

## Title:

How to Use Anthologies to Build Your Reading Audience

## Word Count:

993

## Summary:

How to use the followings of diverse and various writers in an anthology to increase your readership as an author.

## Keywords:

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## Article Body:

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Two years ago, when my colleague, fellow writer, Patricia Phillips, author of recent novel, Last Bride Standing, (and others) came up with the idea of writing an anthology together, I never realized the unlimited possibilities that could come from a book written by three authors.

Later, when I approached the publisher with the idea of doing an anthology, he said, "Anthologies don't do well," but, to his credit, (for which I am eternally grateful,) he bought the manuscript, in spite of his reluctance.

Although the publisher had reservations about buying the book, since that time, I think he has been pleasantly surprised. For one, the anthology, now titled Secret Lovers, (by Patricia Phillips, Maxine Thompson, Michelle McGriff) not only was picked up as a Black Expression's Alternate Choice, within its first month of release, it made their best seller's list. As many know, Black Expressions' Book Club is huge. (One writer I know has received more royalties from this book club with their hard cover productions than for her mass-market titles.)

At any rate, from what I've seen since the June 6, 2006 release of our anthology, Secret Lovers, this type of genre can be a boon for a self-published writer or any writer, for that matter, as witnessed by the number of New York writers now writing anthologies. (Consider Intimacy, Erotic Stories of Love, Lust and Marriage by Black Men Edited by Robert Fleming, with authors as diverse as Stephen Barnes to John Edgar Wideman.) Or who can forget Terry McMillan's Breaking Ice: An Anthology of Contemporary African-American Fiction and Clarence

Major's Calling the Wind: Twentieth Century African-American Short Stories?

So what is an anthology, you might ask? An anthology can be a compilation of a number of authors, such as Proverbs for the People (Kensington Books, 2003, which includes my published short story, "Valley of the Shadow") or Saturday morning (by the Saturday Morning Literary Workshop, of which I am a member) published under Black Butterfly Press, LLC. Or it can be three authors, such as upcoming release All in the family, by Janice Sims, Melanie Schuster (BET Arabesque writers) and Maxine Thompson. In All in the Family, each writer takes a different family member of the four sisters and tells her point of view. Whereas in Secret Lovers, each novella is different, but each story shares a common theme of star-crossed lovers.

But, in the main, as a businessperson, (which many literary entrepreneurs are,) doing an anthology will give you leverage. That is where you do the work once and get paid over and over. Sometimes the pay will be in terms of on-going advertisement for your other books.

Not to mention, you will gain three or more different perspectives of marketing that will take place, plus the publisher's wide distribution, which will help get your name out in the public. Additionally, this will help you build your platform as well as brand recognition, which are both intangibles that you can't measure enough. This can also help with readers recognizing your intellectual property and hopefully, you dealing with less copyright infringement.

Next, you will pick up the fans of the other participating authors. For instance, you can piggyback on previous successes of the other authors. For example, Black Expressions had already picked up Patricia Anne Phillips' previous titles, June in Winter, Nice Wives Finish First and Last Bride Standing. This made it easier for Black Expressions to pick up her work again.

Please note. In choosing authors for the anthology, don't underestimate a self-published writer's talent, reach and influence when you're putting together a group of three or four writers. The third writer in Secret Lovers, Michelle McGriff, a prolific, multi-cultural writer, has a MySpace presence with a large friend network, and she has had an Iuniverse history since 1998. A number of reading groups already followed her work. Her storylines are exciting, fresh and intriguing.

That being said, all of these formats serve to keep you on the cutting edge of technology.

Also, having a platform such as Booking Matters' Magazine, as well as other

Internet articles, draws traffic to your websites, which translates into book sales.

In *Secret Lovers*, we all have different writing styles. But what do we three writers have in common? We all started out self-published.

So this is encouragement for other self-published writers. Team with writers with New York legs of distribution, if possible. If everyone in the anthology is from a self-published background, team with writers with good marketing savvy and talent.

These are just some other advantages of an anthology:

- It brings diverse writers together like a gumbo.
- As an author, an anthology can pick up the audience from the different writers to come over and try your literary offerings.
- It cross promotes for each writer, sometimes even writers from different genres, introducing new voices to the public.
- Anthologies can be good marketing tools, particularly in popular genres such as romance, science fiction, mysteries.
- Anthologies can pick up other books sales for the participating authors. As a literary entrepreneur, this anthology has picked up my backlist sales for my other titles, *The Ebony Tree*, *No Pockets in a Shroud*, *A Place Called Home*, and others.

In conclusion, writers, please see your writing career as a bridge. Each writer can piggyback on the others writer's success and readership in an anthology.

Try to write with writers with different followings than yours and then watch your readership grow!

Only one note of caution. Be willing to pull your weight when it comes to promotion and marketing of the book. When you have a book signing, hand out the other writers' bookmarkers or post cards.

Schedule individual, as well as group radio/podcasting/webcasting interviews. (Everyone benefits.) Do a print mail/email campaign, as well as press release blasts.

Don't feel you can ride on the other writers' coat tails. Do your part.