

# The Beautiful Plan

~ Publishing Strategies from Patron Saint Productions ~

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## Amazon Ends Special Orders

By Gary Michael Smith

“We have exciting news!” We have decided to stop carrying small press, independently published, or any other kind of books that are not carried by major wholesalers! Pretty cool, huh?

The quoted text was the opening line of the doomsday letter I received in the mail from Amazon.com. I will admit that this single piece of correspondence from the pioneer of online bookselling was a stroke of marketing genius. Not only did it cheerily convey bleak information, it did so by offering an option that’s even more gloomy: necessitating that publishers either sell (with inherently large discounts) through major wholesalers, or join the Amazon Marketplace Program.

The second sentence of the letter went on to describe (bracketed text added here) how the “Special Order Book business [i.e., books sold directly by publishers, with or without discount] has led us to conclude that many suppliers can earn even more money selling on Amazon.com by switching their titles from ‘Special Order’ status [a designation determined by Amazon once they realize that no discount is offered] to our Amazon Marketplace program.” With such promising wording, how could one not feel a sense of elation? By reading the terms of the Amazon Marketplace Program, that’s how. Here’s a synopsis from the How It Works link on their site.

- Amazon gets a 15 percent commission on all books sold. (This is subtracted from the retail price; the publisher gets the remainder.)

- Another \$0.99 fee per item sold is also subtracted.
- The selling price of the book, minus commission and fee, is direct deposited into the publisher’s account every 14 days via Amazon Payments.
- A listing is only good for 60 days, then must be relisted.



### “We’re Giving You the Boot, While Offering You a Worse Deal!”

The next paragraph states that “Because this alternate method of selling to our customers will help most publishers earn more money, we have decided to **discontinue sourcing books directly from you effective May 31, 2002.**” (Bolding not added here for emphasis; it was in the original letter.) What great news! They go on to write that they “will continue to purchase titles directly from major wholesalers, so it may be possible for us to procure some of your books through that channel.” Not a chance for books published and printed on demand and in small quantities. Then they suggest that, if I don’t use wholesalers, I’m encouraged to list my titles on Amazon.com Marketplace.

Here are the benefits of Marketplace as stated in the letter. Parentheticals are my own thoughts:

- Increased margins for many through a low commission rate of 15% (Extremely well presented, except that I’m not one of the “many” since Amazon used to sell my books at a zero percent

commission rate with no discount.)

- Decreases the time customers have to wait to receive their order (This has only been an issue because Amazon frequently delayed orders for weeks before either sending me a check or mailing my books to the buyer, even though I normally fill orders within 24 hours of receiving payment.)
- The supplier determines the price of the book appearing on the website (In the good old days, Amazon might sell books at a discount from list price — cutting into their profit, not mine.)
- Book suppliers receive a shipping credit for every order to help cover shipping costs. (Amazon charges my customer \$3.49 shipping and handling, and then remits \$2.26 to me, since I actually pay for the shipping.)

### Can Someone Explain this to Me?

Out of depressed curiosity, I called Amazon to confirm my interpretation of the letter because it was written so optimistically that I couldn’t understand why I felt so badly. Here is a breakdown of what I learned.

- Whatever books currently are listed with Amazon will remain on the site. However, when I search for one of my titles now, I’m directed to a page displaying “No matches for <book title>.” Below are matches for <something other than my book>.” Then this is followed by categories

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(Amazon, continued from page 1.)

for “Cell Phones, Wireless Accessories, Outdoor Living, Classical Music, Books, Arts & Hobbies, Industrial Supplies.” Wait! There it is—listed in the third to last category Books!

- Although books that are grandfathered in are supposed to appear, they are not available for sale. A link displays “Order this item used now,” which brings you to a page where Amazon will try to locate a used copy for you.
- New titles will not be posted unless the books are available through major wholesalers.

### A Dubious Comparison

Amazon's letter continues as the Special Orders Manager (who refused to take my phone call) lists a “side-by-side comparison showing the financial benefit of selling through Marketplace vs. Amazon.com Special Orders.” See the chart at the top of this page. Again, the asterisks are my own commentaries.

The letter ends with a wish “to continued sales of your titles through Amazon.com Marketplace”—just **not** through Special Orders.

### Another Selling Option

In all fairness, there is one other option for publishers — joining the Amazon Advantage program. Books are bought on consignment and stocked in a distribution center. The publisher is paid at a 55 percent discount via a monthly direct deposit. Remember, though, that when you sell on consignment you become the retailer's banker, and your own book-keeping becomes more complicated.

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## A Comparison of Publisher Receipts

(From a letter from Amazon.com — last column added by Gary Smith.)

<u>Example</u>	<u>Special Orders</u>	<u>Marketplace</u>	<u>My Math</u>
List price:	\$32.00	\$32.00	\$32.00
Discount/Commission:	\$22.40 (30%) *	\$27.20 (15%)	\$00.00
Additional fees:	\$22.40 (N/A)	\$26.21 (\$.99) **	\$00.00
Total margin earned:	<b>\$22.40</b>	<b>\$26.21 ***</b>	<b>\$32.00</b>

\* I've never given a discount through Special Orders.

\*\* This is a commission in addition to the 15 percent commission.

\*\*\* I still prefer the \$32.00 margin earned in the old days.

## Results from Online Bookstore Campaigns

Here are some results of recent Online Bookstore Display Placement Campaigns to accompany the tutorial at the end of this newsletter. Hopefully, the lists will make clearer the value of this kind of work. For samples of actual displays and placement reports, please visit the Patron Saint Productions web site.

**Book:** *Anatomy of A Life Possessed* (Winner Episode Press)

**Categories:** Religion, Current Events, Autobiography, Occult

**Placements:** Six sites agreed to install display, including:

- The Linkup (Survivors of sex abuse by Catholic priests.)  
<http://www.thelinkup.com/index.html>
- FACTnet (SuperSite covering cults and mind control.)  
<http://www.factnet.org/>
- Conspiracy Journal  
<http://www.members.tripod.com/uforeview/>
- Mind Control Forum  
<http://www.heart7.net/mcf/index.htm>

**Book:** *Investing With Giants* (John Wiley & Sons)

**Categories:** Personal Finance, Investing

**Placements:** Six sites agreed to install display, including:

- About.com Guide to Stocks  
<http://stocks.about.com>
- CompuServe Investors Forum  
<http://go.compuserve.com/Investors>
- Suite101.com Investing and Personal Finance Forum  
<http://www.suite101.com/discussion.cfm/investing/80745>
- Finance and Investment for Beginning Investors  
<http://pages.prodigy.com/wealth>

**Book:** *In Tribute: Obituaries of Famous People* (Bushky Press)

**Categories:** History, Journalism, Speechwriting

**Placements:** Four sites agreed to install display, including:

- Loving Eulogies.com  
<http://www.lovingeulogies.com/>
- The Funeral Directory  
<http://www.thefuneraldirectory.com/>
- E S P E E C H E S . C O M  
<http://www.espeeches.com/>
- Dead People Server - Tributes and Essays  
<http://www.dpsinfo.com/dps/>

**EDITORIAL**

# The Used Book Fracas

By Steve O'Keefe

In a bold move to usurp corporate CEOs as the reigning symbol of villainous greed, authors are banding together to protest the sale of used books at Amazon.com. The Authors Guild is leading the crusade: "We believe it is in our members' best interests to de-link their websites from Amazon." Some authors have gone so far as to recommend legal action to require Amazon to collect and remit author royalties on used book sales.

There are so many fallacies and errors of logic in the case against online used book sales that it's hard to know where to begin. Let's start with whether these sales have diminished in any way the returns authors realize from their craft.

## **New Book Sales**

There is simply no evidence that used book sales reduce the number of new books sold. Authors and their so-called representatives seem to think there is a fixed pool of dollars allocated to bookbuying, and that money spent on used books cuts into budgets for new books. However, it is proven that used book sales increase total book sales, with more books being sold and finding readers every year. This should be cause for author rejoicing.

## **Author Royalties**

An obvious fallacy in the case against used book sales at Amazon is that authors don't receive royalties from these sales. One bookstore owner wrote into Patricia Holt's newsletter, *Holt Uncensored* — another crusader against used book sales on Amazon — that his store sold overstock books at discount prices online rather than return them to publishers for credit. Full author royalties are paid on such sales.

Indeed, many booksellers find it more economical to list unsold books for auction online than return them to publishers. Authors and publishers

sometimes forget that returning books is expensive for booksellers, too, because they absorb losses due to shipping costs. Cutting losses by auctioning or discounting overstock is good for bookstores, good for publishers, good for authors, and good for bookbuyers.

## **Author Advances**

A more important measure of author welfare is the level of advances publishers pay to acquire manuscripts. Publishers take a risk when they pay an advance; in most cases, it's a losing proposition for them. Less than 10% of books published under this arrangement earn royalties in excess of the advance. In other words, for more than 90% of published authors, royalties mean nothing. What counts is what the publisher pays up-front to acquire the manuscript.

This brings up two interesting points. First, if authors should get royalties on used book sales, maybe publishers should get refunds on advances that don't earn back? I don't hear the Authors Guild advocating for this nod to fairness. Second, if publishers increase profits through the efficient remaindering of books online, this contributes to their ability to take risks and pay advances for new books. Since advances have much more to do with author compensation than royalties, shouldn't author representatives be focused on increasing the number and size of advances?

## **Why Pick on Amazon?**

Authors and their advocates act as though the sale of used books alongside new ones is a new and insidious plot. Powell's Books in Portland, Oregon, has been shelving new and used books side-by-side for decades, much to the pleasure of most authors and consumers. Almost all university bookstores sell new and used textbooks together. I guess some authors are jealous of the high level of esteem that students have for textbook pub-

lishers. Used booksellers have been vending their wares over the Internet since before the World Wide Web was invented by Al Gore in 1994. The only thing new about this development is the sale of new and used, side-by-side, at Amazon.

The issue here isn't even new vs. used, it's a matter of who is making the sale. Books bought from Amazon are shipped by Amazon. Books bought through Amazon's Marketplace are drop shipped by Marketplace vendors. Amazon's books might be used (returned to wholesalers by booksellers and sold again) and books from Marketplace vendors could be new (untouched by human hands) even though sold at a steep discount.

As Gary Smith notes in his cover piece, the Marketplace program is now the only realistic method for many independent presses to sell through Amazon. Amazon shut down its special order service, and will only sell books available from major wholesalers or through the Advantage program. Publishers are once again in the familiar position of having to offer huge discounts or being locked out of retail markets. Amazon's Marketplace offers them another route, where they set the price and pay a 15% commission on sales.

## **Authors Who Love Readers**

Personally, I think an author should celebrate whenever any copy of his or her book finds a willing reader. There is nothing better for authors than to be read. The more people who read an author's work, the better for the author in the long run. It increases the author's likelihood of receiving a larger advance on their next book.

I hate to see authors put in opposition to readers, but that's what this grandstanding against Amazon does. Like a players strike in baseball, author objections to used book sales are seen as hurting the fans — in this case, readers. It's bad for the game.

# Fixing Problems with Amazon Listings

Isn't it irritating to look at one of your books on Amazon.com and see incorrect, misleading, or just plain missing information? You bet it is! Almost every client I've worked with is unhappy about how their books are presented on Amazon. It's not that Amazon is the most important book-selling outlet in the world (it isn't) — but it sure is the most visible. Publishers and their staffs see these listings, as well as authors and their families, customers, reviewers, and trade buyers.

Last month, I conducted an online bookstore display campaign for a client (see the tutorial on page 7), asking high-traffic web sites to feature her book. Here's the response I received from one helpful webmaster:

We earn money by referring the potential book-buyer to Amazon. The problem is that the Amazon listing [for your book] has no book jacket or reviews attached to it. This undermines the credibility of the book in the eye of the potential purchaser. We would love to link to the book. We will also do it in on the first page of our site if you can organize for the jacket and reviews to appear on Amazon. As soon as this is done please send us an e-mail and we'll put the book on our site.

Clearly, my client had a problem. I told her I would fix her Amazon listing, but when I tried to access the same tools I've used in the past to correct Amazon problems, they no longer worked. I spent almost 3 hours trying to find new instructions on how to overhaul an Amazon page. This time, I made detailed notes to share with you. These instructions should be good until the next time Amazon moves the info.

## 1. Correcting Typos & Errors

Let's start with the easy stuff. Certain basic information about your book can be altered using the "*Correct errors and omissions in this list-*

*ing*" link at the bottom of every Amazon book page. You'll be asked to log into Amazon using your e-mail address and password. Then you can change any of the following items:

Title  
Author  
Languages  
Binding  
Number of Pages  
Publication Date  
Format/Edition

If you want to correct something other than these seven items, e-mail your corrections to [book-typos@amazon.com](mailto:book-typos@amazon.com), and include the ISBN number and book title in your e-mail message.

I have no idea how Amazon polices these changes. I've made corrections to many listings of books by different publishers, and those corrections have appeared within days without any verification. Maybe they only investigate if a correction is challenged? It's impossible for them to fact check against a hard copy of the book, since they don't stock the vast majority of books listed at the site.

## 2. Improving the Artwork

Upgrading your Amazon book jacket image is another task you can do automatically, without asking permission. You must send the new image via File Transfer Protocol (FTP), and that requires software such as Fetch (for Apple computers) or WS\_FTP (for PCs). Here's the information for logging into Amazon's FTP server:

**address:** ftp.amazon.com  
**user id:** catalog  
**password:** muchstuff

If the user id and password don't work for you, you'll have to contact [image-fix@amazon.com](mailto:image-fix@amazon.com) and request assistance. Here are Amazon's guidelines for preparing your cover art:

- TIF or JPG format
- 72 pixels/inch resolution

- 648 pixels on the longest side (9 inches at 72 dpi)
- RGB color mode
- 8 bits/channel
- PC or Mac format
- File must be named by the ten digit ISBN (no dashes needed), i.e.: 0471105805.jpg
- Image should be full-front view of cover, no borders
- Overwrites should include ".new" after the ISBN in the file name, i.e. 0471105805.new.tif; 0471161756.new.jpg

Let me add a few suggestions of my own. Scan and re-touch your covers at high resolution (300 or 600 dpi) and get them just right before saving low-res, 72 dpi versions for Amazon. Despite the instructions, I always put a 2-pixel border around the image before saving it as a JPG file. Many other sites use Amazon's cover art, and you never know what background color the artwork will be pulled into. Having a clear, solid border embedded in the image helps it stand out.

At one time you had to send e-mail to Amazon telling them you've uploaded cover art, but that no longer applies. If your new cover art doesn't appear in 3 days, contact [image-fix@amazon.com](mailto:image-fix@amazon.com) and ask for help.

## 3. Improving the Text

Major improvements to the descriptive copy about your book can be made through Amazon's "Book Content Update Form." As of today, the easiest way to get to this form is through the following link: <http://www.amazon.com/publishers>. Look for "Content Form" in the navigational runner on the left side of the page. This "Bookseller Services" page has most of the instructions contained in this article. However, it is impossible to find this page by searching through Amazon's help files — you've got to know the exact URL to get to this page.

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*(Fixing, continued from page 4.)*

It's best to carefully prepare your Amazon content in advance, rather than making it up or keyboarding it on the fly. You're less likely to make typos or say things you'll regret later. Here's a list of the content that Amazon lets you install:

- **Description** (up to 1,000 words or 8,000 characters)
- **Publisher's comments** (up to 1,000 words or 8,000 characters)
- **Author comments** (up to 250 words or 2,000 characters)
- **Author bio(s)** (up to 500 words or 4,000 characters)
- **Table of contents** — Please list each item in the table of contents on a line by itself. Remove page numbers, leader dots, and other typographic elements. (Up to 1,000 words or 8,000 characters)
- **Inside-flap copy** (up to 1,000 words or 8,000 characters)
- **Fair-use citations from reviews** (up to 20 words per review)
- **Excerpt/first chapter** (not to exceed one chapter)

You don't have to observe Amazon's content categories exactly. Use this gift of free space strategically, to put forward the best possible frame of reference for your book. Many other sites may duplicate or link to your Amazon listing. It's worth putting a fair amount of thought into how you use this space.

For example, consider the "Publisher's Comments" section. What consumer cares about what the publisher thinks of the book? This is a good area to use stimulating trade sales copy, such as soliciting inquiries from foreign rights buyers, or mentioning that the book makes an excellent premium for fundraising, and you can include contact information for the rights department.

Amazon gives you a huge amount of room for a table of contents — more than is usually required. Annotate your chapter titles with a short sentence describing the content in each chapter. Amazon gives you two sections to talk about the book: description and flap copy. That's a lot of

room to play with and shouldn't include any author bio since you have two other sections for author info. A good use for the Author Comments section is to specifically thank Amazon buyers, and also counter any misleading or negative reader reviews of the book.

One special point to consider in preparing Amazon copy is that you need to be clever using language to describe physical characteristics of a book. Most jacket copy is written with the assumption that someone is holding the book while reading it. On Amazon, you can't hold the book. So you need to communicate using words such as: large, heavy, weighty, luxurious, brightly colored, sewn binding, textured paper, impeccable design, etc. One book I worked on recently had a trim size of 4" x 9" — which means little to a consumer. The book was about cats, and when the publisher objected to my calling it "narrow," I put on my thinking cap and came up with "leggy trim size" — something expressive that dovetails with the feline theme.

In the section of the form for quoting reviews, note the words "Fair Use." This language is no doubt the result of a legal skirmish between Amazon and certain media outlets. It is against the law to reprint entire reviews without permission from the copyright holder, and Amazon bears liability even if publishers are the ones who upload the reviews. So don't go over 20 words or you're in jeopardy of having your whole page rejected and damaging your relationship with "Earth's Biggest Bookseller." Don't forget to update your Amazon page periodically with the best quotes pulled from reviews.

Finally, you can install a short excerpt from the book at Amazon.com. Many people use the first chapter. That's great for fiction, but the first chapter of non-fiction books is often historical or organizational and, frankly, lacks punch. You might choose a more meaty excerpt that tackles a major problem or issue for readers, demonstrating both the benefits of the book to readers and the author's writing style.

## ~ About ~ Patron Saint Productions

Patron Saint Productions is a publishing consultancy specializing in online marketing strategy, campaigns, and training. It was founded by Steve O'Keefe, a 20-year book publishing veteran who has launched online marketing campaigns for more than 1,000 books and dozens of publishers.

### Web Site:

<http://www.patronsaintpr.com>  
e-mail: [info@patronsaintpr.com](mailto:info@patronsaintpr.com)

### Advisory Board:

John Huenefeld, The Huenefeld Company  
Alice Acheson, Alice Acheson PR  
Don Bates, Media Distribution Services  
Heather Stone, Business Plans LLC  
Kelly O'Keefe, Emergence Inc.

## Time To Book Fall Campaigns

Time is running out to book online marketing campaigns for your fall releases. Patron Saint Productions provides the following services, all designed to light a fire under a book during the month of publication. Ask about discounts for series promotions.

### New Book Launch

A comprehensive campaign including a media component (e-mail news releases), excerpt distribution, discussion group postings, and online bookstore displays. Price: \$2750.

### Chat Tour or Online Seminar

All the services of the New Book Launch Campaign, plus a week-long author chat tour or online seminar. Price: \$5500.

### Web Site Promotion

Includes directory registration, writing meta tags, linkage campaign, e-mail news releases, discussion group postings, and site-of-the-day submissions. Price \$2750 + registration fees.

*Visit our web site for samples documents  
and references.*

TUTORIAL

# Online Bookstore Displays

By Steve O'Keefe

Last month, I had the pleasure of interviewing Peter Workman, proprietor of Workman Publishing, for an article in Publishers Marketing Association's newsletter. Workman is an innovator in packaging for publishers — and I don't mean just book covers. His catalog is filled with brightly-colored, creative counter boxes and floor displays. These are known as "dumps" in the trade, and they have made a big difference in Workman Publishing's merchandising success.

For several years now, I have been creating and deploying "virtual dumps" — online bookstore displays. This work started as a syndication campaign, where I asked high-traffic web sites to install a feature article about a book. I noticed how these sites gradually added Amazon Associate and Barnes & Noble Affiliate stores to their sites. There are thousands of these stores online now, and they make it much easier to get web sites to feature books since there potential for revenue from the placement.

## The Concept

Today, whenever I conduct an online promotion for a book, it includes an Online Bookstore Display Campaign. First, I take an excerpt from the book and work it into a Feature Article. I add artwork, pad it with sales copy, and format it as a single web page. I upload the page to the publisher's web site, or the author's web site, or my own web site. Then I search for high-traffic sites related to the topic of the book and I pitch the editors of those sites, asking them to feature the book in the bookstore or, if they don't have a bookstore, to use it as a feature article on the site.

The success rate for placement requests is about 25 percent. If I pitch 20 sites, I expect to get about five placements. Five placements may not sound like much, but if you get the top venues for your target audience, it can

make a big contribution to awareness and sales.

The number of successful placements varies substantially with the content of the article. I've had as few as two placements and as many as 18 (out of 20 pitches). Articles about computers, business, careers, and travel are easy to place. Fiction, on the other hand, is a tough sell. For any non-fiction subject, you can usually get five placements at niche sites. I've been successful with books dealing with even very obscure subjects such as radionics (remote healing) and packaging laws.

This article contains a brief tutorial on creating and deploying online bookstore displays. You can find samples of displays at the Patron Saint Productions web site, along with a free, downloadable template for tracking your results.

## Assembling the Text

Start with a short excerpt from the book. For fiction, it should be something that grabs readers from the first sentence, and leaves them anxious to find out what happens next. For non-fiction, look for top-10 lists, quizzes, or a passage that quickly demonstrates the author's prowess for dealing with a difficult issue or problem.

Next, add sales copy. I usually add a section about the author(s) with standard bio copy, and a section about the book. For the book copy, I start with jacket or flap copy, then add descriptive language about the production standards for the book. People who read this article won't be holding the book, so I do my best to describe any unique physical characteristics with words. Then I add trade language, soliciting rights inquiries or suggesting special markets uses, and I make sure all possible language for ordering the book is included: ISBN, price, phone, fax, e-mail, wholesalers, distributors, etc.

The display is formatted as a simple web page. My displays are dowdy, but there's a reason for that. Web site

editors who agree to use the display have to adjust the design to fit the look of their sites. If you create a beautiful but complicated web page, you're creating more work for these people stripping out your codes and putting in theirs. They will decline the placement if it looks like too much trouble.

Keeping the coding simple means not specifying any fonts, colors, indents, or unusual formatting. Acceptable codes are bold, italic, centering, and larger point sizes for display type. Try to keep most of the coding at the beginning of the file, and minimize design codes in the middle of the file.

## Adding Artwork

Most of my online bookstore displays have two graphics: the book cover and an author photo. I often grab book covers from Amazon. Clicking on the cover on an Amazon page usually brings up a full-size version of the cover art. I add a border to make sure it stands out, then shrink it to a more standard size — about two inches wide.

With author photos, I scan the art or grab it somewhere online, then embed a caption in the photo, add a border, and shrink it to final size. Use a color photo if you can — the ability to use full color without paying a fortune is one of the benefits of online marketing. Make sure you have permission from the photographer to use the photo this way. Most contracts for jacket photos allow this use, but a photography credit often must appear in the caption.

I use a different approach when promoting art books that are based on their visual appeal. I've used as many as seven images in an online bookstore display. Creating graphic-intensive displays requires a deft touch, and I've learned a few tricks I'll share in a future column. Don't use any more images than are necessary in an online bookstore display, because they make it much more

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(*Displays, continued from page 6.*)

difficult for web editors to use your displays and lead to increased rejection to placement pitches.

### Pitching Displays

Once the display is ready and has been approved by the publisher and/or author, I write a generic e-mail pitch to use as a template when seeking placements. Here's a sample pitch letter:

I'm working with John Wiley & Sons on a promotion for Linda Mead's new book, "Investing With Giants: Tried and True Stocks that Have Sustained the Test of Time." I wonder if you would be interested in featuring an excerpt from the book at your web site?

Mead was the co-author with Suze Orman of "You've Earned It, Don't Lose It." Her new book is timely for those who are jittery about the stock market. It profiles 10 Blue Chip companies that have weathered major crises in the past 100 years, yet kept growing for their shareholders. The excerpt would work well on your [BLANK] page:

<http://URL.of.the.page.here>

I've already formatted the excerpt in HTML for your convenience. You can view it at the URL below. Feel free to grab the source and the two small images and install them on your own site. You're welcome to adjust the purchase link to your own bookstore. The excerpt is temporarily located here:

<http://www.patronsaintpr.com/samples/IWG/iwg-obd.htm>

Please let me know if you plan to use the excerpt, or have questions, or if I can help in any way. I'd be happy to send you a free review copy of the book, "Investing With Giants" — just let me know where to send it. Thanks for your consideration.

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All pitch letters should state exactly where you believe the feature should go on their site. If they have a bookstore on the site, ask for the article to be used as a feature in the bookstore, and insert the URL for the bookstore page. If they don't have a bookstore, but they have an archive of articles, ask for the feature to be used in the archive. Notice that the pitch letter ends with a subtle bribe: it's amazing how many web editors will say yes to a placement if you offer them a free copy of the book. For a couple bucks, you could end up with hundreds of dollars worth of free advertising.

I look for four things before pitching a site: 1) Has the site been updated in the last 60 days? 2) Is there a logical place to put the article? 3) Does the site belong to a competitor? 4) Is there contact information for the person who is in charge of the content on the site? If I don't get the right answers to any of these questions, I quickly move along without pitching. It's a waste of time to pitch sites that aren't maintained or that really have no place to put the feature.

For most books, I need to visit about 50 sites to find 20 good prospects. I often start my search at [DMOZ.org](http://DMOZ.org) — also known as the Open Directory Project. It is a far better directory for finding top quality web sites than Yahoo. Google searches result in too many substandard matches, but I will turn to Google if I can't find enough sites at DMOZ.

The key to a speedy placement campaign is finding the supersite — a site that has an up-to-date set of links to all the major resources in the book's topic area. For example, I recently did a campaign for a book about religious possession, and found a site with a good set of links to cult information web sites. I bookmarked the supersite, and returned to it a dozen times, working my way through their links to other sites. I found a site recently that had a great set of links to online financial resources for women. It made my

placement work much easier than wading through Google looking for top sites.

### Tracking Your Progress

When you find a site worth pitching, log it onto your Bookstore Display Placement Report — you'll find a template for this report at the Patron Saint Productions web site. Your entry should include the name of the site, the URL, the date a request was made, who the request was sent to, and the section of the site you requested placement in. Here's an example:

#### Worldwide Travel Library

<http://www.travel-library.com/>

7/3/02 — This is an enormous travel information portal, used as homebase by the Rec.Travel newsgroup. Asked for feature to be used in "Round The World" section. Request to: (lucas@travel-library.com)

You'll find this report very handy for seeking placements for similar displays in the future. You can also use the contact names to for news releases or to solicit chat appearances or online seminar hosts.

You'll get all kinds of responses to your pitch letters. No response is the most common, but about a quarter of the people pitched will say, "Great — we'll install it. Send me the book." Some will ask you to pay for placement, which I've never agreed to. Others will ask for a link from your site to theirs. Several times, I've had web editors ask for changes to the feature — most often, cutting the amount of sales copy.

When your features start appearing on these web sites, do yourself a favor and document them with screen captures. On PCs, you can use the Alt-PrintScreen function key to capture a screenshot, then edit it in PhotoShop or a similar program. On Apple computers, you get a screen capture by hitting these three keys at the same time: Apple-Shift-3. Authors like seeing these screen shots — so do publishers and trade buyers.

## ~ News from Patron Saint Productions ~

### Online Publicity Class Starts

We have a new venue for our FREE Online Publicity Class, which starts September 10. Due to problems with Yahoo's chat interface, we're hosting the series at the Patron Saint Productions web site. The chat interface is simple, and it works with Netscape, Explorer, and other web browsers. The atmosphere is informal, and discussion quickly moves to what those in attendance want to talk about—as long as it's related to online publicity. Feel free to join us any time.

### New Web Site Resources

- Two chapters of *Complete Guide to Internet Publicity* were cut due to the absurd length of the manuscript. Some of that content is now available at the Patron Saint Productions web site. Just added to the Resources section are job descriptions for staffing an online publicity department.

- New in the Templates section is an Online Bookstore Display Placement Report — an HTML template for tracking your progress seeking placements for articles.

### ~ Fall 2002 Chat Series ~

*What:* Introduction to Online Publicity Chat Series

*Host:* Steve O'Keefe, author of *Complete Guide to Internet Publicity*

*When:* Every Thursday Afternoon at 4 p.m. Eastern Time

*Where:* <http://www.patronsaintpr.com>

### Schedule of Topics

- Sept. 10:** Campaign Planning and Themes
- Sept. 17:** Web Site Registration and Search Engine Optimization
- Sept. 24:** Web Site Linkage Campaign
- Oct. 1:** Online Content Syndication
- Oct. 8:** Discussion Group Postings
- Oct. 15:** Online Newsletters
- Oct. 22:** Firefighting and Handling Complaints
- Oct. 29:** E-Mail News Releases
- Nov. 5:** Chat Tours 1—Preparing and Pitching
- Nov. 12:** Chat Tours 2—Promoting and Producing
- Nov. 19:** Online Seminars and Workshops
- Nov. 26:** Online Contests and Fancy Stuff

### New Articles

\* Steve O'Keefe wrote a profile of publishing management guru John Huenefeld for the July issue of PMA's newsletter. In September, PMA will run another profile by Steve, this time of Workman Publishing founder Peter Workman.

- Speaking of profiles, Steve O'Keefe is featured in a PROfile at [BookZonePro.com](http://BookZonePro.com). The interview, conducted by BookZonePro editor Amy Phillips, sheds light on Steve's sordid background as a production manager, editorial director, online marketing specialist, and publishing consultant.



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