



A How-to Guide for Pitching Book Bloggers

BY ANNE LOGAN

As publishers' marketing budgets dwindle and space for book reviews are shortened or eliminated, authors are faced with the growing challenge of marketing and publicizing their own book.

As if writing the book and surviving the editing process wasn't enough, you now need to embark on an entirely new but equally involved process: finding and enticing readers. Regardless of who your publisher is, there is an expectation that you must contribute to the marketing and publicity plan; unfortunately, the outlets that publish book reviews are an ever-changing landscape. As someone who has blogged and reviewed books for over eleven years, I've been the recipient of some downright terrible book pitches, so below is my advice on how to ensure a successful interaction with book bloggers you contact.

THE VALUE OF A BOOK BLOG

Increasingly, book blogs are becoming a larger part of book-review real estate. One major benefit to pitching book bloggers is that they will review your book years after its release. Some bloggers prefer recent publications, but just as many are happy to discover books that have been in circulation for a longer period of time. Book blogs also have the benefit of reaching a very specific audience:

bookworms! Unlike the majority of newspapers and magazines with a wide variety of content, there's only one type of person who reads a book blog — book lovers. Blogs have the ability to speak to a very precise but coveted audience, so it is imperative that authors take advantage of this medium.

Every major publisher operating in Canada has a book-blogger program and sends out thousands of physical and electronic books to bloggers each year. When pitching to bloggers, remember that they are inundated with review requests. There is a clear protocol you should follow to increase your chances of success.

FINDING THE BEST BLOGS FOR YOUR BOOK

Book blogs are relatively easy to find. The best way to locate potential readers is to browse reviews of books similar to yours. Because it is the most popular social media community for readers, many Goodreads reviewers have links to their personal blogs. Once you find a book blog that looks like a potential fit for your book, look for their review policy — this is the single most important thing to do when approaching a blogger. Some may

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simply have an “About Me” page, but most clearly state what kind of genres they review and what format they prefer.

Because blogging is typically a hobby for most, many blogs are started and then dropped when life gets in the way, so to ensure you are pitching only active bloggers look for clues. When was the last time they updated the blog? If it was over a month ago, reconsider contacting them. Do they have lots of comments on their site, or is it more than a year old? Both are signs that the blogger takes their site seriously. Another important thing to determine is where the blog originates. As an author, you are free to personally ship your book all over the world, but check with your publisher before you send it to a region other than your own to avoid affecting potential foreign rights sales.

THE PITCH

Once you are ready to send your email, ensure you use their first name or blog title (e.g. dear: Books Are My Life). Include a direct reference to their site so they are aware you looked at it first. Give a one- or two-sentence synopsis of your book, its release date, and a couple of reasons the blogger may enjoy reading it. Attach a press release and other relevant information such as touring dates, book club questions, and interviews. The overall tone of your email should be respectful. You are requesting something of them, and many bloggers do this as a passion project that takes significant time with no financial return.

If you are able to participate in an interview or send a secondary copy for a giveaway, mention this in your first email. Any ideas for unique content are a welcome suggestion for book bloggers, and they appreciate creative “hooks” about your writing. For instance, did the inspiration for this book come while on vacation? It is also perfectly acceptable to ask approximately when they will post the review of your book before you send a copy, but remember they may not be able to give you an exact date. However, it’s worth waiting for a review if you believe they will enjoy your book. Always try to keep the body of the email as short as possible and end your pitch with a grateful “thank you.” Finally, never pay a book blogger to review your book — very few will ask for payment, but those who do are not legitimate book bloggers.

While many bloggers will happily read and respond to pitches on a regular basis, there are a few things to avoid when attempting to entice potential readers. Do not frame your book as an exception to their requirements. If it doesn’t fit their criteria, move on to one of the many other book blogs you can pitch. Some bloggers may have a temporary warning that they are not accepting new submissions

— respect this and don’t contact them. If you send an email offering a review copy and don’t receive a response, don’t follow up more than once because most bloggers will respond to a pitch in a timely manner if they are updating their blog regularly. Never send a form email as a pitch because it’s offensive to the recipient. Don’t ask them where they post their reviews aside from their blog. Many will include links to their other platforms if they post elsewhere, but asking the question implies their blog doesn’t have a wide enough reach. The book blogging community is a welcoming place, but word spreads quickly when someone feels disrespected, which unfortunately happens often in an online environment.

The worst pitches I’ve received are from people who have clearly never visited my blog. They send badly formatted, undisclosed recipient emails that have obviously been sent to hundreds of other bloggers. Even worse is when a book is pitched to me in a genre I have never or will never read or when the author requests I post my review to a specific website in the same email they ask

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me to consider reviewing their book. These glaring oversights are annoying at best and arrogant at worst. When authors do not take the time to even read my review policy, I don't feel it's worth my time to respond to their email.

SENDING YOUR BOOK

Bloggers may agree to look at your book, but that does not guarantee a review. To help your book stand out in their "to be read" pile, include a hand-written note in the package thanking them for their consideration of your work. Simple politeness goes an incredibly long way in distinguishing your efforts and reputation among the blogging community. Again, whether or not your book will appeal to them is determined by how well you researched their site. Spending time investigating various book blogs is the best strategy to successfully pitch your book for review. If your pitch is strong, you will gain a new group of lifelong fans who will not only read and enjoy your books but help build word-of-mouth buzz as well.

Anne Logan has worked in the Canadian book industry for eleven years as a publicist, literary festival programmer, and book reviewer. She is the past President for the Writers' Guild of Alberta and currently sits on the Board of Directors for Calgary Reads. As the book columnist for CBC Calgary, she reviews books on air for radio and television. She hosts Wordfest's monthly book club We've Read This and reviews books on her blog ivereadthis.com.

OTHER WAYS TO PROMOTE YOUR BOOK

- Create an author website with links and/or suggestions where readers can purchase your book.
- Link your author website to social media channels you participate on or create a business page/profile on your existing platforms if you want to keep your personal life separate.
- Shop at and make friends with every local independent bookseller in town and ensure they are selling copies of your book.
- Offer book club visits on your website and create a list of discussion questions.
- During the first year of your book's publication, check in with your publicist regularly to see if they need anything else from you to continue marketing your book effectively.
- When meeting new people, introduce yourself as a writer first regardless of your day job.
- Create business cards with your name and website; every event and party you attend is a networking opportunity!

