and links and other such things on a blog. But logically, the more data points on the Internet about you and your books, the better. So keep the website, if you have one. It really is the best place for static information that doesn’t change a lot.

Another great aspect of blogs is the interactive nature of them. That is, you have the ability to turn on or turn off the ability for readers of your blog to comment on your postings. This can actually start threads of discussions from multiple people. It's a great way to get feedback from people and make them feel more directly involved with you. Where that kind of activity is the main event is called a Forum.

FORUMS

Forums, which have been around for a long time, are functionally really nothing more than a public blog. Most importantly, forums represent online "Communities" organized around some organization, theme, topic, or something of that nature. Think of them like clubs. Within a forum you'll find it set up into a variety of discussion categories and sub-categories.

The idea of forums is for people with a common interest to come together for discussions. These discussions are not in real-time, but evolve and continue as the forum's various members and guests come to the forum and add their two-cents worth to whatever topics are on the table.

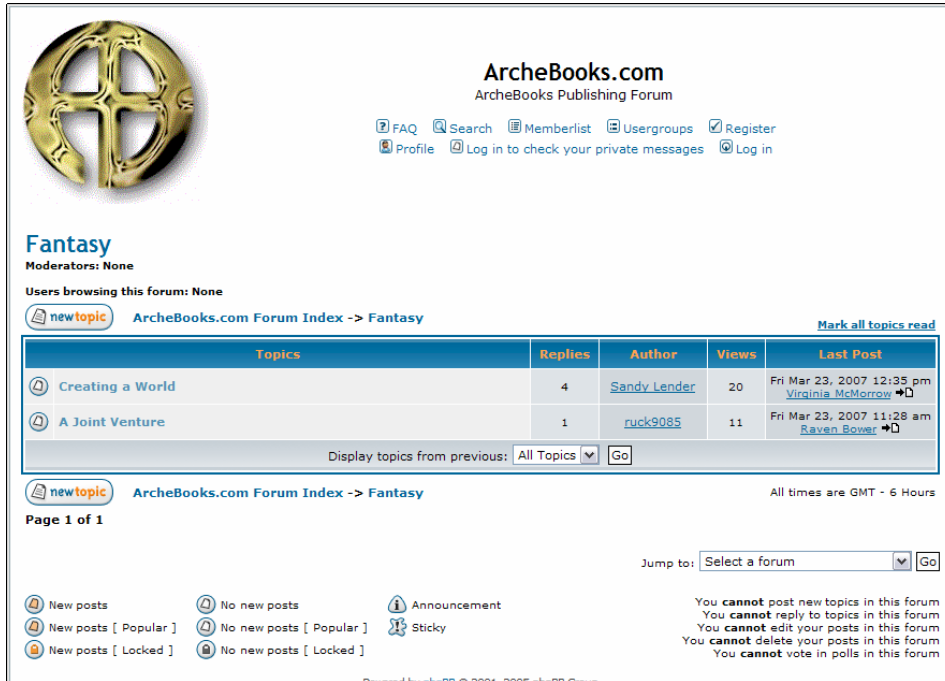
Here's an example of the brand new ArcheBooks Forum for our authors, staff, and fans:



The screenshot shows the ArcheBooks.com Forum Index page. At the top left is the ArcheBooks logo. The page title is "ArcheBooks.com ArcheBooks Publishing Forum". Navigation links include: [FAQ](#), [Search](#), [Memberlist](#), [Usergroups](#), [Register](#), [Profile](#), [Log in to check your private messages](#), and [Log in](#). The current time is "Sat Mar 24, 2007 8:43 am". There is a link to "View unanswered posts".

Forum	Topics	Posts	Last Post
ArcheBooks Genres			
Welcome and Introduction Welcome to the ArcheBooks Publishing Forum. Allow us to introduce ourselves to you and invite you to introduce yourself to everyone reading and participating in our discussions.	4	9	Fri Mar 23, 2007 9:24 am Virginia McMorrow →
ArcheBooks Announcements Check Here for the Latest News and Exciting Happenings at ArcheBooks Publishing	1	1	Fri Mar 23, 2007 2:47 pm ABFAdmin →
Mystery-Suspense Join a discussion regarding ArcheBooks Publishing Mystery-Suspense, Action, Adventure, and True Crime Titles and Authors	0	0	No Posts
Science-Fiction Join a discussion regarding ArcheBooks Publishing's Science-Fiction or Alternate History Titles and Authors	0	0	No Posts
Women's Fiction Join a discussion regarding ArcheBooks Publishing Women's Fiction, Romance, Romantica, Romantic Suspense, Historical Romance, Glitz and Chick-Lit Titles and Authors	1	1	Thu Mar 22, 2007 7:43 pm Nigel Talman →
Fantasy Join a discussion regarding ArcheBooks Publishing Fantasy, Sword & Sorcerer, Dragon Tales and Mage Titles and Authors	2	7	Fri Mar 23, 2007 12:35 pm Virginia McMorrow →

Using a forum is very easy. Again, it's like writing an email. All you're really concerned with is a Subject and then the Text of what you have to say. If you're just commenting on an existing topic, then it's just a matter of adding your thoughts and posting them. That's about it. If you wish to start a new topic of discussion, you hit a "New Topic" button, enter a Subject, start off the discussion with some Text, and then Post. If you clicked on the "Fantasy" genre link on the page above, you'd then be taken to a list of the active topics in that Category.



ArcheBooks.com
ArcheBooks Publishing Forum

[FAQ](#)
[Search](#)
[Memberlist](#)
[Usergroups](#)
[Register](#)
[Profile](#)
[Log in to check your private messages](#)
[Log in](#)

Fantasy
Moderators: None
Users browsing this forum: None

[new topic](#) [ArcheBooks.com Forum Index -> Fantasy](#) [Mark all topics read](#)

Topics	Replies	Author	Views	Last Post
Creating a World	4	Sandy Lender	20	Fri Mar 23, 2007 12:35 pm Virginia McMorrey
A Joint Venture	1	ruck9085	11	Fri Mar 23, 2007 11:28 am Raven Bower

Display topics from previous:

[new topic](#) [ArcheBooks.com Forum Index -> Fantasy](#) All times are GMT - 6 Hours

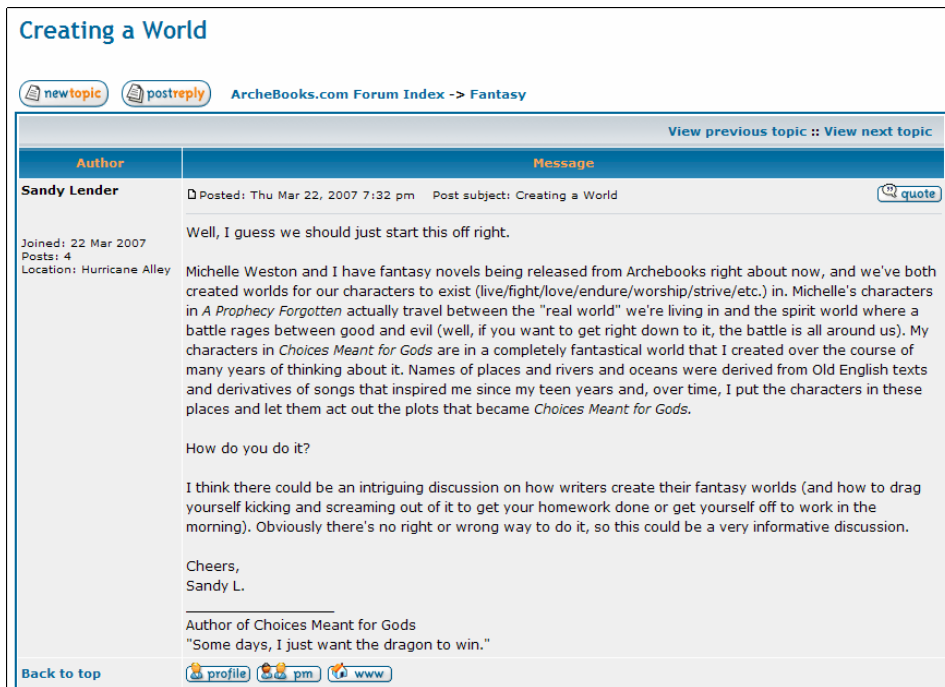
Page 1 of 1

Jump to:

New posts
 No new posts
 Announcement
 New posts [Popular]
 No new posts [Popular]
 Sticky
 New posts [Locked]
 No new posts [Locked]

You cannot post new topics in this forum
You cannot reply to topics in this forum
You cannot edit your posts in this forum
You cannot delete your posts in this forum
You cannot vote in polls in this forum

If you click on the first link, “Creating a World,” you’d be taken to that discussion thread:



Creating a World

[new topic](#) [postreply](#) [ArcheBooks.com Forum Index -> Fantasy](#) [View previous topic](#) :: [View next topic](#)

Author	Message
Sandy Lender Joined: 22 Mar 2007 Posts: 4 Location: Hurricane Alley	<p>Posted: Thu Mar 22, 2007 7:32 pm Post subject: Creating a World quote</p> <p>Well, I guess we should just start this off right.</p> <p>Michelle Weston and I have fantasy novels being released from Archebooks right about now, and we've both created worlds for our characters to exist (live/fight/love/endure/worship/strive/etc.) in. Michelle's characters in <i>A Prophecy Forgotten</i> actually travel between the "real world" we're living in and the spirit world where a battle rages between good and evil (well, if you want to get right down to it, the battle is all around us). My characters in <i>Choices Meant for Gods</i> are in a completely fantastical world that I created over the course of many years of thinking about it. Names of places and rivers and oceans were derived from Old English texts and derivatives of songs that inspired me since my teen years and, over time, I put the characters in these places and let them act out the plots that became <i>Choices Meant for Gods</i>.</p> <p>How do you do it?</p> <p>I think there could be an intriguing discussion on how writers create their fantasy worlds (and how to drag yourself kicking and screaming out of it to get your homework done or get yourself off to work in the morning). Obviously there's no right or wrong way to do it, so this could be a very informative discussion.</p> <p>Cheers, Sandy L.</p> <p>Author of <i>Choices Meant for Gods</i> "Some days, I just want the dragon to win."</p> <p>Back to top profile pm www</p>

Note the posting from ArcheBooks author Sandy Lender, author of *Choices Meant for Gods*. See the “new topic” and “post reply” buttons at the top? Those let you add your thoughts to this posting, or start a new topic of discussion. It’s all extremely simple to use and intuitive. See Sandy’s signature block? (She needs to add her website and blog URLs!) But notice the nice plugs she gives Michelle Weston and her book. That doesn’t have to be an accident.

So, when others come to the forum, read what you've written, they then have the choice to either ignore it if it's of no interest to them, agree with you and add their thoughts, or disagree with you and tell you about that, too. The point is that this is a *public* forum (used to be more commonly known as Bulletin Boards). Everyone can see what everyone else has to say. It's literally the town square for the whole world with respect to anyone on the Internet who visits. It's also being monitored by the search engines. See a common theme emerging here?

If you're a published author out to promote your books and grow your audience, you need to be frequenting forums applicable to your area of writing. So which ones? They're not hard to find. Do a search on your genre with the word "forum"—"mystery writers forum," "romance writers forum," etc. There are many generic writing forums. They don't hide and are easy to search for and find.

When you find a forum, join it. There's usually a "Register" button, and virtually all of them are free. I strongly recommend that you use your real name or the pen name that you write under. This way all of your entries will contain the name that appears on your book. That's important. As part of registering, you get to fill out a little profile about yourself. You don't have to say anything more than you want to, but one item is very important—your signature block. Again, make sure your name/pseudonym is there, and under your name add "Author of (title of your book)," and even add the ISBN, or even the purchase link of where to buy it. Signature blocks are usually considered fair game on any forum site and not SPAM. Most site administrators don't want spammers coming to their sites just to plug their products and services; rather, only people who actually want to be part of their communities and discuss topics with them. So do that!

When it comes to discussing topics, be smart about it. If you're too heavy-handed about talking about your book all the time, you'll be seen as a spammer, and probably banned from the site at some point. Just enter into the normal discussion of topics, but look for ones that potentially have some relevance to something in your writing. When you post your thoughts, your signature block tags that entry with your name, the title of your book, your website, etc. That's all that's needed. So if that discussion thread gets picked up by a search engine, and someone gets that data as a search result and explores it, they will be taken to that page of the forum, see what you've written, and see your signature block. If they are interested in learning more about you and your book, they are now armed with all the info they need to do so. See how that works?

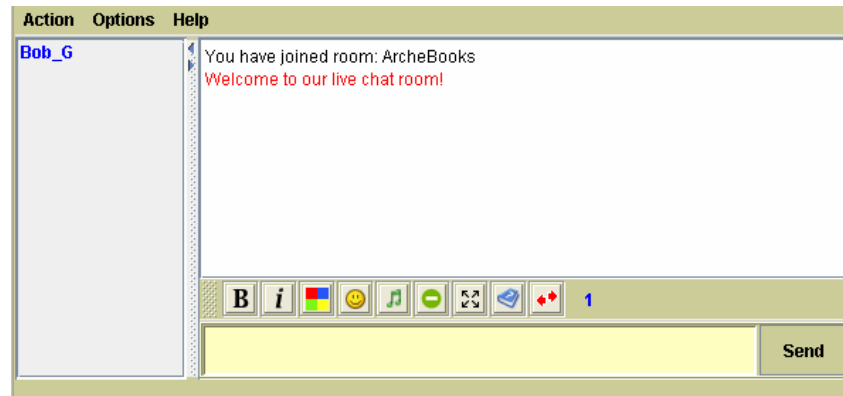
Needless to say, the more entries with relevant information you post (and being relevant and substantive is important, not just a source of blather), the more overall Internet visibility you generate for your "brand name" and that of your website. Don't forget, if you are a published author, you're in a group of less than 1% of all authors; so you have an element of expertise and credibility that the other 99% of wannabes just might want to know about and learn about. So join forums, and start posting.

The next thing to do is to start Chatting.

CHAT ROOMS

In our discussion of Forums above, it was noted that they are not "real-time." That is, a forum has information added to it whenever members or guests come to a site and choose to add their thoughts. So a specific topic (referred to as a "thread," i.e. when you get a sequential string of postings) may develop over many days or weeks. A Chat Room is real-time.

In effect, a Chat Room is like a conference call or a party line. A group of people, at least two, enter the room and have a discussion. Some chat rooms are moderated, which means some administrator gets to approve or disapprove input before everyone else sees it, or some are a pure free-for-all. Participants in a Chat get a little dialogue window that features three main elements: a list of who's in the room (and people can join using nicknames, so somewhat anonymously), a main screen area that keeps a running transcript of everyone's comments, and a small window to add your comments.



Using a Chat Room is as simple as clicking on whatever link takes you to the room. You'll be prompted to log in, whereby you can use a nickname or your real name. Again, I suggest you use whatever name is on your books. Some Chat Rooms are secure and require a password, most don't. If it is secure, it may require you to join something—that's up to you. But after you enter the room you should see your name in the list of who is in the room and a brief welcome message on the main screen. It's customary to be greeted by everyone else already in the room. Enter your own greeting in the small Text entry window, hit Return, and you're chatting. It's that easy.

You'll also find a series of buttons that allow you to customize your chat experience. You can change the color of text, add an Avatar (a little icon) to your user name to distinguish yourself, as well as send fun things like sounds and smiley faces to others. Just be aware that unless the Chat Room has the ability to let you send Private Messages to a specific individual in the room, everything you type and enter will be seen by everyone in the room.

So how is a Chat Room good for an author? The most obvious answer is that it can allow you to hold a "public" appearance with individuals (i.e. fans) all over the world without ever having to leave the house. I would recommend that you use them judiciously, for this is a function of public accessibility. Often authors are scheduled by various online organizations who have Chat Rooms for public interviews, where guests can ask you questions and you can answer them in real-time. It's like a text version of a radio interview.

Just be aware that most Chat Rooms have the ability to let the administrators Save the transcript of the Chats. Some websites post these transcripts on their websites for the benefit of those who weren't able to join the chat at the time it was held. So just be mindful of the fact that what you type may become a permanent record somewhere. Don't say anything you don't want to come back and haunt you down the road. Realize that this *is* a public interview with you.

Chatting can also be a great way to communicate with your fans on a regular basis. You can add a Chat Room to your own website easily and for free. Check out Para Chat at www.parachat.com. Like

several hosted chat services, you can copy some simple HTML code to a page on your website and in seconds have a fully functional Chat Room. So start your own chat show! How about once a week you post on your website that you'll be in your (or some other) Chat Room to take questions and visit with the fans? It's a powerful tool. Use it, but use it wisely.

INSTANT MESSAGING

Instant Messaging or IM, is NOT something you want everyone in the world to have the ability to connect to you with. IM is chatting one-on-one. Your IM address is your one-on-one chatting phone number. Give it out judiciously. But for key people, like your editor, agent, publisher, publicist, etc., it's one of the fastest and easiest forms of communications online, the most common of which are AOL and MSN. You can see within your Contact list who is online and who's not. If someone is online and you have a quick question, or need to share some important info quickly—this is the tool. The screen looks pretty much exactly like the Chat Room, except it's with one other person. You simply click on their name in the contact list. Shoot them your message, and they can reply or not.

The more sophisticated IM systems out there allow more than one person to join the conversation for more of a conference call type scenario. That can be useful for online meetings. Many such systems also support web cams, so you can “video conference” (see others on the call), and some even support virtual white boards, application sharing, and lots of other things. Again this is another way to communicate quickly and effectively using the Internet beyond what a telephone can do, and without any travel expenses associated. Chances are you're already familiar with IM. My encouragement to you is to explore all of the advanced features these systems offer, and see what you're missing.

IM becomes very important for the author who is building his/her audience in the context of Social Networking websites like MySpace (www.myspace.com) and Second Life (www.secondlife.com). One of the most valuable features of such Internet communities is creating groups of “friends.” These “friend lists” are ever-expanding groups of contacts from all over the world that you have the ability to communicate with at once. So imagine if they are all fans! As of the date of this writing, Second Life has almost 5 million members and expects to be at 10 million in the very near future. How many of them have you met? You can do it for free. Check out *A Beginner's Guide to Second Life* (ArcheBooks Publishing, 2007) for detailed instruction on how to become involved in the world's largest online social community.

When you're on one of these sites, and encounter a friend, one of the most common forms of real-time communication with them is via IM. So you may use it there extensively. You may use it to meet strangers and make new friends. So get familiar with it. Your new friend just might want to read one of your books. Oh, and if you join MySpace or Second Life, be sure to post lots of links back to your website and blogs—the more links the better!

PODCASTS

A podcast is the mechanism that lets you have your own show! That's right. It can be a radio-type show (audio only), or a TV-type show (audio and video). This requires a little technical know-how, but not a lot more than a microphone and a web cam and some recording software. Creating the little shows is the relatively easy part. If you have an interest in doing this, start small, with pieces that are perhaps a minute in length and expand as you get better at it.

The idea of a podcast is to post the finished audio or movie file on your website, or upload it to YouTube or any other public posting place, and then get people to download and watch/listen to it. Ideally, you want to learn about something called “RSS” (Real Simple Syndication is one version of this acronym). This facility allows users on the Internet to create a favorites link in their browsers that’s analogous to a News Feed, like the AP wire. This way, anything new you add to your feed, i.e. your next show, the users who subscribe to it can easily access and enjoy. I won’t go much further into the technical how-to of all this. If it’s of interest, do your homework, and/or find a technical friend and get into it. What’s more important to discuss here is why you might want to make this investment of time and money.

An audience is an audience. Why do you think all the talking heads on TV and Radio, and the columnist pundits of the Internet always seem to have bestselling books? Easy answer: they already have an existing audience to push their book upon. You can do that, too, now with Internet technology. Perhaps not to an audience of millions and millions (though that’s not impossible on the Internet), but maybe to several thousand. And several thousand book buyers is a good thing.

The logic here is straightforward. If you provide entertainment and/or useful information on the Internet, and attract an audience to it, that audience can be sold your books. Better yet, they can become recommenders and influencers to others outside your existing audience to help grow it. Ever want to be on Radio or TV? In the 21st Century, you can!

E-BLASTS

There’s no magic here. An e-Blast is a mass email sent out in bulk to a group of people, not just one or a few recipients. The problem with sending out email to large groups of people these days from your regular email client (Outlook, Outlook Express, etc.) is Spam filters. Without special software, sending out mass email is nearly impossible. Yet, if you have collected the email addresses of hundreds, if not thousands, of fans, how do you communicate with them?

One way is via Forums, as we’ve discussed. Most Forum administrators have the ability to send out an email blast to every registered member. If you’re a good member (not an obnoxious troll) and contribute constructively and regularly to a forum, I could easily imagine sending an announcement of importance to a forum administrator and asking them to blast it out to everyone for you.

As noted, there is special software and/or services available you can buy for e-Blasts. This kind of software, in essence, allows you to give it your list of addressees, and then it sends them out a few at a time over a span of time and doesn’t look like spam. Some services offer ready-made Opt-In lists of recipients (just make sure they are applicable to your needs). Some of the better packages also will alert you to spam triggers and help you filter out those things that would get your emails blocked before they’re sent.

Essentially, you want to create your own “opt-in” list of members that you can continually expand and communicate with on a regular basis. Without going further into the technical detail, make this another item on your “to do” list of research. Start by Googling search terms such as: “email software,” “mass email marketing,” “bulk email marketing,” and similar terms.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Realize clearly that all of these tools we've discussed here are intended to be synergistic, not a stand-alone initiative. Each one can link to and support every other piece, thus increasing the effectiveness of the whole network of elements.

Your Website points people to your Blogs for the latest-greatest updates, and it features your Chat Room and appearance schedule. Your Blogs talk about your latest website updates and your next podcast coming out. You're sending out e-blasts to your fan base advising them of all of the above. Your podcasts always mention your website and blogs and scheduled chats. You're regularly frequenting a variety of forums, referring to all of your online resources. In time, the sheer weight of all this information achieves a critical mass such that when anyone is searching for anything even remotely related to something you write or talk about, they're finding you. And that's what you want.

Admittedly, to most people who are not computer nerds, all of these things can be quite intimidating. But my encouragement to you, if you find yourself in that camp, is to realize that, once upon a time, using a word processor instead of a typewriter or writing by hand was intimidating. Using email instead of writing letters was once intimidating. Yet, you mastered those things, and probably consider them quite easy today. The rest of this is no different. It's just new to you. You can type. You can click a mouse. You can do most, if not all, of these things. And you should—if you want to build your audience in the most cost effective manner available to you.

See you in Cyberspace!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Gelinis is the founder, Publisher and Editor-In-Chief of ArcheBooks Publishing Incorporated, (www.archebooks.com), as well as the author of many novels. He is a frequent public speaker and teaches and lectures on writing and publishing.

For more articles by Mr. Gelinis, please visit www.archebooks.com/AuthCor/AuthCorn.htm for ArcheBooks' "Author's Corner" of writer's resources.