

Why doesn't every bookstore carry my books?

Is it true that once you're published by a traditional royalty-paying publisher your books will be in all bookstores across Canada and the US?

The answer is...NO. Many writers believe that this having books in bookstores is the "big advantage" to being traditionally published. But it's a myth. Ebooks have reduced the need for your book to be on a hard shelf.

Since my first novel was published in 2003, I have often been asked why my novels are not in every bookstore across North America. There are a few reasons for this, actually, but one of the main reasons is that the book industry just doesn't work like that. Yes, you'll certainly see the top 25 or so bestsellers in every store. These are big name authors who have proven time again that their books sell by the truckloads, and the 1 or 2 breakout authors whose book flies off the shelf at record speeds may be among them.

Believe me—I would be quite happy (and possibly a bit manic) to see my novels in every bookstore. It is the partnership between so many divisions of the publishing industry that helps increase a book's availability. I know one thing for sure, there are thousands of authors whose books have less exposure than my novels.

There is one simple fact in the book industry: If I want my books to sell, I have to do whatever I can to 'move' them off the shelves (virtual or hard). I owe it to myself. Every author does.

In the years (okay, decades) that I've been researching the book industry, I've heard the statistics many times. I've also heard how publishers in the US are publishing over 3 million new titles a year (ebooks and print). This sheds some light on why my novels aren't on every bookstore shelf. Can you imagine the size the bookstore would have to be to accomplish shelving every title? But it is a common assumption with aspiring or newly published authors that their books will be everywhere, in every store automatically. That's just not the case.

Today's authors have to take on the role of marketing even more than ever if they want to succeed. You can't wait for the sales to happen; you have to go out and get them. Book signings are a plus. I love doing them, meeting people and talking to fans. But most authors, including me, can't afford to tour all across the country 2-3 times a year. And publishers certainly can't pay for their authors to do so either. Thank God for the Internet!

I held my first [virtual book tour](#) (VBT) a few years ago and have done more since. For one month, I blogged, wrote articles, answered interviews, spoke on radio shows—I loved it. VBT's are becoming more popular every year, and I predicted years ago that that's where author tours were heading. Even bestselling author Margaret Atwood knows the trials of traveling; she invented the LongPen, a device that signs books with the author in one city and readers in another.

I embrace the marketing of my novels and I am excited to do so. With eight bestselling novels published, I am constantly searching for new ways, new ideas, and the majority of them involve online marketing. From my own experience, I can say that being computer savvy is a huge advantage as more and more authors AND READERS are turning to the Internet and book apps. Authors experienced in navigating the Internet, and those who blog regularly and update their websites routinely, have a head start.

I believe in working smarter, not necessarily harder. Smarter means promoting ONLINE. Using Twitter and Facebook, plus your blog, will gain more interest, more readers and more sales if done regularly, but not so overdone to be spam.

Selling books is a partnership between everyone involved—author, agent, publisher, distributor, booksellers...they each have their role, and the common goal is to sell books.

Today's authors have to be bold, daring, open to learning, open to selling, persistent, and driven. That's how you become one of the 2.1% (2008 statistic) of authors who sell more than 5000 copies.

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