How to Spread the Word-of-Mouse

by Peggy Tibbetts

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Carly's Ghost

by Peggy Tibbetts

http://www.carlysghost.net

" ... a hauntingly good read."

BookReview.com

" ... a wonderful tale of sibling rivalry and mystery that will enthrall readers of all ages."

The Bookdragon Review

"5 Stars! ... very vibrant with detail descriptions that vividly paint the story with very few words. The dialogue is ... very natural. This is a well-written book that should appeal to any pre-teen ghost story lover ... Carly's Ghost was cool."

Scribes World Reviews

"9 rating! ... a must add to your wish list! ... takes you back to that biggest childhood anxiety--'Is my house haunted?'"
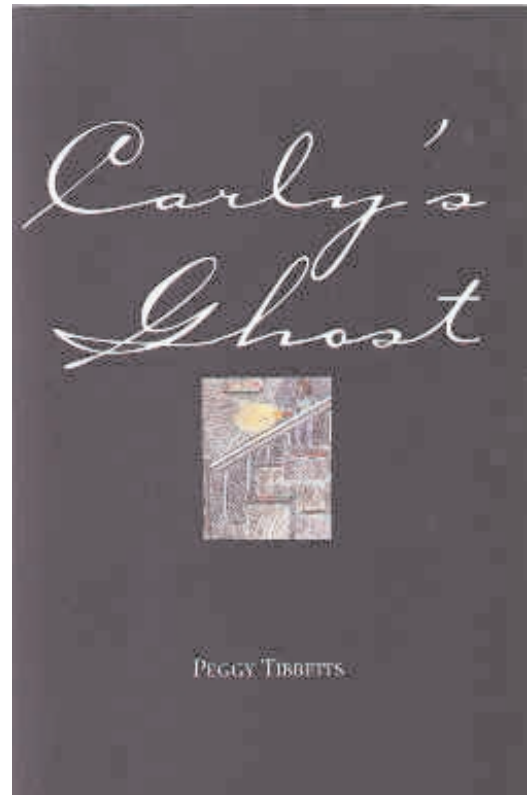
Bookideas.com

" ... much more charming than scary ... Carly's tenacity and strength make her a very likable girl."

About.com Young Adult Books

 "If you're in the mood for a good, old-fashioned ghost story, then you need to check out Carly's Ghost."

KidSolutions.com

Rumors of War

by Peggy Tibbetts
http://www.rumorsofwar.net

"This is a thriller as well as ... a tragic romance. This book would make a good movie."
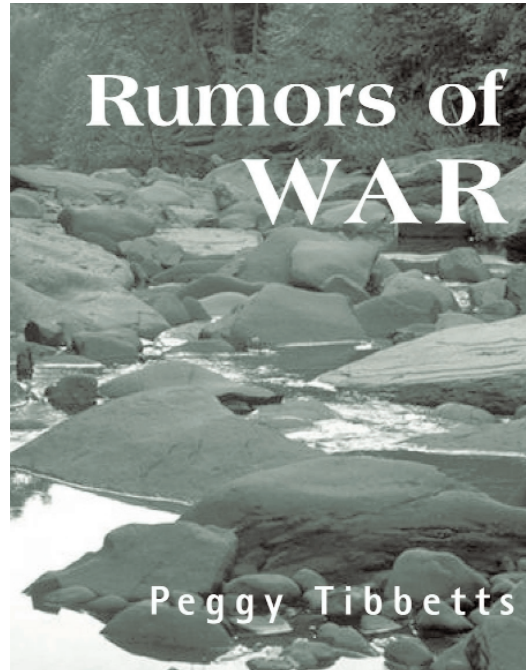
Writer's Digest Certificate of Merit

"... a very powerful and stunning thriller portraying the horror of finding your reality is not what you thought it was."

The Book Reader

"... a well laid trap. Set against the backdrop of Desert Storm, this novel delves into the possibilities behind the real reason governments traipse off to war."

Midwest Book Review

"5 stars! Tibbetts has given readers a book that is full of plots and subplots ... I liked this book ... was disappointed when I read the last words."

Scribes World Reviews

" ... a true suspense novel. Whenever I thought I had the plot figured out, Tibbetts would take me on yet another roller coaster ride by adding an unexpected and exciting twist."

US Times Bestseller List & Reviews

" ... a fast paced novel interlaced with intrigue, danger, passion and ... one woman alone uncovering secrets of dangerous proportions."

Ebook Junction

" ... builds into a frenzy of excitement. Every time you think you know where things are going, it takes a delightful turn ... leaves you wanting more."

The Bookdragon Review

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How to Spread the Word-of-Mouse

Marketing experts agree, of all the state-of-the-art promotional tools available, word-of-mouth gets the best results. It's the oldest and the simplest form of advertising. And, with your computer and the Internet, word-of-mouth translates into word-of-mouse.

Much of what I have to say here today doesn't pertain specifically to children's writers, it pertains to all writers. Though I assure you, I've been a full member of the Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators since 1977, so I've sat where you're sitting many more times than I've been a speaker, and often wondered how the heck that speaker was qualified to discuss the topic at hand. Since many of you have probably never heard of me, let me take a few moments to introduce myself.

I'm a published author and also an online editor for Writing-World.com, where you'll find my children's author interviews, including several members of the Rocky Mountain Chapter—Pattie Schnetzler, Deb Williams, Julie Peters, Ann Cooper, and Mary Finley. I also have my own question and answer column, "Advice from a Caterpillar" about writing for children. And I'd like to take this opportunity to invite you to submit your questions to me about writing for children. It's a great first step in getting published online.

I can assure you right up front I'm not an expert—about promotion, marketing, epublishing, or the Internet. But I definitely know my way around cyberspace. In fact my husband would like you to know I could probably talk for an hour about "How to Shop Online." But I'll save that for a future ebook.

Truth is, for the past seven years, I've spent hours upon hours online, learning my way around, familiarizing myself with content and web sites, trying to discover the advantages of the Internet for me as a writer. What I've found is a land of plenty for ALL writers. And even though I'm going to talk a lot about book promotion and marketing online, I assure you there are loads of opportunities for writers, whether or not you have a book published.

You see, the beauty of the Internet for writers is you can break in long before you have a book to sell. Because you have a service to sell—writing. There's a popular saying, "On the Internet, content is king." Which only means that web sites need words, and lots of them.

I'm not here to tell you "How to Get Rich Off the Internet." Or even "How to Make a Decent Living Off the Internet." Either of those is certainly possible. Anything's possible. But that's not the point. I'm here to show you "How to Spread the Word-of-Mouse" about yourself, your writing, and your books.

In 1999, I was anticipating the publisher's release of my children's novel, "Carly's Ghost," and my self published novel, "Rumors of War." I knew that, like most new authors and self published authors, the promotion and marketing of my books would rest solely on my shoulders. And, again like all new authors and self published authors, my advertising budget was slim.

Naturally I turned to the Internet. I knew that online promo and marketing is the most cost effective way to reach the largest number of people.

But how did I know that?
During that same year—1999—two authors, Angela Adair-Hoy and MJ Rose, were not only successfully marketing their books online, but were busy letting others know—through interviews, articles, and newsletters—about the advantages of online book promotion.

Not surprisingly, Angela's ebook "How to Write, Publish, and Sell E-Books," [http://www.booklocker.com/bookpages/aadair4.html] sold phenomenally well, through her weekly online newsletter and web site, "Writers Weekly." [http://www.writersweekly.com/] Self published non-fiction can be extremely successful and Angela's e-book is 17 pages, in an easy-to-download PDF file, for only $7.95.

What intrigued me more was MJ Rose's success with her self published fiction novel, "Lip Service," which had become the first self published novel to be a Featured Alternate Selection at both Doubleday Book Club and The Literary Guild, and subsequently contracted by Pocket Books for hardcover release in September of 1999. That kind of success for a self published fiction author was truly extraordinary.

By then I'd already seen some of my articles published online, but those two women's success opened my eyes to the real power of promotion and marketing on the Internet. Eventually Angela and MJ combined their efforts and their information into co-authoring the book, "How to Publish and Promote Online," which I strongly recommend as one of the best references out there today.

Okay, so, first you must learn the cardinal rule of online marketing.
Never spam!
How many of you know what spam is?
For those who aren't real sure, here's a brief history of spam—not to be confused with capital S, capital P, capital A, capital M—which, as you already know, is a canned lunch meat product, made by Hormel Foods of Minnesota.

In a policy statement on SPAM and the Internet, Hormel "does not object" to use of the slang term "spam" to describe unsolicited commercial email. Instead the company asks only that people writing specifically about the square, canned pork follow a set of trademark guidelines. The suggestions, posted on the web site, are clear and simple: "Please Do: Always put the trademark SPAM in all capital letters. Follow SPAM with 'Luncheon Meat' or other descriptor. Remember, a trademark is a formal adjective and as such, should always be followed by a noun."

But, Hormel wasn't always so user friendly. In 1997, the company sent a letter to Sanford Wallace, a notorious email spammer, objecting to his use of the word "spam" and his registration of the web site "spamford.com". Being the notorious email spammer that he was, Wallace made sure the contents of the letter got passed around to plenty of people.

Now comes the goofy part. Hormel blames, of all things, Monty Python, the British Comedy troupe, for the adoption of "spam" as a synonym for junk email. It all started with an old Monty Python skit, which some of you Python fans here might recall, in which a group of Vikings sing a chorus of "SPAM, SPAM, SPAM..." at increasing volumes in an attempt to drown out other conversation. According to Hormel, because unsolicited email is seen as drowning out normal discourse on the Internet, the analogy to modern-day spam applied.

Huh?

Goofier still, even Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary uses the Monty Python story to explain the derivation of the word "spam," as it pertains to "unsolicited commercial email sent to a large number of addresses." But the dictionary only notes in parentheses that the word is also a trademark for a canned meat product.

In the end it all works out quite well for Hormel, I think. After all, deleting spam emails all day builds up an appetite. And what better way to fill that craving than with a protein-rich square of salty, pink pork.

So there. Now you know what spam is ... and what SPAM isn't!

Sending out email announcements to friends and family about the release of your new book and asking them to forward your announcement to THEIR friends and family is NOT spamming. By the way, spam is also a verb—spam, spammed, spamming.

However, paying $500 to an online marketing firm, who promises to distribute your email announcement to 100,000 email addresses of consumers who might buy your book—like one unsuspecting new author did last year—well that's your spam, spammed, spamming right there.

Gee, that whole Monty Python thing is really catchy, isn't it?

Let me tell you about poor Jonathan Tropper, who had so much success with his own personal email campaign, sending out announcements about his new book, "Plan B," to the email addresses of friends, family members, and quite a few others he'd simply collected over time, that he decided to take it to the next level. His initial email campaign, the one he managed to pull off on his own, boosted his book sales at Amazon.com, plus something like 200 people showed up at his Manhattan Barnes & Noble book premier and signing in March of 2000. What Tropper didn't know was that the next level was down. Way down.

He hired the Las Vegas-based Internet Marketing Group (IMG), who promised to target the promotion of his book to 100,000 likely readers online. Instead, IMG proceeded to send Tropper's book announcement to dozens of un-targeted web communities and influential people. It was pretty much indiscriminate, including a bunch of kite enthusiasts.

Unfortunately for him, his email announcement included a link to his book's page at Amazon, where the revenge was swift and ugly. A torrent of angry comments from the spam-ees soon cluttered the reader reviews section. His book sales plummeted, and Tropper's reputation was tattered.

Although I do think he's recovered somewhat, since The Wall Street Journal ran a story in August of 2000, detailing his literary marketing blunder, garnering him some enormous publicity—and you know what they say, any publicity, even bad publicity, is good publicity. Not to mention his publisher, St. Martin's Press released "Plan B" in paperback in February this year, plus his Amazon sales ranking is pretty fair, so I'd say the bad publicity turned out pretty good for him, all things considered. You should know that Tropper did have an agent at the time, who, in a last ditch effort to save his client's career, PROBABLY—and I have no proof of this, just guessing here—wormed his way through connections to get Tropper's side of the story into the Wall Street Journal, banking on the whole bad publicity/good publicity thing.

Nonetheless, I DO NOT recommend these methods.

There are other, much safer methods of online publicity.

If only Jonathan Tropper had published his own web site. And, he STILL doesn't have one.

If you have a book published or are expecting the release of your new book, you should definitely publish a web site. It's the best way to begin promoting your book online.

I'm not going to spend time talking about how to create a web site or web site software, or any of the mechanics of web site construction. You can find plenty of resources online, in print, and around your local community to help you get started on the construction of your own web site. Web sites are like fitness, there's no one way to do it. Just do it.

Instead we need to spend some time talking about content.

What should you put on your web site?

Always include the book cover, a short blurb about your book, reviews, the ISBN and price, and links to where your book can be purchased. You should also publish the first chapter. As a book buyer, when you browse in bookstores, you get the chance to pick up any book, see the cover, feel the weight of it, and read the first chapter. At your web site, you can't give readers any physical grasp of your book, but you CAN give them the first chapter.

Be sure to provide information about the author—that would be you. Include announcements of book signings or speaking engagements, a short bio, articles and interviews, or links to them. Consider putting up a page that offers free information. Whether it's resources for teachers, or resources for writers, everybody loves free stuff.

For example, James Deem, one of my interview subjects at Writing World, publishes a web site called, "The Mummy Tombs," [http://www.mummytombs.com] dedicated to the subject matter in his books, "Bodies from the Bog" and "How to Make a Mummy Talk." David Lubar, another one of my interview subjects, publishes a collection of his own hilarious humor pieces at his web site, davidlubar.com. [http://www.davidlubar.com]

If you're really ambitious, you can compile a collection of your short stories, poems, essays, or articles into a free ebook. Be sure to include a cover image and blurb about your book or books and a link to your web site.

Now before you gasp in horror, "But I worked hard on those stories and/or articles! Why should I give away my writing?" Because it's cheaper than paying for advertising, which is very expensive. The average one time print ad costs $400. Web site ads start much cheaper at upwards of $10/month but you'd have to post a lot of ads to get the same kind of exposure you could with one free ebook. So don't think of it as giving away your writing, think of it as earning advertising revenue, and selling books.

Horror writer, Doug Clegg offers his entire novel, "Purity," as a free ebook at his web site, douglasclegg.com [http://www.douglasclegg.com] He claims that since he started giving away free ebooks, sales of his print books have increased from 20,000 to over 100,000—in which case he's not really giving anything away. Incidentally his publisher backs him up on this. So before you publish anything in a free ebook, be sure you own the rights to it, which come under the category of electronic rights.

No matter what, do your level best to make your web site a place where visitors flock to.

If you don't have a book published yet, it's not AS important for you to get a web site up and running. Or let's say you do have a book published, but, for whatever reason, you don't want to hassle with a web site.

There are plenty of sites, where you can strut your stuff—post articles, essays, and reviews, advertise your book, and overall gain good exposure for yourself and your work. For those with published books, make sure your book and it's cover are listed at Amazon.com. If you're self published or your publisher refuses to list it—because there are some smaller publishers who do object to Amazon's 55% discount—you can list it yourself and supply them with books through the Amazon.com Advantage program for authors. [https://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/subst/partners/direct/direct-application.html]

Content is pretty well limited for book listing sites like Amazon, or Barnes & Noble. You or your publisher, supply them with all pertinent data about your book, and as the author you can add more information about the book and yourself, plus publish all book reviews, and encourage readers, in the form of, again those faithful friends and family followers of yours, to submit reviews. On second thought, don't encourage them to submit reader reviews to Amazon—remind them, cajole them, beg them! It's the only surefire method I've found to get others to do those all important reader reviews for me.

Other sites for writers are Authors Den, [http://www.authorsden.com] which is free, and Mystic Ink Community [http://www.mystic-ink.com] which charges fees ranging from $15 to $100 per year. Both sites are designed specifically for writers to promote themselves and their work.

Writing-World has a brand new feature called the "Author's Bookshelf," [http://www.writing-world.com/books/index.html] where authors can display

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