ASA Professional Development Seminars

Capitalise on Creativity: Making money from your writing
Adelaide, 11 February 2010

Publicising your book in a highly competitive marketplace
Presented by Angela Tolley, Publicity Director Wakefield Press

As requested by members, the ASA is providing papers from the professional development seminars in PDF format for downloading. The information that follows summarises the content covered in the seminar and reflects the personal views of the presenter. Please note that the views expressed are not related in any way to ASA opinion or policy.

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OVERALL MARKETING STRATEGY
(publicity, promotions, advertising)

PUBLICITY
Synopsis
Establish the salient points starting with the genre then the Who, What, Why.

Catchy line
A phrase or two that encapsulates your book, eg, 'the voices of the voiceless', 'the first/only book on this popular Australian icon', ‘a haunting/gripping mystery based on a true story’ … which you can roll out as a quick hook.

Photos
Have available two recent, colour, digital head & shoulders shots of yourself; min. 300 dpi.

Identify your market
Your readership profile: eg 40+ women; people interested in history/poetry/cooking/gardening/travelling; general readership; men …

Media angles
Research possible tie-ins, eg, Father’s Day/Christmas; Mental Health Week/History Week; is it newsworthy or of topical interest.

The Media Release
Include colour cover pic and – if it is likely to enhance the chances of coverage – an author pic. Make it visually appealing but not with so many bells and whistles that the main message is buried. Include a brief author biog.

Author biog
Concise, with emphasis on professional rather than personal details and up to date; include where author lives in Australia.

Media options

- Print
  Traditional or online; column items; pictorial – social, human interest; extracts, reviews, profile interviews or feature articles in, eg, literary pages, Summer reading or special interest liftouts, or egn (early general news) pages.

- Online

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Website posts and links, author blog, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, YouTube.

- Radio
  Nominate interviewee/s: yourself, co-author or contributors to the book. Be selective about who you pitch to.

- Television
  Pick best spokesperson (eg author or subject of book); be able to provide or suggest available vision – filming locations or archival footage? Think visual.

PROMOTIONS
Author events
Book launches (best to tie in with an event or bookshop). Guest appearances at literary festivals, conferences, symposiums, book fairs, bookshops, or bookclubs; talks and signings at, eg, public libraries and workshops such as, eg, Feast Literary Festival, Eltham Bookshop author nights, Daylesford Poetry Festival, National Young Writers’ Festival. Involvement in annual writers and readers seasons such as the Summer Read program (State Library of Vic.).

On-site book sales
During or after relevant festivals, author events and conferences, eg, your book launch, SA History Conference, Wagner’s Ring Cycle Conference, Australian Dance symposium, library talks.

Giveaways/Competitions
Instead of, or to complement, publicity and supplemented with a photograph.

Direct/special sales
Sales to target markets via websites, phone, snail or e-mail. Usually in conjunction with publicity. Example: the marketing strategy for AdelaidE: Water of a City, a book on Adelaide water, includes general publicity, a book launch, sales at related public talks, and sales (using flyers with order forms) to educational and science bodies, and organisations such as SA Water.

Flyers and posters
Useful, in hard and electronic versions, if related to a particular event, like a talk or signing, otherwise not essential. An order form across the bottom of a digital flyer is a good idea if you’re with a publisher who can send the books.

ADVERTISING
You may want to place ads promoting your author event if you or your publisher have an advertising budget.

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PUBLICISING YOUR BOOK IN A HIGHLY COMPETITIVE MARKETPLACE

Introduction

We talk about a ‘highly competitive marketplace’ because approximately 500 books are released onto the Australian market every week, many of them arriving on literary editors’ desks. There is an initial 3-month window but then there are ways to help keep sales of your book ticking over beyond that ‘first flush’.

Many people confuse publicity with marketing, pr, promotions, or advertising.

In some cases, publicity might cross over into the areas of public relations, advertising, and promotions which, like publicity, come under the umbrella term marketing. But mostly it is separate and requires specialist skills. The main difference between publicists and others working in a marketing department is that publicists don’t generally work with a budget. Their task is a much harder one – that of achieving FREE coverage.

And here’s the thing …

For those of you who have published your own book and are trying to get it in the public eye, but for whom money is a consideration, your best option of maximising book sales is to try and generate free word-of-mouth coverage via media interviews, articles and reviews. It is arguable that this means of achieving awareness for your book is more effective than paid advertising. It is perceived, subconsciously, as being a more legitimate and therefore a more reliable recommendation.

Above all – especially in our rapidly developing digital age – the value of good communication and interpersonal skills cannot be underestimated.

Background

A publicist earns their keep essentially by their privileged access to the on-air presenter, literary editor, or radio producer. Their intimacy with the media is a valuable/saleable commodity. Freelance publicists charge between $80 and $150 per hour and in public relations firms sometimes double that for a service that might encompass event coordination, promotions and hosting. It’s a specialist profession.

If you’re publicising yourself and your own work then you’re up against – if we’re being realistic – a perception of self-published authors being somehow less worthy because their work has not been taken up by an independent

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publisher. Don’t let this deter you. Take the time to research the appropriate media and build up an up-to-date database of key contacts for your book. Be professional, pleasant and gently persuasive in the manner in which you approach journalists or book buyers (meaning quietly confident, and not bossy or desperate).

It’s a definite BONUS to feel **passionate** about what you’re publicising. It also helps to know what you’re talking about. If it’s your own book you are the best spokesperson for it. You should know why you wrote it and what’s good about it; why people should buy it and read it. And, you hope, then recommend it to their friends.

Your enthusiasm will come through in the **language** you use to promote your book – through your media release, your online pitch, or your phone calls to various media.

Publicity is very much a **two-way** street. Even if you think your story might be a bit left of field; or does not have hard news-story potential; or you’re (as yet) unknown as an author, it’s worth remembering that the media **need you** (to fill their pages and columns) just as much as you need them. Your aim should be to offer the appropriate journalist that thing that is most likely to make their day. This gets back to your being clear in your mind what it is that’s so good about your book - what makes it different or unique, why they should bother doing a story on it (or you). This will give you the edge.

In devising a publicity campaign, you should keep in mind an **overall marketing strategy** for the book (If you’re acting as **both publicist and author** then you should conceive a strategy – even a vague one – before doing anything else). Ideally you would aim to achieve publicity coverage that will complement the overall marketing strategy. It’s about identifying the market or readership for your book.

My advice is to be reasonably **ambitious** in your planning but also try to be as objective as you can. And be **realistic** about the likely opportunities for your book. This will help to keep you focused.

**Consider**

**WHAT are you selling?**
– Identify the genre and key selling points eg what’s unique about the book

**WHY are you selling it?**
– This will impact on the type and extent of your campaign and is tied in with why you published the book in the first place, for example, for profit; for posterity; to tell your story or someone else’s story, or a company history perhaps.

**WHO are you selling it to?**
– The readership (key, secondary and peripheral markets)

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**HOW can you sell it?**
– The strategy (media channels, possible promotions or associated events, like signings or author talks; and also more literally, how you might pitch the book).

Some books are what one might call ‘good’ – which of course is subjective – but they don’t sell despite a successful publicity campaign (lots of media interest via reviews and interviews. This may be because the book is very specialist, considered over-priced, has an uninspiring jacket, or is not taken up by the big book chains because it’s an unlikely bestseller and punters haven’t been asking for it.

**BUT! No doubt about it: word-of-mouth, in addition to media coverage, will help generate sales.**

Then there are books that are not what one would call particularly ‘good’/sexy/literary. They might be poorly written, badly edited, maybe even dull but they achieve publicity coverage and are – bizarrely – bestsellers. It may be that the book strikes a chord with the mass market or that the cover is really attention-grabbing, or it coincides with a new trend or topical event, for example, books on China sold well in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics. And I imagine there is a current scramble for panda books in South Australia!

**At the end of the day, whether your book sells or not may depend on factors that you can’t predict.**

Regardless of this, give your book its best shot by being proactive.

**Publicity materials**

Gather together your publicity materials:

- Synopsis
- Catchy Line
- Author bio
- Photos
- Identifying your Market (create your media database)
- Media angles
- Media Release
- Flyers / Posters

**ALSO!** If you’re giving a talk, creating a website or holding a launch, you might want invitations designed and printed.

NB Launches can involve a lot of effort and expense and, in my view, are best justified by their book sale potential. (Your social network will probably buy the book anyway.) Try and tie your launch into another event, like a writers’ festival, or find a kooky or newsy hook that will attract media attention and/or people that are not your own friends and family.

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Publicity strategy

Print
Online
Radio
TV

Promotions

Author events
Giveaways (competitions)
On-site book sales & special discounts or deals.

Direct sales to specialist groups/organisations/clubs/online booksellers, or possibly individuals via your website. You could also venture into merchandising like Liz Harfull (& her Blue Ribbon Cookbook calendars) and get invited to openings and country shows where you might have an opportunity to promote your book.

The Media Release

Be media-savvy!

- Keep the tone of your release snappy but don’t hype it up to the point of ridiculous. Journalists will see through the hype. It’s better to use plain language and be clear and succinct.

- Create short paragraphs or statements that can be easily reproduced. Journalists don’t want to have to trawl through unnecessary padding to extract the main points. Do this for them.

- Write the media release for journalists’ eyes not those of a potential book buyer. The journalists are the agents between you and your readers so don’t use jargon that might confuse or annoy them.

Media Alerts and Day File Items

Media Alert or Day file item (TV)

- Date of gig; what, when, where in that order; brief and to the point
- Background on the event or author/s involved
- Contact details of the spokesperson/author should be in bold across bottom.

See examples: Supreme Federalist, Wakefield Press author wins Prime Minister’s first literary award!

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Media Release
Some clues about what should go up top.

Don’t be afraid to use your personal contacts to gain exposure. It’s the most painless way of getting your foot in the door. The side door! Schmooze, talk your book up when you’re out and about; use your social networks to explore promotional opportunities for your book (door prizes, talks to clubs, signings, etc).

Some of the most powerful mediums are the quick and fast ones. Never underestimate the power of the column item or social photo. Time poor working public may only ever read gossip columns like Adelaide Confidential and Arts Scene (in the Advertiser) or social pages if flicking through a newspaper or magazine (the doctor’s waiting room is a classic example). Others with short attention spans, or simply busy, almost never read hard copy papers or journals and will download weekly or daily bulletins like Eureka Street, AdelaideNow and Indaily which also have regular features like Business Journal and video interviews as online clips which are very effective. These are important for increasing your, and your book’s, profile.

See example: The Blue Ribbon Cookbook

Once you have your strategy worked out, how to make it successful?

In other words, how to make your book stand out and be on the top of that 500-strong pile.

It’s all those elements, all the good bits about you and your book, put together. Uniqueness is attention-grabbing. Remember you’re trying to make the media’s job easier so use persuasive, accurate phrases in tightly-crafted paragraphs. Ask someone else to proofread your release for those pesky typos you only discover once your release has gone out to 200 people!

The next step to achieving success is: you running with your release. Go for the top of your list of desirable (within reason) media coverage (review in Spectrum, profile piece in SA Weekend or maybe SALife, interview on Radio National’s Late Night Live, Today Tonight). If that doesn’t work, you can always work back.

Pitch by whatever means are most likely to reach that particular media source; generally an email followed by a phone call works best. Talk it up without going over the top. Journalists can get impatient or respond negatively, even rudely, to upbeat overselling or a longwinded explanation about why you think they should give your book their attention. Good manners never go astray! Media don’t have to do anything at all for you or your book. Don’t wind them up! And expect that they’ll want to see a copy of the book before committing to anything. Always have copies of your book handy. If

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you’re with a publisher and their own publicist this won’t be an issue and, in fact, they would be doing the pitching on your behalf.

When following up an email (or responding to a jouno calling to find out more) this is your **moment**!! Keep to the point and talk briefly, compellingly and sincerely. Never make up stuff you can’t back up or you’ll lose credibility very quickly. Honesty goes a long way. I prefer to put my cards on the table if a double-up of programs or journalists is likely as they usually find out anyway and you can’t afford to burn too many bridges (esp. in a small town). Assume you’ll want to come back to them another time.

**Timing**
When is the best time to approach print/online, radio or TV with a news item, promotional idea or interview proposal?

Here’s a rough guide:

**Print and online:** between one and three weeks before an event, like a launch, or can be six weeks to 12 months out if it’s a writers’ festival or literary program spanning several days.

Daily newspapers (with weekend magazines) prefer two–three weeks notice for a story they need to research and allowing time for them to read the book; and allow half day – three days lead time for a news story. Any more notice and they forget about it (or it’s not really news). Use your common sense to decide what is sufficient run-up time for a particular media agent. There is such a thing as too much notice and, where books are concerned, not enough.

**Radio:** Allow two weeks before you want the interview to air (three weeks max.) or can be at short notice if the story’s hot or the author happens to be in town (and you’ve only just found out). Producers usually need to see the book before committing to an interview even in cases of very short notice. They are wary of being ‘set up’.

**TV:** Two–three weeks’ notice for a magazine-style story is good unless it’s a hard news story, or really topical, in which case you might get away with an interview grab and filming an event at short notice. They also need to read the book and research the story angles. This might be a combination of archival footage and a specially filmed interview with you or the subject of your book.
THE MEDIA RELEASE

When writing your media release, use the materials available to you as a starting point. These might be: editor’s notes or a questionnaire such as those provided by Wakefield Press to authors prior to publishing; internet research notes; statistics; author comments gleaned from an informal briefing; or your own intimate knowledge of the subject.

What should go up top: the important stuff

- Book title
- RRP (ISBN optional)
- Publisher
- Headline (the newsy bit)
- Body of release (book description/content)
- Cover pic (low res col; author pic optional)
- Endorsements (can substitute with media review quotes later on)
- Author biog (brief, relevant and up to date)
- Who to contact (you or publicist; include landline and mobile phone numbers and an email address)
- Where to find further information (website address: yours, publishing company’s, the book’s, other useful links)

MOST IMPORTANTLY: Keep it to one A4 page!
Wakefield Press Author wins Prime Minister’s First Literary Award!

Friday 12 September, at Parliament House, Canberra, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced Ochre and Rust: Artefacts and encounters on Australian frontiers by Philip Jones, published by Wakefield Press, as the Non-Fiction winner of the 2008 Prime Minister’s Literary Awards.

The inaugural Prime Minister’s Literary Awards celebrate the contribution of Australian literature to the nation’s cultural and intellectual life. The books chosen are an impressive indication of the outstanding breadth and quality of modern Australian literature. – Prime Minister Kevin Rudd.

Non-fiction judging panel comments: The book is written with elegance, simplicity and outstanding clarity.

Philip Jones will receive a tax-free prize of $100,000.

Ochre and Rust was selected to win the award out of seven books short-listed from a total of 103 entries in the non-fiction category. It’s an extraordinary honour. – Philip Jones

Ochre and Rust takes Aboriginal artefacts from their museum shelves and traces their stories, revealing charged and nuanced moments of encounter in Australia’s frontier history. Philip Jones positions them at the centre of these gripping, poignant tales which transport the reader into the heart of Australia’s frontier zone. Ochre and Rust was also short-listed for the 2007 Queensland Premier’s Award; the 2008 New South Wales Premier’s Awards; and the 2008 Chief Minister’s NT History Book Awards. It was Joint Winner of the FAW Melbourne University Publishing Award 2008.

It displaced all other reading for pleasure … A truly remarkable book and I congratulate you and thank you for so much pleasure and illumination. – Sir David Attenborough

[A] long-anticipated masterwork. Ochre and Rust … highlights the emergence of a new kind of writing about Australia’s history and landscape.– Nicolas Rothwell, the Australian

For further information on the awards: www.arts.gov.au/pmliteraryawards
ISBN 9781862545854 HB Illustrated in Full Colour Throughout RRP $49.95 NZ$65.00

Philip Jones is available for interview. To arrange an interview please call Angela Tolley on (08) 8362 8800; 0438 160 320.

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There are two definitions of cooking: afternoon tea or shearing shed, and show cooking is afternoon tea.
– country show cook.

Every year hundreds of talented amateur cooks spend hours preparing entries for cooking classes and competitions at the Royal Adelaide Show and country shows across South Australia. They range from veteran prize-winning cooks, to talented newcomers using tried and true recipes and techniques lovingly handed down from older generations.

The Blue Ribbon Cookbook is the first book to celebrate the tradition of show cooking in South Australia and the people behind it. Most of the recipes have been created by the cooks themselves and are previously unpublished.

The cooks range in age from three to ninety-three. They each have a strong sense of pride in their contribution to the traditions of good country fare and of agricultural shows – an important part of community life across the State for more than 160 years.

The Blue Ribbon Cookbook features tips from both the cooks and experienced show judges about how to make the recipes work – information and tricks of the trade not usually found in recipe methods, but often critical to achieving the same results you see in mouth-watering displays at the shows. It is a treasure chest for anyone who loves to cook, and enjoy the rewards with friends and family. The recipes reflect the diversity of competitive classes at the shows, which have changed over the years to reflect cooking trends within the home. The collection includes cakes such as Grandma’s chocolate fudge cake, biscuits and coffee kisses, yeast buns and lemonade scones, muffins, marmalade, sauces, chutneys, relishes and pickles.

Originally from the South East of South Australia, Liz Harfull has more than 25 years’ experience as a journalist, freelance writer, editor and public relations consultant. She grew up on a farm near Mount Gambier just a few small paddocks away from the Mil Lel Showground; starting her career at the local newspaper and later working with the weekly farm newspaper, the Stock Journal. Liz has won numerous awards as both a journalist and consultant. As a Churchill Fellow she travelled overseas studying communication techniques that encourage farmers to take up new technology and best practice. A keen amateur cook and show prize-winner herself, Liz now lives in the Adelaide hills and thinks nothing of whipping up afternoon tea for friends as a way of relaxing. She has maintained her love of country shows since she was a child, growing up.

Visit Liz’s blog: http://theblueribboncookbook.blogspot.com/
Liz is available for interview
A Labor man writes about a Conservative!

**Supreme Federalist**

**The Political Life of Sir John Downer**

J.C. Bannon

At 11.00 am, **Thursday 5 March**, in the First Floor Ballroom, **Downer House**, St Mark’s College, 46 Pennington Terrace, North Adelaide, **The Honourable Alexander Downer** will launch **Supreme Federalist: The Political Life of Sir John Downer** by John Bannon AO, former National President of the Australian Labor Party.

**Supreme Federalist** exposes the intricacies of politics at a time of Australia’s transition from the colonial era to the modern federal nation. It is the first biography of this significant Australian founding father.

Sir John Downer (1843–1915), founder of a political dynasty, was born in quite humble circumstances in Adelaide. His career as a lawyer, parliamentarian and Premier, and his prominent role as an initiator of Australian Federation and the Commonwealth Constitution make his distinguished life one of particular significance in Australian history.

**Former South Australian Labor Premier, the Hon. Dr John Bannon, AO**, has published and lectured extensively on the history of Australian Federation. He is an Adjunct Professor in the Law School at the University of Adelaide, a Visiting Research Fellow at Flinders University of South Australia, and a former Master of St Mark’s College. His publications include the chapter on South Australia in the definitive **Centenary Companion to Australian Federation**.

As a member of the South Australian House of Assembly for 16 years, John Bannon served as a minister, Leader of the Opposition, and, from 1982 to 1992, as Premier and Treasurer of South Australia. He was National President of the Australian Labor Party from 1988 to 1991. His involvement in politics and government gives him an insider’s perspective on the workings of federal systems and of Cabinet and parliament under the Westminster system.

To arrange a review copy and/or an interview please call Angela Tolley on (08) 8362 8800; 0438 160 320.