

Websites for Writers – Why You Need One and How to Get Started

By Stephanie Chandler

It may seem like the publishing industry's equivalent of Beanie Baby madness- everyone is talking about writer's websites. Freelancers and authors everywhere are jumping on the bandwagon, publishing sites to promote themselves and their work. This craze leaves many writers wondering if it's just a fad or if it's really worth the expense and effort. While it may seem like an overwhelming or frivolous endeavor, there are some solid business reasons why you should consider setting up your own website.

- ◆ **Editors like Writer's Websites.** When querying an editor for the first time, you can add credibility to your writing resume by referencing your website. Instead of attaching clips, you can provide a link to clips on your site. This minimizes paperwork and lets you avoid sending email attachments that can get scrubbed or cause your email to be routed straight to the trash bin. It also makes the editor's job easier- which could cause them to reward you with a new assignment.
- ◆ **Your Site Can Save You Time.** When you put your clips online, you avoid having to copy them over and over again and instead just upload them once to your website. Your clips file can be as current and as varied as you want it to be. This can streamline your query process and ultimately make you more productive.
- ◆ **Writers with Websites Get More Work.** Writers with websites will tell you that they get more assignments as a result. When you start listing your site in writer's databases, job boards, on your resume and in directories across the internet, you inevitably catch the attention of people who do the hiring.
- ◆ **Your Site Can Promote Your Work.** Whether you are writing freelance articles, books, eBooks, copy for corporations or offering editing services, you can use your site to promote your offerings. Corporate clients will be impressed by a thoughtful website with samples and testimonials. Your site becomes a reflection of you and your work and can impress editors, agents and publishers. The more you work to advertise and market your site, the more attention you can expect to receive.

Setting Up Your Website

It's relatively inexpensive to start a website and often the biggest investment will be in your time. You can hire someone to help you get your site up and running, or you can take this on yourself.

If you want to have the flexibility to manage your site and change the contents frequently, it would be worth it to learn how to do it yourself. [Microsoft Frontpage](#) and [Dreamweaver](#) are two of the most popular software programs for website design. If you don't want to design it from the ground up, many companies offer [templates](#) that you can purchase for as little as \$15. You can then customize the template to meet your needs.

If you decide to hire a website designer, there are many to choose from. The best way to find one near you is to ask writer friends or business owners in your community for a referral. You can also ask someone whose site you admire to share their designer with you.

Website Hosting

You can opt to use a free website hosting service like the one offered by Geocities, but keep in mind that you won't have your own domain name. Instead, your URL would look something like: www.geocities.com/mywebsite.html.

For a truly professional site, you can register your own domain name and have your site hosted for as little as \$12 per month through providers like Yahoo. [Yahoo Small Business](#) also offers free tools for website design, so if you want to create a simple site with just a few static pages, their tools may be enough to get you up and running.

Though I use FrontPage for designing my business website, I found Yahoo's Site Builder tool easy to use and was able to design my writer's website in just a few hours. Check out the result at <http://www.StephanieChandler.com>.

Getting Your Clips Online

If you don't already own [Adobe Acrobat PDF Creator](#) software, you should give it some serious consideration. You can use the program to easily convert scanned files and Word documents to PDF format, making it easy for readers (more importantly, editors) to view your published clips from your website.

The software also makes it easy to publish your own eBooks and other files that can be used for all kinds of business needs. Adobe allows you to create your first three PDF documents for free. You can also sign up for a subscription based service or bite the bullet and purchase the full software package.

Merchant Card Services

If you want to accept credit card payments online, you can attempt to get a merchant services account. Unfortunately, these are difficult for new businesses to obtain from the big banks due to the amount of fraud in the small business arena. There are many merchant brokers that provide credit card services, but keep in mind that you will have to pay a monthly fee in addition to the percentage per transaction. Luckily, [PayPal](#) has come to the rescue and now offers credit card payment services that are surprisingly easy to implement and do not involve a monthly fee.

Marketing

Once your site is live, you need to let people know you're there. There are endless opportunities for marketing your site on the internet. Here are some possibilities:

- ◆ List your website with all associations where you are a member.
- ◆ Trade links with other websites.
- ◆ Write articles for publications and reference your site in your bio.
- ◆ Write a blog and reference your site with each entry.

Website listings with the major search engines are calculated based on a number of factors. One way to improve your rankings with the search engines is to make sure your link is listed on as many other websites as possible. In addition to the marketing ideas above, make sure to submit your site manually to all the major search engines. You can access a free list of sources at <http://www.BusinessInfoGuide.com/submitsite.htm>.

Don't Put Off Until Tomorrow...

If you're still not convinced that you need your own website, join some online discussions and talk with your writer friends. I have yet to meet a writer with a website who didn't agree it is a valuable tool. For more information on building a website and the publishing industry visit: <http://www.BusinessInfoGuide.com>.

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About the Author: Stephanie Chandler is a writer and the owner of several businesses. For more information, visit <http://www.BusinessInfoGuide.com> or email her directly at Stephanie@BusinessInfoGuide.com.