

Quoted PublishersWeekly.Com

in

written by Holly
April 28, 2006
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Here's the article.

And here's the full text of the interview I gave:

1) How do you use your website and other online sites (other people's blogs, your publishers' websites, etc.) to encourage people to read your work?

I stick pretty close to home where promoting my work goes – what promotion I do, I do almost exclusively on my own site. However, I have a large, fairly popular site, and over the years, have been adding and tinkering and building things into it. I started writing articles about writing as part of my “pay forward” philosophy; I was the beneficiary of encouragement and advice from some fine pros when I was getting started; these pros had benefitted from the help of pros when they were starting out. The philosophy each passed to the next was that none of us beginners could truly pay back to those who had helped us, but we could pay forward to the next writers coming up. I took that charge seriously, and ever since, have done what I can to pay forward.

For example:

Between 1997 and now, I've written more than 100,000 words of free writing advice which I've posted on my site, accessible to anyone who cares to read it. (<https://hollylisle.com/fm/>).

I also set up a little bulletin board in 1997, and a few people who had met me at conventions and participated in writing workshops I taught at them dropped by and wanted to

talk more about writing. Our conversations drew in others, and before long I had a thriving little working writers group. And then a largish working writing community. And then a huge one. I kept everything free, from online classes to discussions to crit groups. When I could, I paid for everything, though at times I had to depend on donations to keep the doors open. Being a full-time writer dependent entirely upon writing income does have its downside. I chose moderators from the most enthusiastic and even-tempered members, we all volunteered our time, and we learned as much as we taught. I ended up spinning the Forward Motion Writers' Community off into its own site at the point when it had over 2000 members and was taking me roughly forty hours a week to participate in and run (while still writing full time and raising a family); I gave it to a writer friend of mine (Lazette Gifford) in November of 2003, and it currently has over 9000 members, and is still growing. It's also still entirely free (though Zette, too, accepts donations) and is staffed entirely by volunteers, some of whom have been moderating since not long after I took on moderators. It maintains the same "pay forward" philosophy I started it with, and I'm tremendously proud to have had the hand I did in its creation.

Beyond that, I offer free chapters for most of my books, as well as peeks into the creative backgrounding process that gave birth to them, from maps and costume designs to language development and ship design (<https://hollylisle.com/tm/>). I also offer a few free e-books, an expanding selection of e-books for sale, and I discuss life as a full-time writer in my weblog, *Pocket Full of Words* (<https://hollylisle.com/writingdiary2/>) which is open to everyone, and which gets regular traffic from both writers and readers.

2) What do you do that you think is unusual or particularly innovative?

The community was innovative; it was however, as noted above,

a full-time job, and I already had two of those.

My weblog is daring, though I don't know if that makes it innovative. I talk honestly about the writing; about how I do it, about what life as a writer is like, about how things go wrong as well as about how they go right. This is no doubt risky from the standpoint of appearances; reports of a glossy stream of unending successes would no doubt make me look like a golden girl, and might be better for sales. But I haven't done any of the articles or the weblog as a marketing tool; in fact, I never allowed or used advertising in the community, and only recently added ads for a few of my books to the weblog. And I don't flog my books. I discuss them as I'm writing them, sometimes posting snippets of the work in progress, or grumping through stalls, tailspins, and false starts. And I'll do an announcement when a book hits the shelves. Then, though, I move on.

I've written and self-published a couple of writing books, and intend to self-publish more in the current series. The regular reaction I get is "Self-publishing? For a writer with nearly 30 novels out through major publishers?" Yes, for the following reason: I approached my agent with the idea of doing some non-fiction, because I love to write about writing, and while she liked the work I presented her with, she pointed out that non-fiction writing books would not sell as well as my fiction books, but would still count as my most recent numbers for any future sale, either fiction or nonfiction. No writer needs a precipitous drop in numbers. But I wanted to do the writing books. People have been requesting them for years. So I decided to do them on my own, as a little sideline thing, where the only person who needs to know my numbers is me, and where I can keep them in print as long as I care to. A friend helped me build a web store, [Shop.HollyLisle.Com](http://shop.hollylisle.com/), (<http://shop.hollylisle.com/>), I wrote a second writing book, titled Holly Lisle's Create a Character Clinic, and I put it up, along with an e-book by fellow pro Lynn Viehl (hers is Way

of the Cheetah, about her technique for writing prolifically). I'm republishing my out-of-print backlist, adding a little quality fiction by other writers, and I'll be doing more in the Clinic series, with books on worldbuilding, plotting, storyshowing, and revising and submitting work. I'm presenting the books as e-books, but am also working very hard to get the bugs out of offering print copies. With luck, those will start being available in the next month or two.

I do offer an affiliate program for people who are interested in advertising my shop's books (<http://shop.hollylisle.com/idevaffiliate/>) – as far as I know, that's fairly innovative for an author, though it's common enough in other kinds of Internet businesses. The program is very new, and it's quite small so far, but people are making a little money at it (I pay nice percentages on sales) and it does bring new people to the site. So I'd say it's a good deal all the way around.

I'm low-key about selling my work. That's innovative. It might be nuts, but it's innovative.

3) What's your philosophy regarding free downloads of your writing?

I'm much in favor. I have three available at the moment, two novels and my first writing e-book, which was a bestseller at Booklocker.com for quite a while, until I decided to take it down and make it a free give-away.

The novels are Fire in the Mist and Sympathy for the Devil, my first book and another very early novel, respectively, both downloadable from the Baen Free Library, at (<http://www.baen.com/library/hlisle.htm>)

My first writing e-book, Mugging the Muse: Writing Fiction for Love AND Money, is available as a free download with any purchase at Shop.HollyLisle.Com, or at <https://hollylisle.com/downloads.html>

4) Do you think more people find your website from your books or the other way around?

I suspect more readers find my site from my books, and I know more writers find my books from my site. But I don't know whether I have more readers or more writers on the site, and of course the two groups overlap hugely. A lot of people find the site. I know that, and I'm grateful for them, however they get there.

5) What advice would you give to beginning writers who want to promote their work online?

Don't shill your books. Give something of value to Internet readers, make your work accessible and let people know that the same person who has given them something they can use has also written a few books. Then allow them to approach your work in their own time, rather than shoving your work at them. The Internet is, unfortunately, all about shoving advertising in people's faces. If you want to be innovative ... don't do that.

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