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## Foreword

I hear from new book authors all the time whose typical lament is: “I have a book coming out—or my book has come out—but I have no idea what to do to get it out into the marketplace.” I’m always looking for good resources to help, and since I deal almost exclusively with Christian authors, I want those resources to reflect the unique needs of that market.

I can’t tell you how delighted I was to find *Your Guide to Marketing Books in the Christian Marketplace*. It is not only full of great helps and practical ideas for marketing your own book; it is also a wealth of Christian-oriented resources. Since the job of marketing needs to start long before the book is released, this book will be most helpful to those who are market savvy enough to start the process as soon as the contract is signed. However, if you didn’t get started as soon as you should have, you will still find a lot of resources to help you make up for the lost time.

One of the best features of this guide is that it takes you step-by-step through the various aspects of promotion—not just telling you what you should do, but how to find the contacts that will be critical to your success. The listings of organizations, reviewers, consumer groups, and websites alone are worth the price of the book.

I would encourage writers to read through the book first to become aware of all the possibilities for promoting their book, then go back and work through each section applying what looks like it will work for promoting

their particular book. It's the application of these tricks of the trade that will make the difference between successful sales and a garage full of unsold books.

One thing that shines through as you read this book is the author's knowledge of the industry. Sarah Bolme has written a book to fill an ongoing need in the industry, based on her years of experience working with authors and small publishers. It's obvious that she's also done her homework to bring you up-to-date resources to make your job easier. You can trust the author and follow the path she has laid out with confidence.

Now, with this tool in hand, you're prepared to launch out into the exciting job that lies ahead.

Sally E. Stuart

Founder

*Christian Writers' Market Guide*

[www.stuartmarket.com](http://www.stuartmarket.com)



## Introduction

We will shout for joy when you are victorious  
and will lift up our banners in the name of our God.  
May the Lord grant all your requests.

—Psalm 20:5

**T**he landscape of publishing and selling books has undergone a monumental shift since I wrote the first edition of *Your Guide to Marketing Books in the Christian Marketplace*. In the past eight years, print-on-demand technology and digital reading have changed the entry barriers for publishing a book.

Today, almost half of all books are self-published. According to Bowker, 40% of all books published in 2012 were self-published. As a result, self-publishing, for the most part, no longer carries the stigma it once did. It is now viewed as a legitimate way to produce a book.

However, the average self-published title still only sells between 40 and 200 copies. Often this is due to the author's inexperience or lack of knowledge on how to market a book effectively. This book is my attempt to help any author who has published a Christian book (whether independently or through a traditional publishing house) and new publishers



seeking to reach the Christian market to gain the knowledge necessary to promote books effectively.

Marketing is hard work. It is increasingly difficult to make any book stand out. Each book is competing with more than ten million other books available for sale, while other media is claiming more and more of people's time.

I love this quote by Flannery O'Conner:

*“When a book leaves your hands, it belongs to God. He may use it to save a few souls or to try a few others, but I think that for the writer to worry is to take over God's business.”*

When promoting the Kingdom of God, getting your books into people's hands is God's business. All you can do is what you know to do. Do that and ask God to bless your feeble efforts. After all, if He can feed over 5,000 people with two small fish and five little loaves of bread, He can multiply your marketing efforts to reach thousands of people, if that is His desire.

Marketing and selling books is not a sprint; it is a marathon. Too many authors give up too quickly when they don't see immediate results. Don't get discouraged. Establishing yourself as a viable resource of quality Christian materials takes time. Many small and self-publishers experience success in the Christian marketplace through perseverance and a comprehensive marketing strategy.

I pray that this book will be a valuable resource to you as you strive to bring new insights and inspiration to the family of God. May God bless you and the books that He leads you to produce to encourage, teach, and equip His people.

His servant,

Sarah Bolme

[info@marketingchristianbooks.com](mailto:info@marketingchristianbooks.com)

P.S.: As I write this book, it is still largely a print book world. While the sales of digital books are growing, they currently only comprise about 30% of all book sales. Thus, this material is largely written with print books in mind. While all of the marketing advice that follows pertains to both print and digital books, I have kept a chapter specifically for ebooks to deal with some of the special aspects of this format.



## Get Connected

*Plans fail for lack of counsel,  
but with many advisers they succeed.  
—Proverbs 15:22*

Marketing Fundamental:  
**Information leads to knowledge, which  
leads to wise decisions that bring success.**

**K**nowledge is vital for success in the publishing and bookselling trade. The industry of publishing and bookselling is in constant motion. What is true today for this business will not necessarily be true next year. Publishers and authors must strive to stay abreast of industry happenings and trends. Knowing your competition and what they are doing is smart business. Understanding the current trends of Christian retail stores and Christian consumers allows you to market your products wisely. The best way to gather the information required to stay up-to-date about this industry is to get connected.

## Join a Publishers Association

Name recognition is an essential ingredient in marketing your book in the Christian marketplace. With the myriad of Christian books available today, Christian retailers are inundated with product choices and do not have the time to screen every book they stock in their stores. As a result, most Christian retailers rely on name recognition to ensure that the products they carry contain messages that are consistent with Protestant or Catholic Christian views and are not other religious materials dressed up in Christian attire.

Christian retailers rely on five main sources for name recognition in considering materials for their stores:

- Known Christian author or personality
- Established Christian publishing house
- Endorsement by a known Christian personality
- Favorable review by a reputable Christian source
- Alliance with a Christian publishers association

Since new small and self-publishers are not established Christian publishing houses and typically are not publishing titles by established Christian personalities, pursuing the other three choices are your best options for engendering confidence in the content and quality of your books. An alliance with a Christian publishers association is a good place to start.

Joining a publishers association is a wise decision for any publisher. There are four fundamental benefits of joining a publishers association.

### **Benefit #1: Respect in the Industry**

In the Christian marketplace, name recognition for credibility purposes is probably the most important reason for a new, small, or self-publisher to join a Christian publishers association. Christian retailers gain confidence in a new publisher's products when they know that the publisher is a member of a Christian organization in the industry. Professional organizations hold their members to a higher standard of conduct. Membership in a professional association says, "I am serious about my vocation."

Don't you prefer to go to a doctor who is a member of the American Medical Association? Knowing that your doctor belongs to a professional organization makes you feel more secure that he is serious about learning and knowing the latest medical techniques. As a publisher, your membership

in a publishers association brings you the same professional respect in the book industry.

For example, book reviews are an essential ingredient in promoting a new title, and membership in a publishers association lends your publishing company credibility with book review sources. One example of this is The Midwest Book Review. This review source specializes in reviewing titles from small publishers, self-publishers, academic publishers, and specialty presses. However, they give priority consideration to those titles from publishers that belong to a publishers association.

### **Benefit #2: Cutting-Edge Information**

Publishers associations provide their members with some form of regular communication (usually a newsletter) containing the latest developments and resources in the publishing industry. Many hold seminars and conferences to further their members' education and expertise in publishing issues. The information you glean from belonging to a publishers association can improve your business and bring you more success in your endeavors. Knowing what is currently working for other publishers helps you learn what to do to sell more copies of your books.

The industry of publishing and bookselling is in constant motion.

### **Benefit #3: Saving Money**

Joining a professional publishers association costs money. However, if you take advantage of the membership benefits these associations offer (which can include discounts on shipping costs, co-op marketing opportunities, health insurance programs for self-employed individuals, and liability insurance), you will save money in the long run. Some small publishers claim that the money they have saved on a freight discount benefit alone more than pays for their annual membership fees in one publishers association.

### **Benefit #4: Doors of Opportunity**

Professional publishers associations provide opportunities for you to network with other professionals in the book industry. Aside from the aforementioned seminars or conferences to attend, some associations also provide an online discussion group for member publishers. These opportunities allow you not only to find out what is working for other publishers but they provide a venue to share your expertise.

Displaying your titles at a trade show can lead to great deals. While trade shows are generally a costly endeavor, some publishers associations provide

opportunities for you to display your titles affordably. Some small publishers have sold international rights for their books through displaying titles at the Frankfurt Book Fair through a publishers association.

## **Publishers Associations**

There are currently four professional publishers associations for those publishing materials for the Christian marketplace.

- **Association of Catholic Publishers (ACP)**

ACP is for publishers producing materials for the Catholic marketplace. This organization has a sliding membership fee based on the size of the publishing house. ACP produces a newsletter, provides co-op marketing opportunities, sponsors seminars, and gives publisher excellence and service awards.

[www.catholicpublishers.org](http://www.catholicpublishers.org)

- **Christian Small Publishers Association (CSPA)**

CSPA is an organization for small and self-publishers producing materials for the Christian marketplace. CSPA produces an e-newsletter, offers co-op advertising, exhibits members' books at the International Christian Retail Show, offers a distribution program, runs a book review program, and sponsors the Christian Small Publisher Book of the Year Award.

[www.christianpublishers.net](http://www.christianpublishers.net)

- **Evangelical Christian Publishers Association (ECPA)**

ECPA is a publishers association for established Christian publishers. It has the highest membership fee of the Christian publishers associations. ECPA considers a small publisher one with annual revenues under one million dollars. To become a member of ECPA, an existing ECPA publisher member must recommend you for membership.

[www.ecpa.org](http://www.ecpa.org)

- **Protestant Church-Owned Publishers Association (PCPA)**

PCPA is an association of not-for-profit official church-owned Protestant publishing houses, directly connected to their respective denominations. PCPA supports publishers as they serve congregations within their denominations.

[www.pcpaonline.org](http://www.pcpaonline.org)

Even if you publish only Christian materials, you don't have to limit yourself to Christian publishers associations. Most bookstores and public libraries offer many religious titles for their patrons. Additional membership in a general market publishers association can provide you information and cost-saving marketing opportunities to reach the general book market also.

Here is a list of general market publishers associations for small and self-publishers.

- **Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA)**

IBPA publishes a newsletter, sponsors seminars, provides co-op promotional mailings, exhibits members' books at trade conventions, and sponsors the annual Benjamin Franklin Awards for the best books of the year published by independent publishers.

[www.ibpa-online.org](http://www.ibpa-online.org)

- **The Association of Publishers for Special Sales (APSS)**

APSS (formerly SPAN) is an association of independent publishers. Their mission is to help publishers sell more books in more ways, primarily by helping their members find new opportunities for profitable sales in non-traditional ways. APSS also operates a free, open, online community for publishers.

[www.bookapss.org](http://www.bookapss.org)

- **Small Publishers, Artists, and Writers Network (SPAWN)**

SPAWN provides opportunities for everyone involved in publishing. SPAWN encourages the exchange of ideas, information, and other mutual benefits.

[www.spawn.org](http://www.spawn.org)

- **The Electronic Publishing Industry Coalition (EPIC)**

EPIC, the Electronic Publishing Industry Coalition, was incorporated in 1998 to provide a strong voice for electronic publishing. Once an authors' organization, EPIC has expanded to include hundreds of professionals from all facets of the electronic publishing industry: authors, publishers, editors, artists, and others.

[www.epicorg.com](http://www.epicorg.com)

- **The Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLI)**

ALLI is a collaborative collective of independent self-published authors. This association provides advice, encouragement, and networking opportunities for self-published writers.

[www.allianceindependentauthors.org](http://www.allianceindependentauthors.org)

- **The Independent Author Network (IAN)**

IAN is a group of self-published authors and authors published by small indie presses who work together to promote each other's books. The group's website includes author pages, an author directory, a bookstore, and social networking for their members.

[www.independentauthornetwork.com](http://www.independentauthornetwork.com)

Join as many associations as you feel will optimize the information and opportunities you need to be successful in your publishing endeavors. Once you join a publishers association, make sure to include your membership in that association on your letterhead, your website, your press releases, and all your advertising materials to take full advantage of the name recognition and respect your membership brings you.

## **Subscribe to Industry Publications** \_\_\_\_\_

A number of publications help publishers and authors stay abreast of current news and trends in the Christian marketplace. Some of these publications are more costly than others. However, there are a number of free e-newsletters that provide condensed news of the industry for those publishers and authors on a tight budget.

### **Subscription Publications**

You do not need to subscribe to all of these publications to stay abreast of industry conditions. Since the Christian marketplace is a relatively small subset of publishing, information is often repeated between the publications listed here. A subscription to one of these publications complemented with the free e-newsletters listed on the next page is usually sufficient to stay abreast of industry news.

- ***Publishers Weekly***

The most costly of these publications, *Publishers Weekly*, is the preeminent magazine for publishers and booksellers. *Publishers Weekly*

covers the general book publishing market but includes a great deal of information on the religious marketplace.

[www.publishersweekly.com](http://www.publishersweekly.com)

- ***Christian Retailing***

Produced by Charisma Media (formerly Strang Publications), this magazine has been published for over 50 years. The magazine is free to Christian retail stores, but industry suppliers must pay for the periodical. *Christian Retailing* is produced monthly.

[www.christianretailing.com](http://www.christianretailing.com)

- ***CBA Retailers + Resources***

*CBA Retailers + Resources* is the official publication of CBA, The Association of Christian Retail. This monthly publication is free to all members of CBA. Non-members must pay a subscription fee.

[www.cbaonline.org](http://www.cbaonline.org)

## Free e-Newsletters

The beauty of e-newsletters is that they are the most cost-effective means of staying abreast of industry news. Most of the subscription publications listed above also offer a weekly e-newsletter free of charge. Simply sign up for the newsletter on each publication's website and you will receive the newsletter each week in your email inbox.

- ***Religion BookLine***

This is *Publishers Weekly's* e-newsletter providing updates on religion publishing and book buying.

[www.publishersweekly.com](http://www.publishersweekly.com)

- ***Christian Etailing***

Produced by *Christian Retailing*, this weekly e-newsletter features industry news for the Christian marketplace.

[www.christianretailing.com](http://www.christianretailing.com)

- ***CBA Retailers + Resources Industry Brief***

CBA produces this weekly e-newsletter featuring headline news for the Christian publishing and bookselling industry.

[www.cbaonline.org](http://www.cbaonline.org)



## Join Online Discussion Groups

Joining discussion groups is free and it is a good avenue for acquiring information, ideas, and trends from other publishers. Here is a sampling of online discussion groups for publishers.

- **Christian Self-Publishing**

This discussion group is for authors and small presses who are involved in self-publishing and marketing material to the homeschooling or Christian private school markets.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ChristianSelf-Publishing>

- **Self-Publishing**

This discussion forum is a community of authors and small presses interested or involved in self-publishing and book marketing for the general marketplace.

<http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/self-publishing>

- **Publish-L**

This email discussion group is for issues related to publishing. It is a forum for the exchange of ideas and information about publishing and marketing books to the general marketplace. Anyone interested in publishing or engaged in the industry is welcome.

[www.publish-l.com](http://www.publish-l.com)

- **POD Publishers**

POD Publishers is a business discussion group for publishers of print-on-demand books. This group is primarily comprised of general market POD publishers.

[http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/pod\\_publishers](http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/pod_publishers)

## Connections for Christian Authors

For Christian authors, staying abreast of the industry is very important for you to promote your books effectively. Keeping informed about industry trends also helps you be aware of the types of materials the marketplace needs so you can be successful in your next writing project. Publishers should encourage their authors to stay connected with other Christian authors in the Christian marketplace. Here are a few ways authors can get connected.

## Join a Christian Writers Association

A number of Christian writers associations exist to support, encourage, educate, and inform writers writing for the Christian marketplace.

- **American Christian Fiction Writers Association (ACFW)**

Membership in ACFW provides Christian writers access to a monthly e-zine, critique groups, mentor groups, access to the ACFW online forum, and promotional opportunities for published authors.

[www.acfw.com](http://www.acfw.com)

- **American Christian Writers Association (ACW)**

ACW offers regional writers conferences around the country, regional charters of local writers groups, and two publications: *Christian Communicator* and *Advanced Christian Writer*. Membership in ACW is not required to access any of these great services. Subscriptions are available for the association's two print publications.

[www.acwriters.com](http://www.acwriters.com)

- **Catholic Writers Guild**

The Catholic Writers Guild is for Catholic writers looking for a group of like-minded writers willing to assist each other in their publishing goals. The organization offers online support and communities.

[www.catholicwritersguild.org](http://www.catholicwritersguild.org)

- **Christian Writers Guild**

Run by Jerry B. Jenkins, membership in this group gives authors access to webinars, manuscript critiques, a novel contest, and writers conferences.

[www.christianwritersguild.com](http://www.christianwritersguild.com)

- **Fellowship of Christian Writers (FCW)**

Located in Tulsa, Oklahoma, FCW began as a local Christian writers ministry, but is now available to writers at large. Membership provides a monthly newsletter; access to local writers groups featuring speakers, workshops, and critique groups; and entry into their writing contest. FCW also hosts a Yahoo! discussion group that is open to any Christian writer.

[www.fellowshipofchristianwriters.org](http://www.fellowshipofchristianwriters.org)

## **Attend Christian Writers Conferences**

Writers conferences provide authors an excellent opportunity to meet and connect with other Christian authors as well as to stay abreast of the industry trends. More Christian writers conferences take place across the United States each year than can be mentioned here. An online search for “Christian writers conferences” will bring up a good list for you to peruse.

## **Join Online Author Discussion Groups**

Another good way to get connected, network, and learn from others is to join online discussion groups for Christian authors. Joining discussion groups is free and it is a good avenue for acquiring encouragement and information. A sampling of online discussion groups for Christian authors is offered here.

- **ChristianWriters.com (CW)**

The CW community includes a number of forums or discussion boards and a chat room for Christian authors. This group requires membership, but membership is free and easy to obtain online.

[www.christianwriters.com](http://www.christianwriters.com)

- **Christian Writers Group International, Inc. (CWGI)**

CWG offers an online discussion group as well as a message board for Christian writers.

[www.christianwritersgroup.org](http://www.christianwritersgroup.org)

- **FaithWriters.com**

FaithWriters requires membership, but membership is free and easy to obtain online. This community provides message boards and discussion forums as well as other opportunities for writers to network and grow.

[www.faithwriters.com](http://www.faithwriters.com)

- **Christian Electronic Authors**

Owned by Christian e-Author, this group discusses electronic publishing and inspirational writing for electronic books. They investigate inspirational writing, promotional opportunities for electronic books, e-publishers, and the world of electronic publishing.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Christian-e-author>

## **Summary**

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C.S. Lewis once said, “The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle of those who are.” Being a member of an association or discussion group places you in a circle of wise people. Associating with and learning from other people in your field helps you become wiser in your own business.