



LAUGHING BEAR 143

NEWSLETTER

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The Surviving Small Press: Advertising Books in Magazines

You have just published your book. Now you need to promote it. It would seem like a no-brainer to include magazine advertising in your marketing plan. Before you do that, though, you need to take a close look at the cost versus what the advertising can reasonably be expected to add to your sales.

First, you need to calculate the cost of advertising. There is more to it than just the cost of the ad. You need to look at the number of copies in your first printing, how much profit margin you can afford to spend on advertising, and whether that is the best use of your marketing dollars.

Second, you need to decide where to best place your ads.

Some books are more suited for magazine advertising than others.

Let's say you have a book on bass fishing. Bass fishing, in this part of the country at least, is huge. If you go to a newsstand, you will find numerous magazines specifically about bass fishing. That should tell you that (a) bass fishing is popular and (b) people who are into bass fishing like to read about it.

Advertising a book like yours in those bass fishing magazines makes it available to exactly the people who will be most likely to buy it.

If your book is literary, a family history, or is otherwise

locked in a niche for which there are not specialty magazines, you should probably put magazine advertising low on your list of marketing priorities.

If your book is not targeted to a specific demographic, it is not likely to get much response from ads. Advertising a novel as a mystery without appealing to the magazine reader is too vague. You need to be able to tie it to the theme of the magazine. For instance, you might advertise a mystery that takes place in Old Tucson in *Arizona Highways*.

Lets say you have a book that you believe will lend itself to magazine advertising. When you select where to place your ads, you need to take more into consideration than just the magazine itself. The cost per reader and the demographics of the readers are both important. It is easy to convince yourself that an ad is a good investment, but you need proof.

Mass market magazines.

Why not advertise in big magazines, like *People*, *Redbook*, *Time*? The cost is too high and the readership is too varied. Your ad may reach a million readers, but only a miniscule percent of them will notice it.

Review magazines.

If you are thinking of placing an ad in *Library Journal*, *Publishers Weekly* or any of the other large magazines that review books, your book should have mainstream appeal. These ads are going to be

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Estimating Circulation

When you are working out a business plan for your magazine you have to be able to come up with a realistic estimate of the circulation you will be able to achieve. After all, you need to know how many copies to print, how much to charge for ads, and what your costs are going to be for fulfillment.

It would be a mistake to base your circulation estimate on the number of possible subscribers. For instance, if you are going to publish a magazine about water skiing it would be misleading to base your circulation estimate on research that tells you there are 15 million water skiers in the United States. Most of those already subscribe to a magazine or never will.

As an example, when I started *Laughing Bear* literary magazine in 1976, literary magazines were a dime a dozen. It seemed like everyone who wrote poetry or fiction had their own magazine.

Since there were so many magazines, I figured there must be a demand for them. That was a mistake.

Most readers of the literary "little" magazines were the writers who had their own magazines, so they swapped subscriptions with other writers to get magazines they wanted for free. The few actual subscribers had so many magazines to chose from, that you were doing well if you could maintain 100 paid subscriptions.

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Advertising Books in Magazines *(continued)*

expensive, but then their readers are book buyers for libraries and book stores. A bookstore chain single order could be for 100 copies.

Books that may do well with ads in these magazines are mainstream fiction, history, biography, etc. The bass fishing book would probably not swim.

You are not likely to receive direct orders as a result of these ads. Booksellers and librarians usually buy books through distributors. So, if you are not with a distributor you will not make many sales. Booksellers are also going to be purchasing wholesale and may expect a discount for quantities.

Libraries may order one book or multiple copies. They primarily purchase hardcover editions because of the wear and tear library books receive. If a book is not available in hardcover, they still may buy it and have it rebound, but that adds expense and bother for them and that will affect their decision on the purchase.

Cost is relative.

In magazine advertising, cost per reader is figured as CPM (cost per thousand). If a magazine charges \$100 for an ad and they have a circulation of 5,000, the CPM is \$20. If another magazine charges \$100 for an ad and has 15,000 readers, the CPM is \$6.66. Therefore you are paying less per reader for the magazine with the higher circulation.

Using CPM alone, the obvious choice would be the magazine with \$6.66 CPM. But in the case of the book on bass fishing, if magazine with the lowest CPM covers all water sports and the other is specifically for people who fish for bass, you will do better with the \$20 CPM magazine because all its readers are potential buyers of your book.

That is where small magazines become attractive. Small magazines need to be focused on a niche audience to compete in the same market as large magazines. That is the same strategy that applies to small book publishers. If the magazine's niche is the same as your book's, you have a perfect match.

Still, when you are looking at cost, you need to estimate your return on investment realistically. The advertising needs to pay for itself and still allow a decent profit. Even with the best match of book and magazine, the very best you should expect from a display ad is 1% return. If the magazine has a circulation of 5,000 you may sell 50 books at most – and that will probably be spread out over several months of running the ad.

Demographics are everything.

The number of targeted readers who will buy your book also depends on what your book can do for them. If they are convinced by your ad that your book is unlike anything they can get anywhere else, they will be much more likely to order it.

If you cannot convince the reader through your ad copy that your book is irresistible, it doesn't make sense to advertise. Send copies out for reviews, do a book tour, exhibit it at the big book fairs, build a web site, send out direct mailings. But don't spend a lot of money on advertising that will just be ignored.

Timing is everything else.

You also need to be aware of the best time to place your ads. Buying one ad for one issue is not effective. Magazine advertising works by repeatedly putting the same message in front of people's eyes until it is noticed. The first time the reader sees it, it may catch

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Estimated Circulation

(continued)

Going back to the water skiing magazine, you therefore have to look at how many magazines there are for water skiers already. Provided there are not so many that you have rethought publishing at all, look at the circulation figures for each magazine. You will find that the more magazines there are on a subject, the smaller their circulations will be, except of course for the dominant magazine which was probably the one first in the market.

If there are already a dozen magazines for water skiers you need to ensure that your magazine has something to offer that the other magazines do not. Put yourself in the reader's place. If someone already subscribes to another magazine, why would they also subscribe to yours?

No matter how unique and innovative your idea is, it would be a mistake to assume that you will be able to achieve an initial paid circulation larger than the largest of the existing magazines. In fact, it would be best to take the average of all those magazines' circulation figures to come up with an optimistic estimate of how your magazine will do.

Once you have an idea of the circulation you can expect, you need to adjust other factors to make your magazine economically feasible. If the figures show you can expect 5,000 subscribers, you will have the basis to figure out how much advertising you will have to sell, subscription price, and the amount you can afford to produce the magazine.

It is easy to get carried away when you are imagining how large the potential circulation of your magazine will be. But getting the figures right is the only way to make sure that it will enjoy a long and profitable run. 🐻

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Advertising Books in Magazines (continued)

their eye. By time they've seen it four or five times, they will be poised to react.

Bass fishing season gets started in March, so you should start advertising by October at the latest. If you want to have it available for Christmas you need to start advertising even earlier. Booksellers order books for the holidays in the spring and early summer.

Keep running the ad through March, at least. After the bass season gets going, sales will tend to dip because the people passionate about fishing will be fishing, not reading. Still, keeping the ad going year round keeps your book fresh in their minds. So much the better if your book is updated annually.

Keep in mind that you are not selling Coca-Cola.

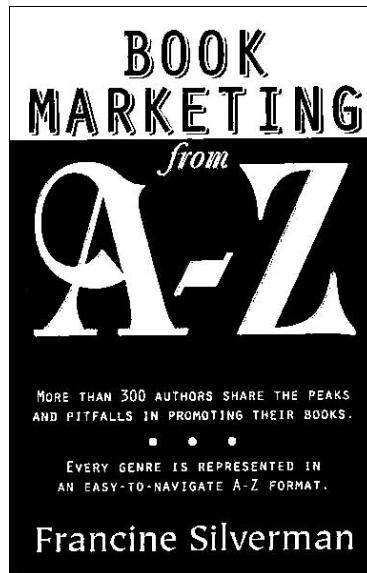
Advertising a book in a magazine is not like advertising Coca-Cola. Coca-Cola advertises to build brand awareness. They bombard the market so when you go to buy a cola, you will buy theirs. They can afford to do that because they sell millions of bottles of cola every month.

Not even the biggest book publishers practice brand awareness, unless they have a Stephen King, who is a brand name unto himself.

The majority of book marketing goes into book tours, review copies, and book fairs.

Not everything that can be sold is a product.

It is fashionable and convenient for those in advertising and sales to believe that anything that can be sold is a "product". By inference, all products can be sold using the same techniques. But a book is not a product. A book is information and passion and it is unique. You cannot sell books like blenders or soft drinks. You have to be more clever than that. 🐻



Book Marketing from A to Z

By Francine Silverman
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This is a collection of tips, advice, and anecdotes from over 300 authors who have promoted their own books.

The information is arranged by subject. Sections include headings for Advertising, Book Signings, Branding Yourself or Your Book, Freelance Writing, Humor and Enthusiasm, Pre-Publication Promotion, Press Kits, Speaking Engagements, and many more.

This is a great book to flip through when you are lost for ideas or just plain discouraged. The entries are short and lively, seldom more than a half page.

Book Marketing from A-Z is like having a support group of publishers to brainstorm with anytime you need them. There is such a wide range of subjects and genres that you are bound to find something you can use any time you open the book.

This is a useful and entertaining book for any publisher.



Budget Savvy

Melissa Toseti, editor
Budget Savvy Headquarters, 516
Cleveland Street, Redwood City,
CA 94062; 32 pp, 8 1/2" x 11",
www.budgetsavvymag.com, quar-
terly, \$12/4 issues.

Budget Savvy, subtitled "a real magazine for real people", is aimed primarily at younger working women who want to live well, and on a budget. Articles include things like Decorating a Room for under \$75, an Internet Shopping Challenge, a New York Weekend on \$100, an Financial Rules to Live By.

It is informative, fun, beautifully laid out, and it is targeting a niche that is ignored by the usual fashion and style magazine for women where the assumption is that price is no object.

From a publishing standpoint, *Budget Savvy* is interesting that it does not contain advertising – yet. The publisher wants to build a track record with the magazine, including circulation, before trying to sell advertising.

This approach is unusual, but ultimately makes sense, long as the publisher can afford to do it. When she is ready to sell advertising, the magazine will already have an established circulation that can be documented and presented to potential advertisers.

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Variety / Variedad Magazine

Susan Squires, editor
P.O. Box 574, So. Sioux City, NE
68776; 104 pages, 8 1/2" x 11",
www.variety-variedad.com, free on
newsstands

Variety/Variedad is a bilingual (English/Spanish) magazine to help parents protect their children from abuse and predators. There are articles on abuse, profiles of victims and people fighting child abuse, and names and photos of child molesters and pedophiles in a tri-state area.

The magazine provides some somber information, but combines this with positive and fun ways parents can keep their children safe such as activities, puzzles and games. The first issue has a language learning game that teaches children how to ask for help or report problems in Spanish and English. The feel of the magazine is positive and family-friendly.

Variety/Variedad has been received so well that seven additional states want their own editions, which places the publisher in the enviable position of having to try to keep up with her own success.

The magazine is distributed free and is paid for with local advertising.

Announcements

- **New Address.** Laughing Bear Newsletter's new mailing address is 1418 El Camino Real, Euless TX 76040.

- **Spoken Books Publishing** (www.spokenbookspublishing.com) is the first audio book recording, CD duplication, packaging, publishing and distribution service to self-published authors. Visit their web site for a complete explanation of how the program works, including audio samples, pricing and submission guidelines.

- **Shenua Company** (No. 16 Gutian Road, Qingdao, China; www.shh-printing.com) offers affordable color printing services in China for books, magazines and promotional materials.

- **Ebonyfly Books** (www.ebonyfly.com) is an online community for avid readers of African-American literature. Each week one new book is featured for that entire week until it has sold out or the week ends. Novels are sold at a discount to subscribers of the site's free weekly e-newsletter.

- **7 pieces by Karl Kempton** have been added to the minimalist concrete poetry site at www.logolalia.com/minimalistconcretepoetry. This is a Spidertangle project. Other projects are listed on www.spidertangle.com.

- **Print Runner** (888-666-0744; www.prinrunner.com) offers low priced, full color printing of business cards, postcards, brochures and other promotional materials.

- **Martketsmart Newsletter** (Al Galasso, ed.; agnabe@ix.netcom.com) is a very useful free e-newsletter on book marketing. It has tips and resources on things like how to increase the odds of selling your book to book clubs, web sites to see, and classified ads. It has been around a long time. I haven't been able to find a web site, but contact Al by e-mail to subscribe.

- **Author World** (www.authorworld.com) is an advertising web site for authors and books. Each book gets a full web page of content, including author photo, for a one-time setup fee.

- **Poets & Writers, Inc.**, which publishes *Poets & Writers Magazine*, offers a free e-newsletter through its web site, www.pw.org. The newsletter for writers includes valuable tips, news, and information, including reminders on upcoming deadlines for grants and awards.

- **Paradigms Lost: The Life and Deaths of the Printed Word**, by William Sonn, Scarecrow Press (www.scarecrowpress.com) is a history of the printed word with the thesis that there have been four times in history that a dramatic drop in the cost of printing has coincided with strange and surprising events in ensuing decades. Governments wobbled, commerce was turned upside down, even the way people thought changed.

- **CLMP Newswire** (www.clmp.org) is a free e-newsletter published by the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses. It covers literary publisher news including notable achievements, innovative marketing programs, people news, e-publishing ventures, grant making and fundraising trends, politics and policy issues affecting small literary publishers, and awards and grants deadlines.

- **Suburban Printing, Inc.** (524 Main Street, Beech Grove, IN 46107; 317-788-7941; www.suburbanprinting.net) offers black and white and color wholesale digital copies for publishers. Other services include offset printing, typesetting, binding, and mailing.

- **Wild Heart Ranch, Inc.** (www.wildheartranch.com) is a children's toy and publishing company that has built its brands around original stories about nature and endangered species.