

Your website plays a number of roles in your book's overall promotion and sales program. It is the source from which all of your online publicity messages are sent. It also serves as a retail store to sell your book. And a content rich, informative website will attract surfers and introduce them to your book.

A Quality Website is a Powerful Tool to Promote Your Book

When planning your book's promotional program, the first step should be the creation of a welcoming, informative website. It serves as the home base from which you send out your publicity and to which others can respond when they want to discover more about you and the book you are promoting.

Most important for published authors, it also serves as your private bookstore where they can purchase copies of your book or of any other items or services that you offer. These sales will be the most lucrative since you don't have to share the profits with any outside selling agents.

Attracting Visitors

The goal of your website design reaches far beyond simply looking pretty, although that is important in attracting visitors. But the true magnet that will make your site the first stop for surfers seeking knowledge is its content. Your site must be rich in information and organized in a way that makes it easy to digest.

Your target audience is immense. There are almost 150 million computer literate people in the United States alone. But everything you enter on the Web can reach millions more around the globe. They too turn to their computers for information.

Today, the Internet has become the first place the majority of journalists look when seeking information for a story they are creating. The latest study conducted by Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism stated that 98% of working reporters and editors head to the Web to research facts and interview experts. Your goal is to become one of those experts by offering the content they seek and creating a meaningful Press Room on your site that will bring journalists back again and again.

Journalists aren't the only visitors who are usually in a hurry. Most surfers are as they search for material that will benefit them directly. They rapidly screen the Web looking for the most informative and accurate sources. Their options are myriad, as you will discover if you enter the subject you write about into a major search engine. Thousands of sites will emerge.

The challenge you face is to stand out above those others. That can be accomplished in several ways. Content, of course, tops the list. Information that provides something of worth to your visitor.

The second ingredient is the awareness and use of Search Engine Optimization to help you move you up the ladder to the first or at least the second-page of your subject's listings on the search engines.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

You know from your own experience that the way you find sources of information on the Internet is to create a phrase or even choose just a single word and enter it into your favorite search engine. Obviously, others-whether surfers, journalists, scholars or students-use the same technique when seeking information.

But for them to find your site, you must include those keywords and key phrases in a prominent position on your site. The search engines send out digital "scouts" that are called "spiders" to search the Web and record the principal words and phrases used by thousands of web sites. That way, when a surfer enters a keyword, the search engine includes your site among the listings it offers.

The additional benefit you'll receive from using keywords effectively is that they will elevate you to a higher level on the search engine listings.

You'll find as you begin to use keywords that companies like Google, Wordtracker and others maintain records of how often and the ways in which a keyword is used. Google's Adword Keyword Tool is free to use. Wordtracker offers a trial period, but then charges if you continue to use it.

For example, you might want to use a word like "book" or "writing," if those are your subjects. A search will show that perhaps a million web sites around the world are using that keyword, so the chance that you will reach page one status on the engine is slim.

However, you can also find a number of related words on the Google or Wordtracker list that are directly relevant to your subject but are used less frequently and therefore improve your chances of rising on the search engine listings..

You can become more precise and narrow down the field still more by adding another word or two. For example, you might qualify the base word book by adding the qualifier nonfiction or perhaps an additional word like political or historical or academic.

Similarly with a popular word like writing, you might add article or essay or even book or nonfiction. So a person searching for help in creating a history might enter "writing a nonfiction history book." It's just as simple as that, although there are additional facets to SEO that space will not allow me to describe.

Always remember that it is your website from which most of your promotions are sent and where responses are received. But it serves another vital role as well. If your site is direct, easy to understand and chock full of solid information, combined with an ample

sprinkling of keywords, you'll find it rising rapidly on the search engines. Before long you'll thrill to the fact you are on page one. Believe me, you'll be able to tell from the