

TRANSCRIPT FOR TLC ONLINE WRITERS' DAY MORNING SESSION

Provided via StageText

00:00:13.000 --> 00:00:19.000

AKI: Hello everyone.

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We've decided to open this webinar a minute earlier so people can begin filtering through.

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We're not starting just yet.

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We're giving people a chance to join.

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So please join at your leisure and get comfortable and make sure you have your coffee, croissants, water,

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whatever you might need.

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I will be making introductions very shortly, but just for now we are welcoming you all into this webinar.

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JOE: Hello everyone.

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AKI: You can see the TLC team on screen.

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Nelima is just disappearing.

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I will leave it another few seconds before I make introductions and I can see people in the chat.

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Hello everyone in the chat.

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Okay.

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We have 74 people here.

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Another 100 to arrive.

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Don't worry we are recording this session.

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So nobody will miss anything.

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Welcome to the first ever TLC online Writers Day.

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My name is Aki Schilz.

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I'm the director of The Literary Consultancy.

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On the screen is Joe Sedgwick.

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Joe will be here in case of any glitches and as an admin person, if you have any issues and need somebody

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to private message, please private message Joe and he will be able to help you out.

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This is the seventh TLC Writers Day that we have hosted, but the first one we have hosted entirely online.

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I would like to thank all of you for joining us and being part of this digital experiment during the lockdown

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when everything has moved online and we are getting used to what formats work best especially for writers and

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especially for conference-style formats where we try and be as interactive as possible.

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To describe how the day will go, in the morning session, we have two seminars with amazing industry

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speakers.

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You will then have an hour's break for lunch and then we will go into breakout sessions in the afternoon

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with a writing workshop and a pitch workshop and then at the very end of the day, we will round-up, say thanks

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to everybody, and declare the winner of the TLC Pen Factor competition 2021.

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We will also be declaring live our long list, shortlist and some highly commended titles for the first time

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live at the event rather than ahead of the event.

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This is a bit of an experiment for us.

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If there are any issues, please use the chat.

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We are hosting this using an online portal which you will have had a link to.

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Our recommendation is you keep the online writers portal open so that you have all the links accessible to you.

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You will have received a PDF guide with some top tips for getting through the day and making the most of the day.

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I can already see that the chat is active, but just to explain, the chat is open throughout the day.

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Please post your messages there.

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I can see people saying, "Good morning.

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" It would be lovely to hear where you're all from as well because this is a digital event where you are based

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in the chat and I'm also going to launch on your screen a short poll.

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So you should see, hopefully if this has worked, on your screen now a poll with some questions.

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We're just trying to find out who is in the room with us.

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In the afternoon session, there will be more interactivity.

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So you will be in meeting rooms rather than webinars in the afternoon which means you'll get to talk and see each

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other, but because of numbers, just for this morning's session, we are in a webinar format so you will only be

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able to see the speakers on screen.

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You can also see one additional person on screen who is a very important part of this day.

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Everything today is captioned.

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Marea is giving us a wave.

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In the afternoon we will have auto captions for your break out sessions.

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All the content will be uploaded into your video library.

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The video library can be accessed via the portal.

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After the event, you will see bonus readings and dispatches from a publisher and bookseller.

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We will publish the recordings from today's sessions into the video library so you can access them those

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after the event.

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If you happen to lose connection today, please don't worry.

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Use the same link as you used to log in, to log back in and we will let you in via the waiting room.

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So the chat is there.

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When we have our speakers coming, you will see a Q and A button and that's on the bottom right of your screen.

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When the speakers are coming in, we have left time for questions so that you can ask questions to the industry

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speakers directly, please use that Q and A button during the speakers sessions to leave your questions for

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them.

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And at the end we'll have a curated Q and A session.

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There will be lots of people in the room.

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So we might not have time to visit every single question.

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But we will try to get through as many as possible.

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Also on your portal page, is a forum.

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So at the bottom of the portal page, if you scroll down, you should be able to see something called, "Forum "and

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where there is a forum, you can chat with other participants and leave comments and try and interact with

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people.

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Leodora Darlington is our first speaker.

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She will be arriving at 10:00am.

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She is a Commissioning Editor at Canelo.

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She is also the founder of an organisation called Owned Voices.

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She has just recently run a prize.

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Our second speaker is the publicity director of Sphere.

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She will be talking about DIY publicity.

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So, how you apply large scale publicity tactics and strategies to help boost your writing no matter where you

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are in your writing journey.

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While Leodora talks, the title of her session is New Digital Frontiers.

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Let's have a check-in with our poll to see who is in the room with us.

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Currently, we have 73% unpublished writers.

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5% self-published writers.

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22% traditionally published writers.

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5% of people in the room are in the early stages generating ideas and creative play.

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20% are working on their first writing project.

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61% have completed one or self-manuscripts.

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11% are published and looking for something more.

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So we hope you can find it today.

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And on the third question about confidence levels.

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20% are feeling unconfident.

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67% relatively confident.

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13% confident.

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And 0% super confident.

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So what we will be doing at the end of the day is revisiting this and with any luck, those numbers will be

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significantly higher.

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My tech team is in touch with me.

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We've got multi-screens, the digital age.

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There has been some error with our portal.

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Now, for the time being, that's okay.

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Because you're all in the room.

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The Tech Team is working as hard as possible to fix this.

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This is sometimes what will happen with new formats that we're experimenting with, but we hope it

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will be up and running as quickly as possible.

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We are going to send out to an e-mail to everybody on the guestlist with reminders of all of your links.

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If you're in the room with us this morning, please just stay on the line.

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There is no need to log out through the morning session.

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Let's go to chat and have a look at what people are saying.

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It might be nice to see who is in the room and where everybody is from.

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Let's see what people are saying.

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Hello from Denmark.

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Hello from Windsor.

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Hello from Dorset.

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From Bristol, from South West London, from Switzerland, from West Yorkshire, from Manchester, from The Hague, from

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Luton, from Kingston in South West London, from Aldgate, from West Midlands, from London, we've just been

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joined by our first speaker.

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Hello.

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Good morning Leodora.

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We are just saying hello to everybody who has come in from different parts of the world.

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I'm just reading out where everybody is from.

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From Germany.

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Hello from London.

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Hello from Bristol.

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Hello from, I can only assume that's somewhere in Wales which I don't know how to pronounce correctly.

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Hello Lynn from Wales!

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Hello from Somerset, Chichester, Hackney, the French Alps, Leicestershire, Kent, Trinidad &

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Tobago, Birmingham, the Canary Islands, Suffolk, London, Germany, Hove, another one from the Canary Islands,

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St Leonard's on Sea, the Wirral.

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St Albans, Shropshire, Sussex, Dorset, goodness me.

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We have from people all around the world.

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Just to answer those people who are still asking about the portal, please don't worry, our team is working on it

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and we have a tech person doing everything they can.

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So please don't log out of the session and you will be able to access everything.

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Okay, so it has come time to introduce our first speak, Leodora Darlington is joining us from, where are you joining

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us from today?

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LEODORA: From West London.

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I'm in Shepherd's Bush which isn't too sunny.

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AKI: It is nice and sunny in East London.

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I'm an Ealing girl.

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I've briefly introduced you.

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Leodora is a Commissioning Editor at Canelo and her session is new digital frontiers.

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Leodora will be talking about what digital publishing is and what it can offer to writers and how it is so much

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more than just e-books.

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If throughout Leodora's session, you have any questions, please use the Q and A function and ask your questions

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and at the end of the session, we will gather up those questions and we will be able to have a chat together.

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So, I'm going to end the poll.

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I'll share those results just so you can have a look of them.

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This is a poll from the beginning of the day about who is in the room.

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That should be appearing on your screen.

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Leodora, have you got your slides?

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LEODORA: I do.

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AKI: Wonderful.

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I'm going to spotlight Leodora just so that everybody can see her on the screen.

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I'm going to mute myself and I'm going to hand straight over to you, Leodora for New Digital Frontiers.

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LEODORA: Fabulous.

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Can you see my presentation?

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AKI: Yes, we can see it.

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LEODORA: So, first of all welcome to everybody who is here.

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Thank you for giving up Saturday morning for me to talk about digital publishing.

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I hope you'll get a lot out of it and hopefully you will have some questions at the end of the presentation.

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I'll give you an overview of who I am.

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My name is Leodora.

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I'm a Commissioning Editor at Canelo.

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I have several years working in commercial publishing, repeat e-book and best seller and I've worked on

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books by number one best sellers.

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I've worked with authors whose books have been translated and sold in dozens of countries and whose paper

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backs have sold hundreds of thousands of copies and this has happened through working with digitally-led

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publishers.

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That's what we're going to be discussing a bit more about today.

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Right, just to start with the basics and to think about what I mean when I'm talking about digital publishing.

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Today, I'm going to be talking about independent publishers and larger publishers who have a focus on e-backs

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and other formats, but e-books.

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One of the advantages on the whole, it is quicker to get to market.

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So that gap between delivering your book to an editor and the book landing in someone's hands or Kindle device or

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other reading device, that can be shorter.

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The quickest window if it is e-book only, it is about five months.

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That's going through a full editorial process.

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If you're the kind of writer who likes to write quickly, that can end up working well for you because it means

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that you're working with a publisher who can keep up with the pace of your writing.

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So another really attractive advantage of digital publishing is the high royalty rates.

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On average, the royalty rates per e-book are higher than at traditional publishers, I would say they start at

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40% compared to around 25% at traditional publishers and what that can mean in terms of money, say for

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1,000 copies of an e-book at £1.

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99 that's sold on Amazon and I'll use Canelo's model.

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Our royalty rates starts at 50% for 1,000 copies sold that translates to £700 compared to £350, but it is a

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higher royalty rates, but no advanced models.

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It ends up higher risk, higher reward.

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Say for example, you're offered a digital publishing contract and a 10K advance.

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Thinking about the e-book sales so it doesn't become too complicated.

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Say a book sells 10,000 copies at the price I mentioned, it ends up being £7,000 through a digital publisher

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offering at that 50% rate.

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Now, that translates to £3300, but you have the £10,000 advance tucked away in your pocket.

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Even if the book only sells 1,000 copies, you have got that advance.

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If your book sells well, say it sells 100,000 copies, then you're looking at £70,000 from a publisher like Canelo

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compared to £30,000 from a traditionally-led publisher.

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Digital publishers are better equipped to create digital success.

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It is really important to manage expectations because not every book can be a best-seller and it is tough

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to get books to the top of retailer charts.

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There is the risk versus reward element.

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Thinking about the disadvantages, that's one of the biggest disadvantages, you're sharing the risk

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with the publisher on whether you'll make money.

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It is worth bearing in mind.

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If you want bricks and mortar presence, there are some digital publishers who are focusing on paper

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backs in an exciting way and I'm going to come on to that.

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Are you getting the same deal from publisher to publisher?

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In short, no.

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I think one of the biggest differences or one of the most significant differences to authors is that

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paperback provision.

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Some independent publishers like Canelo or Aria have a focus on producing mass market paperback

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edition.

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I'm talking about more traditional paperbacks, so it is getting sold into retailers.

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It is a traditional paperback.

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Sphere and Sphere will release a select number of titles in mass market paperback in addition to similarly

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Hera is part of Canelo.

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It is not all about MMBs, they will do PODs.

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These sometimes get sniffed at because you won't tend to see PODs in a physical bookshop.

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If you want to walk into Waterstones or Smiths, that's not going to be a POD.

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Something that's been interesting is watching the pattern of POD sales.

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I'm sure some of you will have see stories from authors who have complained about their books not being

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available on Amazon during the pandemic because Amazon started to prioritise products that were key ending the

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coronavirus outbreak.

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If a customer wants to buy a book, there is a special machine that can print and bind that book which means

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there weren't the same level of delays which means that POD sales have been really healthy.

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If a book is a reasonable length, book prices are dependant on book length.

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If a book is a decent length, the margins on PODs - I won't talk about the boring techie things for too long.

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You can be making good money on PODs and they will be available to buy on websites like Waterstones and Amazon.

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It is worth thinking about that.

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Audio books, tend to vary from publisher to publisher.

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They tend to be invested in audio and producing audio books.

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That can be really advantageous, when it comes to audio sales, if you can have an audio book released at the

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same time as an e-book and paperback, it will push the audio sales.

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Now, on the whole, thinking from publisher to publisher, something that should be consistent is really

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thorough editorial work.

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There can sometimes be a conception with digital publishing, it is about rushing things through.

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That's not the case.

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And generally speaking if anything is important to you as an author, before signing a contract, ask your publisher

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about it to make sure that what you want is going to be provided to you.

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So, on the whole, digital publishing, they tend to offer authors a fairer deal with the higher royalty rates.

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Canelo is the highest going that I'm aware of.

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When it comes to digital publishers, we're looking at the royalty rates, it is all the money that the publisher

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gets in from selling a book.

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There should be no deductions for artwork or anything like that.

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It shouldn't cost you anything.

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If a publisher is asking you for money runaway screaming!

00:22:04.000 --> 00:22:05.000

One thing that I love about digital publishers, from publisher to publisher, authors tend to be treated

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a bit more equally.

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It tends to be more - if there is an author with a 6K and 10K, the publisher needs to be thinking about

00:22:23.000 --> 00:22:32.000

their profits and losses.

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Because there isn't that advance inequality, it means that authors tend to be treated more equally which I

00:22:33.000 --> 00:22:43.000
love to see.

00:22:43.000 --> 00:22:44.000
The common thread is a fairer deal for authors, a focus on the digital formats and high royalty rate no

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advance model.

00:22:49.000 --> 00:23:01.000
It has been great to see different things popping up.

00:23:01.000 --> 00:23:08.000
In the last couple of years, Hera.

00:23:08.000 --> 00:23:09.000
Other publishers too, it is worth bearing in mind that digital publishers come in many different

00:23:09.000 --> 00:23:13.000
shapes and sizes.

00:23:13.000 --> 00:23:15.000
I will talk about Canelo before I move on seeing that's where I am now.

00:23:15.000 --> 00:23:23.000
It was founded in 2015.

00:23:23.000 --> 00:23:28.000
The company has grown to become the largest independent in Europe.

00:23:28.000 --> 00:23:34.000
It was to bring stories to the widest audience.

00:23:34.000 --> 00:23:38.000
We're broad thinking, collaborative and putting the authors that we work with first.

00:23:38.000 --> 00:23:45.000
I have spoken about paperback editions.

00:23:45.000 --> 00:23:49.000

In 2018, Canelo moved into the print market where we have sold well over 2 million paperback editions.

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Digital doesn't mean e-book only.

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Now thinking about life of an e-book seeing that's the common thread that the digital publishers share.

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It will go through the editorial process, marketing and various stages differ by varying degrees compared

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with a traditional e-book, but we'll start with the editorial process first and foremost.

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Now, at any reputable publisher, it should look similar to the traditional publisher.

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There should be structural edit, a line edit and copyedit and proofread.

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With the structural edit, it is big picture things.

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Whether the character feels complete.

00:24:53.000 --> 00:24:56.000

Does the ending work?

00:24:56.000 --> 00:25:01.000

This past tense timeline.

00:25:01.000 --> 00:25:09.000

Are there high enough stakes in it?

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But whereas when you come to the line edit, you're looking at things at a more microscopic level, does the

00:25:10.000 --> 00:25:13.000
sentence structure work?

00:25:13.000 --> 00:25:18.000
Is the right word choice?

00:25:18.000 --> 00:25:19.000
A copy editor, a good copy editor is worth their weight in gold.

00:25:19.000 --> 00:25:26.000
They're brilliant.

00:25:26.000 --> 00:25:34.000
They're amazing and they are life savers and it is their job to catch what you as the author ar-Sandra.

00:25:34.000 --> 00:25:42.000
They might say, "Sandra left the shop at 2:00pm.

00:25:42.000 --> 00:25:45.000
" Looking at things on a sentence level and checking punctuation and grammar and making sure that sentences flow

00:25:45.000 --> 00:25:55.000
properly and everything is comprehensive.

00:25:55.000 --> 00:25:56.000
By the time we get to the proofread, spelling and grammar and making sure the menu script is as perfect as it

00:25:56.000 --> 00:26:00.000
can be before going off to readers.

00:26:00.000 --> 00:26:04.000
Now, you've got your perfect manuscript.

00:26:04.000 --> 00:26:09.000
It has been perfectly edited and you're comfortable that readers will love it.

00:26:09.000 --> 00:26:12.000
Now we have to think about getting the package and artwork in excellent shape.

00:26:12.000 --> 00:26:18.000
Getting the package right is really crucial for digital publishers.

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There are different tools available to sell tools in physical bookshops.

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In a physical bookshop, you might have a wonderful gold foil that makes it stand out.

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If a physical bookshop, it might be placed on a display that's in a advantageous position near the

00:26:29.000 --> 00:26:34.000

entrance.

00:26:34.000 --> 00:26:41.000

Online, there are different tools that you can use, but it comes down to the cover and the copy.

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Those tend to be the things, once the readers on Amazon and have typed in, all you have at that point is the

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cover and the copy to sell the book.

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This is key because for some digital publishing contracts it means final cover approval does sit with the

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publisher and there can be a quite difference compared to traditional publishing.

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In some publishing there can be more author input and it is worth bearing this in mind when thinking what you

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want from a publisher.

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At Canelo we commission the best freelance designers in the industry.

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Speaking about Canelo specifically, when it comes to thinking about a first book on a contract, what we are

00:27:29.000 --> 00:27:34.000

looking to do is establish a strong author brand look which can be carried across to future books.

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It is really important when we are putting together a package to make sure the genre accuse are right.

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By that, I mean if there is a huge historical fiction fan, if they see your cover in an ad or online, they

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know it is a World War II historical model.

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If they are a man of thrillers, they know it is a thriller.

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There are certain elements on the package that contributing to that.

00:27:58.000 --> 00:28:03.000

Yes, the artwork and the title and the strapline.

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They play together to make sure that they are really clear and readers know what they're getting.

00:28:06.000 --> 00:28:15.000

It is super, super important.

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Now, you have got your wonderful manuscript and it is time to think about the tools to sell books.

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The tools that digital publishers use to sell their books tend to be different.

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So, NetGalley is a tool that most publishers use.

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Readers can request to read a book, an advanced reading copy before it is released to the public.

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They can request it and leave a wonderful review, but in future on retailers.

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This can be really key for ads and promotions which we're going to talk about in a little bit, but it is a

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really wonder tool.

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Blog tours, when I heard about blog tours, I didn't really understand the concept.

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Book bloggers are an integral, a publisher will schedule a certain number of days, on each day there will

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be a book blogger releasing reviews on their website, but on social media and shouting about it.

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There are consecutive days where there are different bloggers shouting about your book and hopefully about how much

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they love it.

00:29:32.000 --> 00:29:38.000

It is a great way of creating buzz.

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When it comes to newspaper and magazine reviews, this tends to be that publishers use less often if it

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is a e-book release.

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It is just because when it comes to e book sales, there are stronger tools for selling e-books than the magazine

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reviews.

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It is wonderful as an author to see your book listed in a magazine, they tend to be more effective tools to

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selling books that traditional publishers like to focus on.

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When it comes to selling into retailers, this is something that digital publishers really excel at.

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What they're good at doing is establishing really strong relationships.

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Amazon is important and publishers will still maintain and develop those relationships, what is great about

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maintaining the other retailer relationships, those retailers are really good at giving the books a bit

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of extra support on their websites, and some meaningful sales can be coming from outside of Amazon, it is great to

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diversify where your sales are coming from and rely on other sales too.

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Let's think about publication day and beyond and how publishers will be selling your book at that time.

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We spoke about ads.

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Social media ads are a surprisingly effective tool for selling digital books and digital editions,

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particularly Facebook ads, they can sell thousands of copies of a book.

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NetGalley will mean you have some great five-star reviews coming through and if you can use that text on your

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ad, it makes the ad much more likely to perform well.

00:31:25.000 --> 00:31:36.000

You might have a five-star review that says, "OMG, I couldn't put this book down.

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" Going to the retailer page, hopefully the reviews have fed through and it means that readers are more likely to

00:31:38.000 --> 00:31:40.000

buy the books.

00:31:40.000 --> 00:31:45.000

That's when NetGalley comes in handy.

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There are tools that publishers like to equip down the line.

00:31:48.000 --> 00:31:56.000

Usually when it comes to price-led promotions.

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This isn't we're going on pub day, it happens a few weeks or months after the book has published.

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BookBub is the biggest promotional partner.

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It is a mailing list promo.

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BookBub has mainly mailing lists filled with people who say, "I really love crime thrillers.

00:32:15.000 --> 00:32:18.000

I want you to tell me when they are on offer.

00:32:18.000 --> 00:32:20.000

" These lists are hundreds of thousands of people strong.

00:32:20.000 --> 00:32:23.000

Publishers will say, "I want to publish a book.

00:32:23.000 --> 00:32:26.000

I want to drop the price on this book.

00:32:26.000 --> 00:32:29.000

Will you tell your mailing list fans about it.

00:32:29.000 --> 00:32:31.000

" BookBub will say yes or no.

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It is a really effective tool.

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A great example of how effective it can.

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We got a BookBub and in the US and off the back of the BookBub and smaller promotions it got to number two in the

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US from that visibility.

00:32:48.000 --> 00:32:54.000

That's how strong and powerful those promotions are.

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It is something that digital publishers are really switched on and they will be really engaged at making

00:32:57.000 --> 00:33:00.000

sure your book gets a push up the charts and more visibility.

00:33:00.000 --> 00:33:01.000

Digital publishing, does it work?

00:33:01.000 --> 00:33:05.000

It is a loaded question.

00:33:05.000 --> 00:33:10.000
Of course, I'm going to say yes!

00:33:10.000 --> 00:33:17.000
There are some really wonderful examples working favourably for authors.

00:33:17.000 --> 00:33:21.000
I'm going to go through a few of our success stories.

00:33:21.000 --> 00:33:29.000
I know where she is was a best seller.

00:33:29.000 --> 00:33:31.000
It was reviewed with fans wanting more of S.B.

00:33:31.000 --> 00:33:42.000
Caves.

00:33:42.000 --> 00:33:51.000
Nick Louth's books are popular with readers with thousands of reviews on Amazon.

00:33:51.000 --> 00:33:56.000
The closer you get has been a success story for Canelo.

00:33:56.000 --> 00:34:00.000
Huge sales from other retailers including independent bookshops and libraries.

00:34:00.000 --> 00:34:03.000
It is a great example of sales as well.

00:34:03.000 --> 00:34:11.000
What we do with the sales pattern is a book performing.

00:34:11.000 --> 00:34:15.000
This book performed okay on publication and we entered into some promotions and it got a lot of

00:34:15.000 --> 00:34:23.000
visibility and the sales rose at a high and brilliant level.

00:34:23.000 --> 00:34:27.000
Angela Marsons, it would be remiss to talk about publishing success stories and not speak about Angie.

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It illustrates what digital publishers do quite well.

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It fills the gap between what readers want and what publishers want.

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At the time that Angie's novel was being shopped around.

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They went, "It is a great procedural.

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" People are still buying them.

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Along came a digital publisher who picked Angela Marsons up and her book sold over four million copies to date.

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It is a really brilliant example of bridging the gap between what readers want and what publishers are looking

00:35:01.000 --> 00:35:03.000

for.

00:35:03.000 --> 00:35:13.000

I am conscious of time.

00:35:13.000 --> 00:35:21.000

I'm going to speak briefly about M.M. Chouinard.

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It is a really good example.

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Digital publishers tend to offer a higher degree of flexibility.

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So, yes, let me whiz through this.

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There is lots more to talk through.

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We found this novel through PitMad.

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I spotted Michelle's tweet.

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I liked it.

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We were really looking for a new procedural that would break out.

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The book wasn't selling much of anything.

00:36:01.000 --> 00:36:03.000

We changed the package.

00:36:03.000 --> 00:36:05.000

The sales slowly increased.

00:36:05.000 --> 00:36:06.000

We changed the copy.

00:36:06.000 --> 00:36:10.000

Sales increased.

00:36:10.000 --> 00:36:13.000

We saw this could be doing better.

00:36:13.000 --> 00:36:19.000

This is where BookBub, the reviews become crucial.

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This didn't have enough reviews on it to qualify for a BookBub.

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So we it shot to the top of the charts and it stays there and became a top 100 best seller in the US and became a

00:36:32.000 --> 00:36:36.000

top 15 best seller in print and that was off the back of POD.

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So this book at the time only had a print on demand edition.

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It is having a mass market paper back release in May, but it has gone on to sell hundreds of thousands of copies

00:36:49.000 --> 00:36:51.000

which ended up being lucrative for the author.

00:36:51.000 --> 00:37:21.000

Let's talk more about getting your foot in the door.

00:37:29.000 --> 00:37:29.000

If you think digital publishing sounds like a good idea and something that could be right for you, I'm sure

00:37:29.000 --> 00:37:33.000

AKI: Hello.

00:37:33.000 --> 00:37:40.000

We seem to have lost Leodora's connection momentarily.

00:37:40.000 --> 00:37:49.000

I'm just going to remove the spotlight and see if she is still with us.

00:37:49.000 --> 00:37:52.000

Hello Leodora.

00:37:52.000 --> 00:37:54.000

She has disappeared, but she has the link.

00:37:54.000 --> 00:37:55.000

Hopefully she will log back in.

00:37:55.000 --> 00:37:58.000

That does happen.

00:37:58.000 --> 00:38:02.000

There might be a connection issue.

00:38:02.000 --> 00:38:08.000

One of the TLC team is going to get in touch with her.

00:38:08.000 --> 00:38:19.000

Hopefully she will be joining us in a couple of minutes, but thank you everyone for your questions which we

00:38:19.000 --> 00:38:23.000

will be going through shortly with hopefully with Leodora with us.

00:38:23.000 --> 00:38:29.000

Some have been answered through the presentation so far.

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We will try to get to as many that haven't been answered because you've got some brilliant questions so far.

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Will the slides be available in the replay?

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It is just one that I can answer.

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Yes, absolutely they will.

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All the recording with the captions and transcripts will be uploaded.

00:38:47.000 --> 00:38:52.000

Leodora seems to be joining us again.

00:38:52.000 --> 00:39:02.000

Hello Leodora.

00:39:02.000 --> 00:39:05.000

I think you're on mute.

00:39:05.000 --> 00:39:06.000

LEODORA: Can you hear me now?

00:39:06.000 --> 00:39:10.000

AKI: Yes.

00:39:10.000 --> 00:39:15.000

LEODORA: Sorry for that.

00:39:15.000 --> 00:39:19.000

AKI: I'm going to respotlight you.

00:39:19.000 --> 00:39:20.000

LEODORA: I'm going to reshare my screen and hopefully get through the

00:39:20.000 --> 00:39:32.000

rest of the presentation.

00:39:32.000 --> 00:39:34.000

It is great when technology decides to be creative with how it operates!

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AKI: Slow the pace down a bit.

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It is a lot of fascinating brilliant information.

00:39:39.000 --> 00:39:44.000

LEODORA: I'll speak more slowly.

00:39:44.000 --> 00:39:45.000

I'm too keen to rush through everything to make sure there is time for questions.

00:39:45.000 --> 00:39:48.000

I'll go more slowly.

00:39:48.000 --> 00:39:51.000

Let's about getting your foot in the door.

00:39:51.000 --> 00:39:56.000

So you have decided this might be something that's right for you.

00:39:56.000 --> 00:40:04.000

The question I get asked quite often is, "Do you need an agent?"

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" Now many imprints are open.

00:40:13.000 --> 00:40:24.000

At my old imprint, I would say the split on the list was 50/50 agented to unagented authors.

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Currently, only 20% of the authors are unagented because we are currently closed to submissions.

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Digital publishers can be a really great option.

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For one, it is fewer barriers to entry.

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You only have to get your manuscript past an editor rather than past an agent and then an editor.

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But I do think there are some brilliant things to be said for having an agent.

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I think first and foremost, particularly for your debut, it can be great to have someone in your corner

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who knows the ins and outs of the business.

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The best agent will be knowledgeable to help you write the best book and get the best deal.

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It is worth bearing in mind, if you find a great agent, that's a long-term relationship for you.

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If the editor changes, your editor is more likely to change than your agent.

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Having an agent means if there is a change, you have the constant presence there and it feels less disruptive.

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It looks important to know if you click with the editor, if you don't have an agent, they end you will

00:41:30.000 --> 00:41:38.000

filling the agent role and there is more contact with them, but it is worth mentioning there is less room

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for negotiating at digital publishers when it comes to contracts.

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Agented and unagented authors on the whole tend to be getting the same deal.

00:41:48.000 --> 00:41:58.000

On the whole, an excellent agent is always worth having.

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A mediocre one, if you're thinking about being published digitally, a bad agent, stay away from.

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Not all agents are created equal, have an editor who are going to throw themselves behind you and your work

00:42:12.000 --> 00:42:19.000

with lots of energy and enthusiasm and be your champion.

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So, in terms of your actual submission in getting an editor at a digital publisher to pick your book up.

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What do you need?

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I'm giving away my trade secrets here.

00:42:28.000 --> 00:42:30.000

It is a hook.

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You need to have a really brilliant hook for your novel.

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It is a really competitive market and it is important that your novel stands out.

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So your pitch might revolve around a hooky dilemma.

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It might be your life or your unborn child's.

00:42:53.000 --> 00:42:55.000

Your pitch might evolve around an intriguing crime.

00:42:55.000 --> 00:42:56.000

Two women.

00:42:56.000 --> 00:42:58.000

One is dead.

00:42:58.000 --> 00:43:00.000

The other says it is suicide.

00:43:00.000 --> 00:43:06.000

Do you believe her?

00:43:06.000 --> 00:43:11.000

Can you distill the end of your novel into a sentence or two and make it really exciting.

00:43:11.000 --> 00:43:18.000

Beyond that, I know it might sound really obvious, if you have got a brilliant hook, it is just really

00:43:18.000 --> 00:43:28.000

important to make sure that the writing stacks up behind it and you can have the most incredible hook in the world,

00:43:28.000 --> 00:43:34.000

but as an editor, what editors want to spend time with their authors and if the manuscript seems it is going to

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take time attention away from other authors, that's going to make an editor stop and think.

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Big picture issues tend to be a little bit less scary to an editor for mixing compared to the small-scale things.

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When I say big picture issues, I'm talking about structural things.

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Of course, you want your novel to be as structurally as sound as possible and it will be wonderful, but if for

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example, a plot threat might need considering, a character might need changing and maybe the end needs to be

00:44:05.000 --> 00:44:13.000

changed slightly or a plot needs to be tweaked, those are bigger things in terms of the scope, but it is easier

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for an editor to step back and say, "Okay, that's what we need to fix and to feel confident that's what need to

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be done.

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" If you're looking at purple pros, language that's over-written, that becomes more challenging for an editor

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to look past.

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It is worth bearing in mind.

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On a sentence by sentence level, make sure that your spelling and grammar, those are the things to look at as

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well as the big picture things.

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The tech quality has taken time away from us.

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I want to talk briefly about self-publishing.

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It would feel remiss of me to talk about digital publishing and not talk about self-publishing.

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Canelo, there are self-published authors who are doing a stellar job.

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It is worth thinking about.

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Let's talk briefly about the advantages of self-publishing and disadvantages.

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The biggest advantage is you keep all the money to yourself.

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It is all yours and in your hands.

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Another wonderful thing is you have total creative control over your branding.

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Some digital publishers will have final approval over your artwork and title, but that's not something you

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have to worry about if you were self-publishing.

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The disadvantages, it is a lot of hard work focusing on publishing strategy, or working on publishing strategy for

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a book.

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I'm thinking about the marketing publicity and advertising and there is less time to focus on your writing.

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It tends to be the writing that writers want to spend their energy on.

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It is worth bearing in mind.

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The other thing to consider are the upfront costs.

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It will cost money to get a designer.

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I know we always say, "Don't judge a book by the cover.

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" The best artists I work charge £1,000 and there are designers that are brilliant, but I can't work with

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because they charge twice that.

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It is worth bearing in mind.

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I would strongly recommend getting editorial work, professional editorial work done on the book and a proofread

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which could cost £900.

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I would think a structural edit is advisable.

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You have to think about advertising the book and you could spend £50 a day on ads.

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So, before you know it, £1,000, £2,000, £3,000 has gone and it is worth bearing in mind that BookBub

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which is a brilliant tool and I really advice people to use it, it is expensive for a very popular category.

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It can cost £900, £1,000 and worth bearing in mind.

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I think we've got time to talk about the success stories here.

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I just wanted to put out some authors who have been doing a brilliant job.

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Holly Martin used to be published and went into self-publishing and has been doing really well for herself and her

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books are entering the top 50.

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AJ Wills book got into the top five.

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Nicola May, the Corner Shop.

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She has done a great job of shouting about her success.

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She says it is a number one best seller.

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Not only was it the number one best seller when it was released in 2019, it stayed at the number one spot for

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weeks on end.

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Thinking again about the advantages, these authors to keep all the profits.

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I know they are all hard-working when it comes to marketing and publicity and they spend a lot on that too, but

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it is another path that's worth considering and worth thinking about.

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I know in my keenness to get through, all of the wonderful bits of information that I've packed into the

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presentation, I have sped ahead.

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I'd love to hear a few questions from everyone who has been watching and thank you for listening to me talking

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at you for over half an hour.

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AKI: Thank you so much Leodora.

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There has been so much information.

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For those of you who joined us later because of the portal issues, we have now e-mailed everybody the links.

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Hopefully everything is back up and running.

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We do apologise.

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This is the first time we've used portal.

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There were unfortunately some issues.

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We are working on an apology package.

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Look out for some goodies coming your way later in the day, but yes, Leodora, we have so many in the Q and

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A.

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A couple have been answered already.

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If I gloss over you, it is partly time and it is because Leodora has addressed some of this in the

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presentation.

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Everything as we say will be recorded and uploaded to the video library and we will remind everybody about access

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and so on with our follow-up e-mails.

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Straight to the questions, Leodora after that fantastic presentation.

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The first one is, "Because it is a shared risk model, does that make a digital publisher more inclined to

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take a risk on new writers or books that are not an obvious win?

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" LEODORA: Because because the publisher isn't having to put £10,000 plus on an

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advantage and it means they can take some risks.

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Some digital publishers more risk averse, but I see digital inprints taking a chance in an area they have

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not previously explored or that might feel more risky.

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AKI: We have had some questions from three or four writers.

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We have got a few questions on, you talked about the hook.

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You've talked about book club fiction and genre accuse and there is a lot of reason why commercial fiction seems to

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work in the digital sphere.

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Do you also look at literary fiction and if you don't, why do you think that is that in this particular

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context does it not sell?

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Is it just not what you're looking for?

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LEODORA: We do look at book club fiction in a limited scope.

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Book club fiction is something that digital publishers publish and are interested in.

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It comes down if it is up market, it needs to have a good hook.

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There are many more conversations at the publisher about how to market the book.

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The good example would be the missing letters of Mrs Bright.

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This is a book club book, it is very well written, but we need to think how we can connect it to readers.

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What's the thing about this book that might draw readers towards it?

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That's why we pulled out the hook of the missing letters in the title.

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There still needs to be a distinctive hook within the book.

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I think where things become literary, no digital publisher tends to focus on literary books because they feel less

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accessible.

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By their nature, there is a smaller audience who are looking for them.

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It doesn't mean that the commercial books, there is not a focus on the writing quality too, they will be

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extremely well written.

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It is just if something is extremely literary and the whole book is one sentence, some readers will go, "That

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scares me.

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" We don't want to scare away readers in that sense.

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AKI: You've cultivated a particular readership with tastes with the things

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that Canelo is known for?

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LEODORA: 100%.

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While I do think there is some responsibility for a publisher to always be looking at reaching new

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audiences, there is a certain degree of confidence in knowing that those preexisting audience for that

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publisher that they know they can reach.

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AKI: I hope that answered your questions.

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Dina asks, "You mentioned some impressive sales results for fiction during your presentation.

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Do you have any thoughts about how non-fiction sales fair digitally?

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" LEODORA: That's an excellent question.

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The publishers that I have had experience with, the publishers who I know the editorial staff, they have

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only started looking at non-fiction in the digital space.

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I don't have very impressive figures yet.

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I think it feels more experimental.

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I'm sorry that's not the answer you were looking for.

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Digital publishers are interested in it.

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Non-fiction does well in audio, but it feels newer for the publishers that I'm aware of it.

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AKI: "You mentioned in your presentation the value of agents and

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how that process works" and in the afternoon we have got our pitching sessions where we will be put into

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groups to look at that process.

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Aruna is interested in the split of writers that come to you via different channels, it might be open submissions

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or it might be agents and it might be as you were talking through you kind of approaching writers.

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Can you talk about the split between the different channels?

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LEODORA: Yes, Canelo, because we are currently only open to submissions,

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most of the submissions come through that channel.

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I have been getting editors to engage.

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PitMad, I spoke about and DVpit.

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At the moment at Canelo, it is 90% agent, it is just agented submissions we're getting.

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Other publishers like Book Sure.

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It ends up being 50/50 in terms of representation there.

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But there are wonderful things that I've been doing and Book Sure have been running like Spread the Word and

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we will do a call out.

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AKI: We have had a couple of people asking what those platforms were?

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AKI: PitMad and DVpit for those asking.

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That is in the chat for you.

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We will continue to pop resources and things mentioned in the chat as they come up.

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Yes, attendees are answering their own questions.

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Thank you to all of you for answering each others questions!

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We've sort of covered this, but I'm interested in case, maybe you've already answered this, which is book

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club and more commercial stuff, digital publishing in general Robin is interested in.

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It seems to be more successful with certain genres.

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Could you tell us, I guess, give us a list so that we know because you've mentioned book club and generally

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commercial.

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Is it all there, do you think?

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LEODORA: Yes, I think so.

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I think the interesting thing is it might look like digital publishing works best for say a very specific

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genre, but the interesting thing, I'll speak more specifically.

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With thrillers, you can see them getting to the top of the best seller charts.

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Usually when it is on a price information like a daily deal with it has dropped to 99p or been dropped

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after publication or it had a BookBub.

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There are other commercial genres that you don't see at the top of that list as often, but they are at a higher

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price point consistently.

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For example, historical fiction and saga fiction sells exceptionally well to digital publishers and also in

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print.

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They tend to, they sell at a higher price point and have a longer tail of sales.

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Sometimes we can get distracted by what's in the top 50 or top 100.

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Crime thrillers will do well.

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Procedurals are hard to make work.

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We might be getting to the point where readers are loving it, but looking to the brand name authors.

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Thrillers, if you've got a great pitch, readers will buy it.

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Romance works really well, especially if it is holiday romance in the UK.

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It works less well in the US because readers tend to go towards either brand or self-published authors who

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have cornered the market.

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Book club fiction, although we've discussed literary fiction not being as popular with publishers, but book

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club fiction with a good hook can do well and it is something that publishers are looking for.

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I'm wondering if there is anything I haven't touched on which is important.

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One thing that digital publishers struggle with is sci-fi.

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AKI: Guy has asked a question about things that are stuck again genres.

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"It harder to make it harder to sell anything that doesn't have a genre home?

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" LEODORA: The short answer is yes.

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It is where does it sit?

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If it is difficult to get it to sit somewhere, usually the sales team become nervous about it.

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I think every editor has picked up a passion project at some point that doesn't sit in a genre.

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It does tend to struggle a little bit.

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It is because it is harder to get the genre cues to shout clearly.

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Sometimes it might be a case of editing the manuscript so it sits more comfortably, but it can't, it makes it

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trickier for us.

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AKI: Mark said, "I'm really interested to hear that PitMad has worked for

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someone.

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What would Leodora recommend to writers to make their PitMad tweets more successful and what else can

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writers be doing to attract digital publishers?

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" Not attract them as I guess how do you make your pitch and we will be doing this in the pitch sessions, if

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you're doing a PitMad which is new to come people in the room.

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You can find that on Twitter, how can you make that limited space feeling appealing?

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LEODORA: Because there are so many tweets, it feels like going into TK

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Maxx!

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I would say use comp titles...

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AKI: It is similar titles to the book that you're writing.

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Taken from contemporary or non-fiction.

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LEODORA: It doesn't have to be another book.

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It is like, all the Netflix series I'm thinking of.

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It might be a Netflix.

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They'll put the comp and say X meets X in capital letters and if you're looking for something in a certain

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genre, you will pick up on that.

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You use things that are really big and best sellers and you use recognisable names and also make use of the genre

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hashtags.

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PitMad will use certain hashtags to describe the genre that you're writing in.

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Those two things are worth bearing in mind.

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AKI: Rich has a question.

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This is a big question, but we will try and keep it succinct.

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When it comes to cover design, genres tend to have specific style to appeal to readers, do you think there is a

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time to make a cover different to the usual genre style in order to stand out particularly for an author who is

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new to a genre?

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LEODORA: For an author who is new, it is important that the cues are there.

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Interestingly enough I think again every editor has gone, "Let us do this differently.

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" That cover and you want to do something different with it and it didn't work.

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I think the challenge is finding those clear genre accuse while trying to keep it fresh.

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One of the covers I worked on was, it is called The Nurse by JA Corrigan.

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It does look a bit book clubby, but it was trying to find a point of difference.

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For publishers and authors, make sure the accuse are clear and find a point of difference.

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AKI: I hope that answers your question and why covers get grouped in

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particular ways and why it is useful as a cue and in other place how it can be restrictive, but it is not the session

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for now!

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It is perhaps another one.

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So, Arty has got a question.

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There might be a typo.

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I'll read it and hopefully it makes sense.

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"I see a lot of issues with disabled writers trying to get their foot in the door" you said transparent.

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Do you have any tips for disabled writers wanting to get into digital publishing?

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LEODORA: Yes.

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I suppose, my advice tends to be similar for authors.

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I do a lot of work in terms of trying to increase representation of writers from under represented backgrounds

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across all backgrounds and it comes down to writing something that feels authentic to you, not what feels

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authentic to the publishers.

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It is the story you want to tell and thinking about - I would advice once you have written your story, what are

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the exciting elements that I want to pull out and make sure you put that in your pitch letter or agents or

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publishers.

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It is telling the story you want to tell, but thinking about the exciting things that you can pull out from that.

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I hope that's a good enough answer, but focus on writing what you want.

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Just saying about sharing.

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Write why your heart.

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Sometimes it takes a few rejections to get there, but I think you will eventually.

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AKI: We will share on the forum once, I think we've, the tech team

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discovered that it might be the forum which has caused the issues in the portal, we have had to disable it, we

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will filter through any resources to the portal.

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For example, we are work in partnership with literature organisations that support disabled

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writers and we will put links in there.

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We're in the last stretch of questions.

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We have had questions about digital publishing.

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Is it kind of amalgamating your questions writers into one.

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I apologise if I missed anything.

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Is digital publishing a first stage, somebody referenced having an e-book and moving on to print.

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Is it something that you see as a model that can live separately from print?

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LEODORA: This is interesting because at the current publisher I work at

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e-book and print is very much intertwined.

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For the writers I worked with in the past, it is not a first step.

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For writers who have been published in e and audio similar tain lussy, it is what works for them.

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I'm thinking about workers Angela Martin.

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When you are successful under the digital model, the money that you are making is very nice in short!

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So, it is very much on a stepping stone.

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It is about what suits.

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It is like choosing what clothes to wear.

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It is what fits you.

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and yourself most appropriately.

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AKI: We have questions from writers who are writing either children's or middle grade.

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I don't think we've mentioned children's or middle grade.

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What's it looking like?

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LEODORA: It is as yet untested.

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The instinct that the publishers have is that fiction beyond the adult category just doesn't sell as well in

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digital formats.

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I'm not sure how far that's interrogated as a theory, but it is not something that digital publishers

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are looking at.

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AKI: Fine.

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A short question here.

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"How many authors can Canelo take on each year?

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" This is something that interests me and I ask agents a lot.

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How many submissions do you have and of those, how many end up published?

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Roughly?

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LEODORA: I honestly couldn't tell you how many.

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We're independent.

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Because the way we operate at Canelo every different editor has a very different genre focus.

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Our in-boxes are different when it comes to submissions.

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I have looked at my acceptance stats and I take on 0.

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5% of my submissions.

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AKI: 0.

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5%?

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LEODORA: Yes, it is quite small.

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I would encourage open submissions as much as possible.

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Sorry, it is not good to give a more wider...

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AKI: That's fine.

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It is really useful to know and you know, it is something that we know so we think the average across the

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industry is 0.

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9% just from our research.

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That's in line.

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But sometimes writers are surprised to hear that.

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LEODORA: There was a question about how many books authors can take on a

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year?

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AKI: Yes.

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LEODORA: I can only speak to myself as an editor where I currently am.

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I have about 12 front list books in the year for 2021.

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I probably wouldn't go above 20 at Bookouture it is around 20.

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Some authors are delivering three books a year.

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Yeah.

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Hopefully that helps.

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AKI: It really, really does.

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So we are 2 minutes from the end of this session.

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I should mention before we wrap up, I'm going to see if there, so many questions, we've got 48 questions.

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Thank you everybody for inputting.

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Before I get to the last question which I'll pick in a moment, I did want to share with you, Leodora that

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throughout the chat we have had so many people saying, "Thank you so much for an insightful presentation and for

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your input and writers saying that they have really enjoyed this and there is so much to learn.

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I did want to mention that.

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Okay, so let's go through and pick the final golden question.

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Let's make it a good one.

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There are some things which have been covered off.

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There are a few questions about pitching.

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We will answer that, I think, in the afternoon session.

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Forgive me if I don't get to those.

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One question about POD.

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That just means print on demand which means as and when somebody wishes to print it rather than having a full

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print run of hundreds or thousands of books as and when somebody wants it.

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It is a higher unit price.

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And then upfront costs.

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Leodora has covered this.

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There shouldn't be any upfront costs with any publisher.

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No publisher should be charging you.

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This is interesting.

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Let's finish on this final question because I have seen this, maybe I'm wrong, I have seen in digital

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publishing, pseudo names or use of initials?

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LEODORA: Yes.

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Yes!

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AKI: Is this a trend?

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Is it to do with genre?

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LEODORA: That's a good question.

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For some authors, it is a case of personal preference.

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Sometimes it is to do about IP.

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So for some IP projects, the publisher will pick a name and that means that from book to book there might be a

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different author working on the book, but the names are picked by the publisher.

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I see it a lot particularly in psychological fiction.

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I can't tell you.

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By the time a few people have done it and they have been successful, there is a lean to it.

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Some like to go by initials.

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If a female character is writing, if a female author is writing something that's hardcore, they might choose to

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use initials.

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Sometimes it is the case of authors wanting to protect their identity.

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AKI: It is one of the mysteries, but probably trend-based.

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We're not sure.

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We have some to the end of our first session.

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Thank you everybody for being here.

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Thank you, Leodora for such an amazing presentation.

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And for such generosity and just a wealth of information.

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I really hope that you've all taken away lots to think about and mull over and that you can maybe consider

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digital publishing as within of the options.

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We always tell writers through TLC to be open to all pathways, because it is about pathways to readership.

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Leodora, thank you.

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We'll let Leodora go, but we'll keep the window open.

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You can either log out and use the same link to log back in at 11:05am or you can switch off your audio and

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video and go and wander and around and have a cup of tea.

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We will be switching over captioners so you probably want to mute and not listen to me doing that.

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But thank you for being here.

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Thank you for your forebearance with the first ten minutes of glitches and thank you, Leodora.

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We will see you all in 8 minutes.

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We will see you at 11:05am.

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LEODORA: My pleasure.

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I hope you enjoy the rest of the day.

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AKI: Hello, everyone.

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We are back!

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It is 11.

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p05, we have changed captioners, and we are here with the director at Sphere.

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Are you able to switch your video on for us Maria?

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This is the second session of the TLC onliners day.

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Please continue to use the chat here.

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We had a couple of questions from the last session about the raised hand function.

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So throughout this session, I will spotlight Maria as I did Leodora, she will make

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her presentation and we'll leave time at the end for questions.

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If you have questions, you can use the Q&A button on the bottom right hand side of your

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screen to ask a question, we will see the question and we will answer those in the Q&A at the end.

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The chat is for general comments, things that you are interested in and

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we'll pop resources or things mentions by Maria in the chat so use the two functions during this

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session.

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The raise hand function is, if you raise your hand and you want to ask a question with

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audio, the raised hand function allows you to do that.

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Depending on how many questions we get, we'll select some, if we get lots, we'll go through them.

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I would like to introduce Maria, our second speaker of the day, we are so glad you could join us this.

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Is DIY Publicity.

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Maria is an award-winning publicist and now a publicity Director of Sphere.

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She'll take you through what publicity is and how you can apply some strategies to help you as a writer and

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your projects.

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Without further ado, I am going to spotlight Maria and I am going to hand

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over to you, Maria Garbutt-Lucero.

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MARIA: Thank you for coming and thank you Aki for inviting me.

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So, just to tell you a little bit about myself.

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I have got over ten years' experience working across literary and prints at Penguin,

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Random House, vintage, Faber.

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Today what I am hoping to do is tell you some of the things I've learnt along the way that can help you

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on your journey to publication and hopefully inspire you with some ideas for when it comes to

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promoting your own books on a budget.

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I would like to give you an insight into the machinery behind the whole publication process because I

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know it can be mystifying and opaque from the outside.

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I'll also discuss a couple of case studies of authors I have worked with

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to illustrate my points and also tell you about how I have applied the principles to my own

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extracurricular projects with my Filipino Baboy Club.

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I'm going to share my screen.

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Is that working for everyone?

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AKI: Yes, we can see that.

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MARIA: OK.

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MARIA: Trying to get it to full screen.

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AKI: At the top where it says slide show, insert design animation

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transition slide show and then from beginning.

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There we go.

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MARIA: OK, great.

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So, a quick note on the difference between marketing and publicity.

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We work closely together to find the audience the books buyers.

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And then old and simple distinction between was marketing is promotion that you

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pay for, so advertising in newspapers or on the radio or on TV, billboards that you will see in train

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stations, kind of point of film, merchandise at, you know, book shops like those dump bins full

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of books, things like that.

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And then publicity is all of the row motion that isn't paid for, so getting the book reviewed in the

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newspapers or getting authors talking at literary festivals about their books and signings afterwards,

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meet the audiences.

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So whenever I start a campaign, I always think who is the ideal reader

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for the book?

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Who is most likely to buy it and how do I reach them?

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I think about my print targets, my online targets for sort of coverage, looking at features,

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extracts, interviews with the author, that could be like some of the reading lists, like Book of the

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Year Lists, things like that.

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Now in the digital age, there's more of a blurring between publicity and marketing because we are trying to

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find social media influencers who'll build buzz and excitement ahead of publication.

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So the other thing marketing would do would be creating merchandise, so I've

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got over the years, I've accumulated so much merchandise, thanks to the creativity of my

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colleagues in marketing, so Normal People wrapping paper that we wrap the books in before we sent them

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to editors, you know, thousands of Tote bags, in my drawers, Normal People mugs that we sent to

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people who'd really championed Sally Rooney's debut novel conversations with friends.

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I have dozens of these T-shirts that have come in useful as pajama tops for me and my friends over the

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years.

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As a publicist, I guess one of the main roles is, I'm a cheerleader for

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the book, I'm kind of the one shouting about it to the media, trying to get literary editors

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interested and agreeing to review it.

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So I am really thinking about sort of precise ways to convey the message of

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the book without them, you know, just kind of tempting them to read on, basically.

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And then, as part of the publishing team, I am advising on the audiences that we are trying to find for it.

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And I plan national tours of events, at book shops, literary festivals, signings, that kind of

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thing, and building relationships with media and making connections between them and the author.

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Occasionally I'm a therapist as well when things go wrong!

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The main bulk that I do, as I said, is trying to find the people who will buy

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the book.

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The thing that I really enjoy about my job is curating events.

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And this is sort of my opportunity to kind of think about who are my dream pairings?

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Who would I love to hear in conversation with Zadie Smith.

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I was able to set up an event where Diana Evans interviewed her.

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I worked with Emilie Pine on her memoir Note to Self two years ago and with a writer of the New Yorker we

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got Octavia Bright, a co-host of a brilliant literary podcast called Literary Fiction

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interview.

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So it's, you know, drawing different people together and Zadie Smith will

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have a specific audience and Diana Evans will have her own fans and then you bring them together and

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that's kind of a really rich, interesting conversation sparking off ideas off each other and

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also there are different plans of them coming together and celebrating their work.

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So I have worked with prize-winning novelists like Anna Burns, and what I

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really love doing is building the profile for debut novelists.

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People at the start of their career and, you know, the general public,

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have no idea who they are.

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I am kind of trying to find the journalists who will want to write

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about the book in media and then festivals who will want to promote their books.

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It's like a real exciting challenge at the beginning of someone's career.

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These are a range of the authors that I have worked with.

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Sally Rooney, Francis Char, and Edward Louis.

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Part of the work in building someone's profile, that can begin even before

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you have been published and before you have an agent.

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So you can start pitching articles to places like the White Review or Short

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Stories, The Stinging Fly and there are a range of prizes for emerging writers like the Sunday

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Times Short Story Award and the Guardian BAME Short Story Award.

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There was a debut novelist who started that, Candice Carty-Williams before she became a

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multi-best-selling author of Queenie.

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Last year I had the great pleasure of working on Dolly Parton's song-teller,

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David Mitchell's number one best-seller utopia Avenue and then the Firm with the louding voice, the

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debut novel of Abi Deus who you will be saying later on today.

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What is really important is, how do you tell the story of who you are as a writer?

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Probably like a way of saying that is building your personal brand.

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Of course, there's all sorts of things that you can do to promote a book and

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get it noticed when you have a publicity, marketing team and the luxury of a marketing budget and a

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publishing house behind you.

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For instance, I have toured with Irvine Welsh in a customised black cab

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for his book, A decent Ride and a book called the Knowledge, a popular science book about how to

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survive the apocalypse.

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We vacuum packed proofed copies of the book to send to literary editors

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because we wanted to playfully grab at their attention and sort of tell a quick short hand story about

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the book.

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That generated a buzz because people were sort of surprised to receive this

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vacuum-packed proof that would tell them how to survive any apocalyptic situation.

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Then that gets the book seen elsewhere.

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A key role for the publisher is to get other people talking about the book, not just us, because I

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think people in the public know that we are trying to sell the book so what we really need to do

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is generate excitement outside of our bubble.

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What is the path towards success before you are signed with a

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publishing budget - the first thing I really think is helpful is building your biography.

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That needs to tell a story about who you are and what you write.

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So in other words, conveying your personal brand because it's the way that agents will pitch you to editors

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at publishing Houses and the editors will take your proposal to acquisition meetings to be read across

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the department and then they'll get feedback from the colleagues in sales, marketing,

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publicity, editorial.

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We all kind of come together and discuss how viable it is to sell and can we find

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an audience for it.

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So your biography is a short hand way of expressing either I'm a literary write

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we are an interest in sci-fi or queer retellings of classical myths, or I'm a historian with

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academic credentials and I specialise in sort of military history.

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So it's kind of about tying your name to the certain institutions that tell

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that narrative.

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So to some extent, it's identifying what genre is your book because if

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it's literary fiction or non-fiction, crime, thriller, romance, sci-fi, at the end of that process,

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once it's bought and turned into a physical object, the generic conventions sort of mean that

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it kind of defines where it will end up in a book shop.

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It's all kind of this whole sort of pipeline from the beginning of acquisition to actual publication.

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So I think a useful exercise would be to sort of reverse engineer that.

01:28:54.000 --> 01:29:01.000
If you look at your favourite books and think about your favourite authors, get the books off

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the shelves and have a look at the back and have a think where did they begin?

01:29:03.000 --> 01:29:12.000
How did their careers kick off?

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And say for Abi who is speaking later, she won a novel award in 2018 and was a finalist

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for the literary consultancy award in 2018.

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These are markers of, it just show hes that they are people already interested in the work and there's

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going to be an audience for it.

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Then another way to build that presence is through social media.

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If you can create accounts on Twitter or Instagram, I think it's really important to join the

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conversation around books that you like and that you want to be part of the publishing landscape and it's

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really important to support the work of other writers.

01:29:59.000 --> 01:30:04.000
It's not just a platform to promote your own work, it's not a one-way street because I don't think anyone is

01:30:04.000 --> 01:30:10.000
interested in simply following someone who is self-promoting constantly.

01:30:10.000 --> 01:30:15.000
It's also important to do your research.

01:30:15.000 --> 01:30:20.000
Know the media that your books will be promoted through.

01:30:20.000 --> 01:30:25.000
Start reading them, thinking of features you would write for publication.

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There will be all sorts of publications dedicated to whichever

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genre that you are specialising in, be it crime, thriller, science, history.

01:30:36.000 --> 01:30:42.000
Get to know the journalists that write for them.

01:30:42.000 --> 01:30:53.000
What is the national conversation around that topic that is your passion?

01:30:53.000 --> 01:30:58.000

Again, you can start writing articles and a lot of that can be done through social media like a lot of

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journalists - say specifically for women of colour there are specialist publications like

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gal-dem Bad Form Aurelia and the editors often do feature call-outs on Twitter outlining specific topics

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they are interested in hearing about.

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So you can instantly have this direct contact with a journalist who may then

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commission you to write a piece which then leads to more attention to your work.

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That is again another by-line that you can add to your biography.

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Then in terms of, once you are there, when you are pitching, I think pitching e-mails is a whole other

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workshop that we could spend an hour on I think.

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I would like to share a few tips that I have found useful over my decade in publishing.

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Have you heard of kiss - keep it simple stupid or keep it short and

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sweet.

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That means keeping it concise and relevant because the thing in media is, no-one has the time to

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read blocks of text and what you really want to do is convey your argument or your idea very

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quickly.

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So what I sometimes like to do is think about, how would I describe this

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book to a friend or this idea?

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How would I encapsulate that in a tweet?

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Then I will attach the longer piece.

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Because once the e-mail lands in the editor's in-box, they get hundreds and hundreds of them

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a day, so if you can capture the attention immediately and lead themmen to reading the piece in

01:33:01.000 --> 01:33:05.000

full, that seems to be the mofs fective way.

01:33:05.000 --> 01:33:12.000

Thinking about hooks, I think it's always good to include any facts and

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statistics that you have to bolster your case and media planners often plan around big anniversaries.

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So are there any that are coming up that you can hook up a piecen to?

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So in August, it's 60 years since the Berlin Wall was constructed and I'll be pitching

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features on this book Tunnel 29, around that.

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The other thing to think about is, what is your angle, what are you saying that has not been

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said before?

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The media is obsessed with new ideas and new angles on stories.

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Personal experience is also really interesting, particularly for women's

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magazines, they are interested in memoir pieces, and do you have a unique perspective on a

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topic that affects a lot of people?

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It's always important to provide context for a feature idea.

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Again, plugging into the national conversation around whatever topic it is that you specialise in.

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But with news, the obsession, you know is with something new because something move so quickly.

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By the time that a piece gets published, it could be old news and everyone's moved on to something else,

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particularly in the age on Twitter when everything is so accelerated.

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I think always try to look to the future and not just digest what has

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already happened.

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I have on the screen listed a few prizes.

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These are another useful way to signal to the media publishing industry and book sellers

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about where your book fits in the market and who your audience will be.

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So entering these competitions and getting on the short lists adds to

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your biography.

01:35:06.000 --> 01:35:17.000
There will be specific ones around crime and thriller.

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So it's mainly a lot of research and reading up on the kind of genre that you are trying to write

01:35:26.000 --> 01:35:32.000
in I thought it would be interesting to talk about a study with Sally Rooney,

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when I worked on her debut launch campaign for conversations with friends around five

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years ago now I think, I actually interviewed for my job at Faber and presented an eight-page campaign plan.

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I won't go into the very granular detail of that, because that would take an hour, but I think the

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main thing for me about a successful campaign in publishing is, I always think of it as a single snow

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flake that turns into a snowball and as it rolls down the hill towards publication it becomes an

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avalanche.

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It's when a book goes beyond the pages and goes on Radio Four and what not, I would call

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it a crossover where it crosses over into other cultural spaces.

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Like the reason that I knew the Sally Rooney book was booking a phenomenon.

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I had never mentioned the book to my auntie but they were doing it of their

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own volition as a discussion and it wasn't just people in publishing talking about it.

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So how does that begin?

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Before she was the number one best-selling prize-winning author with film

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and TV adaptations, and fans across the literary and celebrity worlds, she started as a debut author

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like you.

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She published the *Stinging Fly* and the *White Review* and, after the book was acquired, she

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won the Sunday Times short-story prize which got her on the radar of the literary editor and opened

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doors later on and then, having that on the biography, that really helped my case when I was

01:37:22.000 --> 01:37:28.000

pitching for literary festivals.

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With debut authors, they are an unknown quantity because people haven't encountered their work before.

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So having those sorts of things on your CV is that short hand that makes people sit up and think, I

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had better book her!

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Another part of the whole publishing process is, editorial team find

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champions for the book.

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So they get quotes, endorsements from high profile established authors, so again

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that sort of marker of quality.

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Then as a publicist I'm targeting those journalists who will write about it, producers who

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will want to set up interviews with the author on radio, print or online, and then alongside the

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marketeers, we find influencers who will share the book on Instagram and book blogs, Twitter.

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I think the author photo is something to consider.

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It's not simply a passport photo.

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I think with author photos you can convey a story about who you are as an author.

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For instance for Sally for her first one, I arranged, she sort of sent me this spotify play list she had

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been listening to which she had been writing Conversations with Friends and it has bands like

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Bell & Sebastian on it.

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So when I commissioned a set of author portraits, I booked someone who had a

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background in Indie music because I thought they had sort of been part of the same world and it

01:39:26.000 --> 01:39:42.000

would, the style of photo that he took would sort of convey the kind of world that her characters lived in.

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When I did a mailing to womens' magazines, we sort of created a package with the proof copies of

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Conversations with Friends and I included little bottles of Bombay Sapphire Gin and cigarettes

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with gold tips and a hand-written postcard from Francis to Bobby, sort of one of the e-mails that

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she writes in the novel where she's kind of wistful and kind of, again sort of trying to convey the

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summer holiday aspect, friends talking late into the night and getting drunk and drinking and

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cigarettes and the intimate conversations that they were having.

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It kind of probably seems like quite a gimmick and I wouldn't do that to

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every person in the media, that was specifically targeting womens' magazines because I think they

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are interested in the lifestyle element of books as well.

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I don't think that approach would have worked for the Sunday Times literary

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editor who was much more interested in the institutions that kind of have, that Sally had written

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for, like the White Review or the Stinging Fly.

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As a result of that mailing package, those womens' magazine editors took

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Instagram photos and tweets with the whole package.

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Then again that's like another bit of free publicity and getting the book properly seen and having it recognised

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months before publication.

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From that, you keep building and then it sort of is an unmissable image so that by the time it's published and

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in the book shops and window displays, people already have a sense of what it is.

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Then they see it in a magazine or in a newspaper, they hear Sally talking on

01:41:46.000 --> 01:41:53.000
Radio Four Front Row or they might see her listed in the Hay Festival brochure or Cambridge

01:41:53.000 --> 01:42:00.000
Festival being interviewed by Ali Smith for her Literary Days Debut Panel.

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The other thing is, people say that you have to have seen a book five times before you buy it.

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Because I mean, if you think about every day you are bombarded with so many marketing messages,

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be it online or walking down the street, billboards for all sorts of different products.

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It's just about getting your book kind of to be unmissable, just implanting

01:42:26.000 --> 01:42:31.000
that image in people's minds.

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But it's also really important to find and build a community.

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When I started in 2010, around the recession, there was a lot of scary talk about Kindles bringing about the

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political books and social media competing for our attention spans.

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It was as if in ten years publishing wouldn't be here any more because we'd all be on Twitter

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the whole time.

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To some extent that is true, but I think I am very positive, like books are still

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here, book shops are still around, there's so much conversation around literature and culture.

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There is still a persisting idea that we are competing against things like

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Netflix.

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Despite the Internet being a democratising influence, there are a wealth of

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opportunities to kind of find communities online.

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When I began my career, I was really terrified about the idea of networking.

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I always imagined that it was going up to someone senior at a party and sort of shaking their hand

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forcefully then giving them a business card and making some kind of professional connection that

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way.

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It never felt genuine to me or something that I could really do with confidence.

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You know, I have never actually had a business card in my ten years of

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publishing, I've never gotten around to it.

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Secondly, it's a legitimate way to make contact, but I kind of never felt that

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comfortable with it.

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Yesterday, I saw a post about Issa Rae where she talked about, it's not about

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networking up, but across.

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This really articulated something that I had been doing and some of my friends have been

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doing without really having an intention behind it.

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But it really kind of encapsulates that.

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She kind of talked about calling on your friends or colleagues and finding opportunities

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to work together.

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And I think it's so important that, finding a community of peers, who share the same

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passions as you do.

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I would say a good way to do that would be to, once the pandemic is

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over, go to events, writing a book can be a solitaire experience, so if you go to book events, you are

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getting a sense of the publishing landscape, the things that people are interested in talking

01:45:16.000 --> 01:45:20.000

about, how to do a good book talk and, you know, you can support your local book shop, talk to the

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book-sellers, they are also passionate about reading.

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When it comes to publication, they'll probably stock your book and possibly

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be hand-selling it to customers who come in.

01:45:32.000 --> 01:45:36.000

Go to literary festivals.

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See who is being paired together.

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What are the dominant themes and what can you add to that conversation?

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Book people are a pretty sociable bunch and love a party as well.

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So there are chances to socialise, particularly, I have found the crime world to be really friendly and

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tightly knit.

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So you will often find people mingling at the bar at the Harrogate Crime Writing Festival, for example.

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I'm going to pivot from one favourite topic, books to another, which is food.

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Not because we are approaching lunch time, but it's kind of an illustration

01:46:27.000 --> 01:46:36.000

of what I've been doing without a budget.

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So in 2018, I started a Filipino supper club called Baboy Club, a fun side project.

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I've always loved cooking, my friends have often said that the you should write a cookbook

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or, I don't know, but this was a fun way to challenge myself to go beyond having dinner parties or

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barbecues, it was like let me see if I can host a dinner for 30 people with no training!

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It's also kind of a fun way to reconnect with my culinary and

01:47:13.000 --> 01:47:19.000

cultural heritage, having been born in Manila and being thousands of miles away from my Filipino family.

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What I found with this project was, having a social media presence is a

01:47:25.000 --> 01:47:25.000

really fun way to document my adventures in food, kind of my journey towards writing a cookbook

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potentially.

01:47:31.000 --> 01:47:32.000

It's also research, it's like a photo blog shaping the identity of what I am

01:47:32.000 --> 01:47:39.000

aiming for.

01:47:39.000 --> 01:47:45.000

And when I started planning, I was thinking, I want to share the festive dishes from my

01:47:45.000 --> 01:47:52.000

childhood in the Philippines because I have this nostalgic joy for them and a lot of my friends weren't

01:47:52.000 --> 01:47:57.000

familiar with Filipino cuisine, so it's a celebratory thing to bring these two things together.

01:47:57.000 --> 01:48:07.000

Having social media presence is really important because it brings media opportunities your way.

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I saw a journalist tweeting about a peace on London supper clubs and as a result I got her

01:48:12.000 --> 01:48:19.000

e-mail, pitched to her directly and suddenly was in Time Out.

01:48:19.000 --> 01:48:23.000

And again, same thing happened with, well a similar thing happened with Refinery 29, they DMed

01:48:23.000 --> 01:48:34.000

me on my Instagram and interviewed me for International Women's Day.

01:48:34.000 --> 01:48:39.000

I heard about the food podcast called Lecca, I was able to contribute my recipe.

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Again, that is me building my biography.

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Then back to the idea of - sorry this is the Instagram - this is me sharing

01:48:50.000 --> 01:48:52.000

Filipino culture and food.

01:48:52.000 --> 01:48:59.000

I take photos on holiday.

01:48:59.000 --> 01:49:03.000

I kind of just do it quite sporadically but I enjoy it.

01:49:03.000 --> 01:49:18.000

Then back to online networks.

01:49:18.000 --> 01:49:24.000

Shortly after I started the Instagram account, the chef Mae Williams contacted me.

01:49:24.000 --> 01:49:31.000

Through this food network we have been meeting assembly-regularly, dining at Filipino

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restaurants, we have a WhatsApp group where we talk about and share recipes and talk about food

01:49:39.000 --> 01:49:39.000

media, give each other advice, champion each other's work, and then also spread the word about each

01:49:39.000 --> 01:49:45.000

other's projects.

01:49:45.000 --> 01:49:47.000

It's just a really supportive network of people who share the same passions and

01:49:47.000 --> 01:49:53.000

interests of Filipino food.

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From that, I was able to start the #FilipinoFood4NHS project during

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lockdown last year.

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In March, through the Filipino Food UK group we received a message from a charity,

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about 30 nurse who is had just arrived from the Philippines, straight after the COVID-19 travel

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ban, and they were feeling home sick and missing their food of home.

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As a group we were able to band together and volunteer our time and

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cook fresh Filipino meals and even before that, fund-raise on GoFundMe and share it through our

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social media platforms.

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As a result of that, we raised £5,000 and provided over 2,500 meals to staff

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working across London, Surrey and Manchester.

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That was as a result of our combined social media presence.

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Then actually, a happy by-product of that which I had never planned for

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were some interesting opportunities that came our way, like the Museum of London contacted us and

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did an oral history about the project and they have actually taken one of my spoons and

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they are going to put it in the permanent collection which is something I would never have thought

01:51:15.000 --> 01:51:21.000
of at the beginning.

01:51:21.000 --> 01:51:24.000
A produce fresh MasterChef invited me on as a guest so that is actually

01:51:24.000 --> 01:51:34.000
coming up in the next few weeks on BBC.

01:51:34.000 --> 01:51:34.000
We have just launched our second fund-raiser and we are on £1,500

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already.

01:51:42.000 --> 01:51:51.000
This logo on the screen was designed by my neighbour Hannah, again
another example of networking

01:51:51.000 --> 01:51:52.000
across, because she did that pro bono and then we have been able to as a
team share the image and

01:51:52.000 --> 01:51:58.000
fund-raise.

01:51:58.000 --> 01:52:06.000
If you would like to donate, you can find a link through my Baboy Club
Instagram.

01:52:06.000 --> 01:52:08.000
Anyway, I hope I've give an an overview of the publishing industry as a
whole and ways that you can promote

01:52:08.000 --> 01:52:15.000
your book and I wondered if anyone had any questions.

01:52:15.000 --> 01:52:24.000
AKI: Perfect, thank you so much, Maria, I'm going to just remove the

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spotlight, switch to gallery view and also stop the sharing so that everyone
can see your face.

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Hello, Maria, thank you.

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We have so many people - I do apologise, my dog is just bothering me here.

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So many people saying thank you for the inspiration, lots of participants made hungry by your final

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slides, looking forward to lunch already, and we do have some questions.

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So, Mustafa would like to know, how many jobs in your job do you cheerlead

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at any given time?

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MARIA: That is an interesting question because it's like two or three a month

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but I'm sort of sometimes working on books that are publishing a year in advance, most of

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the time it's three month, or three, four, five month lead up to the publication but for bigger

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products and say for Sally Rooney, Conversations with Friends, from the point I was interviewing for

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the job then leading up to the June publication, that was all the way through, so having a long lead

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time is invaluable.

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AKI: At any given time, how many writers are you looking at?

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MARIA: Oh, erm, well it's two to three a month but it just depends.

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I would say maybe like, I'm in contact with probably a dozen at any one time and it may be a small request

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or it may be kind of daily e-mails, dozens of e-mails and a phone call every week, it just depends

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on the project.

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AKI: One question - you spoke about brand, with social media etc, it feels like a bit of a necessary evil.

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What happens if you don't want that as an author, if you want your writing to speak for itself

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and not be part of a hype, is there a place for these writers in the 21st century world?

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MARIA: That is a very, very good question and I mean, I do feel for

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authors in this day and age because there's sort of an element where you have to be multipurpose

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person, rather than I've written a book and hopefully that will speak for itself.

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Actually, getting a publisher on board, that is a big part of the process

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because we are the ones trying to do that, getting the literary champions, putting the quotes on the

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books, that's kind of the way, and I suppose having those short listings for praises and what not, you

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know, but yes, I think if it doesn't feel natural to do the social media thing, you shouldn't

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force yourself.

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There are other ways.

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But I think it's mostly about getting your writing out there through writing articles for prizes.

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AKI: And to the right readers as well, so if they are not on Twitter, why

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would you be, which segues into Ian's question - publicity and or branding point of view - is it

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important an author maintains the same genre throughout their career?

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Does the switching genre confuse selling opportunities or publicity opportunities?

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MARIA: Oh, I think probably it does because it's sort of I guess like

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switching careers midway through then you are having to rebuild and find a new audience in that genre.

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If it doesn't feel right, it's best to do what feels genuine and authentic to you and what

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you are passionate about because that's probably...

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yes.

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I think yes that is my personal take.

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I don't know if I am coming at it from a publicity angle.

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AKI: Thing is a perfectly valid take as well, and that, yes, authenticity

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absolutely key.

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Just being aware of it, that you have different readerships for different things if

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you cross genres.

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I hope that answers your question, Ian.

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Someone asked for LGBTQ plus writers looking to build their brand with stories about the community, how

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can they reach across audience so they are not boxed in and labelled as just writing LGBTQ fiction

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for LGBTQ+ plus people.

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That is an important question that is probably around any boxing in or categorising, but how can that be

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avoided or dealt with?

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MARIA: I guess writing for broader publications like the Guardian, you

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know, it's not like a specifically LGBT publication.

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Does that kind of answer it?

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AKI: I think it's about wanting to reach as many readers as possible and

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I suppose if you are working with a publisher who identifies, there is a big rate for

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this readership, how does an author navigate that if they believe generally it's for a wider readership?

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MARIA: For my campaign I do, I always work with broad national immediate

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targets and then I have more specialist publications, like say for the Phil Wang side-splitter book

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coming out in September, about mixed race identity and being Chinese Malaysian and British, how to

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be from two worlds at once, and I suppose I am aiming for things like the Observer magazine and

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FT Weekend but also a big part of my campaign is reaching out to Chinese Malaysian communities online,

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like East Side Voices or, you know, the Chippy Girl podcast.

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Things like that.

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I guess it's just having an honest conversation with your publicist about what are your goals and I would hope

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that they wouldn't be kind of pigeon-holing you.

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Yes.

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It's about being ambitious about finding the targets.

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AKI: Great.

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A couple of questions about self-publishing.

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So there are a few, but a couple of them sort of are broadly about, if you are

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either self-publishing or perhaps you are published but you have limited publicity support from

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your publisher for any number of reasons - how much in advance do you suggest making your own DIY

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publicity plan, and what are the best methods of going around building that, bearing in mind that

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you might not have a budget and might not have access to national newspapers and radio outlets?

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Mar nah is kind of what I talked about in terms of do your research on all of that, the media

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that you are hoping to be represented in.

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See how people are writing about the topics that you want to talk about.

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There are all sorts of homeworks like that that you can do on your own ground and

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again, going to look in the back of books and check author biographies.

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That can spark off ideas too.

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AKI: See what they've done and learn from it in maybe a smaller scale.

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MARIA: Yes.

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And social media, a lot of journalists are tweeting about that and asking for new voices

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really.

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AKI: There is a big wave for that at the moment.

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We have an interesting question here from Kit who asks - what lessons have you learned

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from any failed promotions which we are not asking you to disclose what they might have been but

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how can failed promotions help us learn about what to do and can you give any examples?

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You don't have to name names.

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MARIA: OK.

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I guess back at my first job in Penguin there was always this funny story from back in

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the day that it was sort of the MD's idea to promote a book on natural history and they'd spent

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quite a lot of money on a headline-grabbing stunt, they kind of got a massive mammoth and had it in

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Trafalgar Square and the plan was to tour it around the country.

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Actually I think a similar thing happened with a Wil Gompertz book on modern art, they got a massive toilet.

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I don't know, like it's kind of a fine balance between doing something gimmicky and something that

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is expensive and that doesn't lead back to the book.

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I don't know, like it's kind of a fine balance between doing something gimmicky and something that

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is expensive and that doesn't lead back to the book.

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The key thing is, what is the aim of what you are doing - it's to get your book seen and therefore to have

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people buying it.

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So I think it's about being targeted rather than just being splashy and yes, I

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don't know, what was the aim?!

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AKI: Exactly, so being clear in your aim is incredibly important for any

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campaign.

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I'm just reminded someone that sent meat or ribs...

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MARIA: Yes.

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Lamb chops.

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MARIA: Which did generate a lot of publicity and helped later on but it

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didn't lead to book sales.

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He got headlines across the press, right.

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AKI: He did.

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MARIA: I think it might have been on the news as well, but then, you know,

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like that got him...

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AKI: It had a value.

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MARIA: There were other things that were probably more valuable like

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setting up the good agency and publishing the Goodkm immigrant.

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AKI: I suppose that is what you were saying about being clear about your

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aim that some publicity if your aim is to sell more books you will have to of a particular approach

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and some publicity - lots of questions from authors saying "I'm an unknown" if that is to drive

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visibility up for yourself, that can also be a valid outcome provided you know what you want

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success to look like for you.

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Paul asks - are agents and publishers likely to have a age glass ceiling.

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I regard myself as an autumn leaf.

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So writers who're coming to this either later in life or who've been plugging at it a while?

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MARIA: Yes.

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I think maybe it can feel disspiriting because the very young authors can grab a lot of

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headlines, 27-year-old debut novelists, like there is an obsession with newness and media but at the

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same time there are hugely successful authors who have started later in life like Anne Griffin, her

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debut novel *When All is Said*, she published that when she was 50, she had only started writing six

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years previously, done a creative writing course and studied under Frank McGuinness and again, that

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is the talking point for me when I talk to radio producers.

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That is me building a story of who she is.

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It's not a complete impossibility.

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Again, Anna Burns, she hadn't published a book in about 12 years and

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then we ended up publishing *Milkman* and it won the Booker prize.

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Can't remember how old she is but she wasn't like a baby debut novelist basically.

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AKI: So it's absolutely not a barrier, hopefully that answers your question,

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Paul.

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Cora has a question about writers who started in a different form, so Cora started with

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poetry and is a published poet, so if - and maybe this is for anybody who's previously

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published something else like poetry - is there a way to capitalise on that in promoting for example a

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first novel, how far should you or shouldn't you use your previous history in another area?

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MARIA: I think that all counts.

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It's just sort of a part of a stepping stone to that publication.

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I'm trying to think.

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There are all sorts of people who transitioned, like Will Harris is a poet and

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then he's published a couple of non-fiction like Mixed Race Superman and he's got another one on the

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way I think.

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Who snels Sarah Elaine Smith, she was a poet and that obviously informs her writing, so

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again I can talk about that poetic background and how that gets conveyed through the novel eeven

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though it's a different form.

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And again there is a really strong poetry community in the UK.

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So follow those poets, what are they talking about!

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? AKI: With publicity, for the writers who think I'm doing it alone, you tap

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into a community or a readership - that is useful to remember.

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Esme, we have a few more minutes, this feels like, it depends on how quickly we run through

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the answer so I apologise if we haven't gotten through your question.

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But Esme has a great general question, possibly to wrap up with.

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Could you tell us what do you feel the new areas are coming up for debut authors to exploit and

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how they can make the most of those?

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AKI: Hm, quite a big question!

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OK, I think what is interesting is, Refinery 29 recently did a call out for books on Black Joy, that is

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something that maybe the publishing industry needs to get better at, not just publishing books about

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gay trauma or black trauma, but, you know, joy and kind of life as normal because I think marginalised

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communities shouldn't be defined by trauma.

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I think that is it.

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That is actually something I'm passionate about.

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AKI: Several people in the chat have said, amazing to see someone so

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passionate, plierly about championing under-represented voices and such a rich talk is another

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comment.

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Lovely comments that we'll pass on to you, Maria.

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That last point is really valid to anybody coming from, whether you are an oerled writer or a writer writing

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between genres or a writer writing about something that's maybe not the same as typecast.

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We have heard earlier from Leodora and marketing and it's nice to hear what perspective and also nice to hear

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from Maria about how you can create stories and narratives outside those that are authentic to

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who you are and the story you are trying to tell because if you write with that conviction and that

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sense of purpose, you can convey that in the publicity or the noise or the buzz that you are

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generating, it's not just a branding opportunity, it is also about really clarifying for yourself the

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intention of your work and the kind of voice that you are speaking with and the voice, the place

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that you are speaking from.

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Thank you Maria, that is a really encouraging place to finish on our

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morning session, thank you so much for your generosity, candour, time and paings and to everybody now,

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we are going to break for lunch.

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We have got a one-hour lunch break, we are reconvening for your breakout sessions.

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Please refer to the portal for your next links starting from I think it's 1.

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05, the next breakout sessions.

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We have got our writing breakout groups then our pitching breakout

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groups, then we are wrapping up the day with the TLC pen factor.

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The forum is back up and running so on the portal page please use the forum.

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We encourage you to promote your own work.

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We think why not, here is the space, be proud of what you are writing and who you

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are.

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We'll reco-en vein in an hour and for anybody worried about links, we are going to send an e-mail

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with the links to remind you of them so there is a safeguard.

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We thank you sincerely for being with us and bearing with us!

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We'll see you after the break and thank you, thank you again Maria.

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MARIA: Thank you.

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Enjoyed that, bye.