Harnessing the Web's Magic

When promoting a book, few avenues are more effective than the World Wide Web. Introduce your book in millions upon millions of homes. With the remarkable growth in the blogosphere in the past decade, digital promotion has become even more productive.

Columbia University's prestigious Graduate School of Journalism conducted a study that revealed that 7 out of 10 (70%) journalists today use blogs as a resource for their stories. If you stop and think of it, you are reading this article on a web site with a related blog, designed in part to promote my newest book *The Writer Within You*.

Launching Your Own Web Site

If you haven't already mounted a web site or a blog, you are missing one of a writer's greatest promotional opportunities. I know that many of us seniors and retirees are somewhat intimidated by the intricacies of the Internet, but going online with your own web site is relatively easy. I'm sure you're computer literate since you are now reading the retirement-writing web site. That indicates that you have enough facility with the computer to be able to produce your own web site.

Free, do-it-yourself design packages are available on the Web. More sophisticated packages at very modest costs can also be found there.

Web designers are available for a fee to take on the entire task for you. Their fees vary greatly, as does their competence. If you search for designers on the Internet, be certain to check their galleries of completed sites, and study them carefully before you commit.

You might research www.icca.org , the Independent Computer Consultants Association for their listings of designers. If you prefer, click onto my blog and request recommendations for designers. If you can wait until August for its release, the Appendix of *The Book Within You* lists quality designers.

Fresh Content Is Key

Since a web site or a blog is never static, with new material added on a regular basis, it is important to be able to remove or add content and make any changes you want during the life of the site. To keep visitors coming back, you MUST change content regularly.

There are software program like "Movable Type" or "Expression Engine" that can be programmed into your site to make change easy. You may prefer to hire a Webmaster to complete these tasks for you. They can be found through most online search engines.

When planning your content, be aware of the fact that the goal of a site promoting a fictional author and his/her books differs from one designed for nonfiction devotees. Visitors seek out a fiction writer's site because they have been intrigued by reading the book or hearing others comment about it. They want to know more about you as a person and as a writer and get a sense of other books you have written.

Conversely, nonfiction readers seek information. They have come to your site because they think you have important data that you can share on a subject that is of particular interest to them. Content is king on a nonfiction site, and it must be fresh and informative each time a reader visits the site.

New articles written by you or others whom you invite to guest-write must appear with regularity. Searchers on the Internet are a hungry bunch. Don't disappoint them or they will never return and never buy your books.

The Search Engines' Slippery Slope

When those of you who are already web-literate seek information, you turn to a search engine, probably either Google or Yahoo. A listing of your site or blog, positioned near the top of an engine, is the most effective tool you have available to bring visitors to your site.

Forester research conducted a study of web users and determined that 82 % turn to search engines to select the web site that contains the information they seek. Just imagine! 82 % . That's 134 million searchers.

BUT research also shows that 62% of these surfers look only at page one of the search engine. The challenge is not simply to be included in one of the sometimes thousands or even millions of listings on the search engine. It is to climb to the top 10 or 20 positions to gain maximum response. And that slope is slippery to climb.

Search Engine Optimization

A complete industry, "Search Engine Optimization," (SEO) has grown up to help site owners struggle up the mountain. It is a somewhat complex, even arcane, methodology involving three key elements: *key words* sprinkled throughout your site, *links* to your site and *content*.

Key words correspond to words and phrases commonly used by people searching the engines. You must think of the words and phrases you would use if you were

searching for the information available on your site, and use those words and phrases throughout your text.

Links are relationships with other sites that deal with the same or similar subjects. The quality of the sites you link to weighs heavily on the value the search engines places on your links. The engines also consider the frequency with which content is updated, and are heavily concerned with the quality of the content

Remarkable, almost incomprehensible "spiders" electronically crawl through your web site evaluating all three of these issues to determine the appropriate slot for you among the endless listings on the engine. All of this is much too complicated to be discussed here. Future articles will deal exclusively with SEO and how you can climb the search mountain all the way to the top.

EPublishing for Fame & Finances

EBooks and eZines represent the newest cycle of publishing. Done Electronically on the Internet, these books and magazines never see print. They are created on the computer, transmitted electronically and read on either a computer screen or an electronic hand-held gadget.

Submitting articles you write to other web sites and to eZines (electronic magazines) will entice viewers of those other sites to visit yours. They will also be noticed by those search engine spiders we just talked about and will push you further up the slope.

The articles can't be self-serving. They must be based on fact and be informative. However, as a courtesy, you will be allowed to add a short blurb at the end of the article

identifying you as the author as well as your web site and your books. That is what will turn the reader of your article into a visitor to your site.

Click onto www.bookcoaching.com to find myriad free articles written by Judy Cullins who has turned her web site into one of the more successful selling tools on the Web. You'll also find a great deal of information about ePublishing on the web site www.booklocker.com published by renown writer Angela Hoy. She has also written an eBook entitled *How to Write, Publish and Sell EBooks.*

The Blogosphere

Blogs can be best defined as exciting web sites. They allow a far greater freedom to the author, but also demand far more frequent changes in content. No longer are they thought of as simply the expressions of political activists, although they have had a huge impact on government and political campaigning. Today web surfers head to blogs for a variety of information, and you should be there too, particularly if your book is nonfiction.

As with web sites, blogs are relatively easy to create and operate. Free sites are available on the Web to help you. Perhaps the most popular of these is Google's www.blogger.com. Blogs vary in sophistication, but the most important element in attracting visitors is content, not appearance.