

Media Kit
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Introduction to My Media Kit

Welcome to my media kit, a curated collection of content designed to engage, inform, and inspire. As a passionate blogger and aspiring writer, I've created this kit to showcase a well-rounded mix of pieces that highlight both my personal journey and my dedication to impactful storytelling. After receiving my master's degree, I plan to further develop my skills and pursue blogging for a company, and this media kit serves as an excellent step in that direction. Writing blogs comes naturally to me, and the experience I gain here will be invaluable in refining my craft and broadening my reach.

This media kit features four distinct pieces: a news release, a feature article, and two opinion blogs, each aimed at providing relevant and meaningful content to a diverse audience. The News Release about Community Gardens brings attention to the important role these gardens play in sustainability, local engagement, and community building. It offers a timely, actionable message that encourages readers to consider the social, environmental, and economic benefits of creating and supporting community gardens.

The Feature Article about Codie Crowley's Publishing Journey takes readers behind the scenes of the publishing process. By following Codie's personal journey from writer to published author, this piece offers aspiring writers' valuable insights into the challenges and triumphs of publishing, helping them navigate their own paths in the literary world.

The first Opinion Blog, titled "Why Becoming an Author is Amazing," provides an emotional and motivational perspective on writing. It celebrates the fulfillment and rewards that come with storytelling, encouraging those interested in writing to pursue their passion despite the challenges. This blog aims to ignite creativity and passion in aspiring authors and remind them of the profound joy that storytelling brings.

The second opinion blog, "*Can Authors Just Write Books for Income?*" explores the financial realities of being an author, highlighting the challenges of relying solely on book sales. It addresses the modest income many authors earn, the extensive work beyond writing (like marketing and building a platform), and the need for additional income streams through freelance work, teaching, or speaking. The article also touches on new opportunities in self-publishing and digital marketing, offering authors more control over their careers.

This piece showcases my ability to address complex topics clearly and insightfully, demonstrating both industry knowledge and a conversational writing style. It highlights my versatility, showing that I can write for a professional audience while offering practical advice.

For readers, the article provides valuable insights into the financial realities of writing, helping aspiring authors understand the importance of balancing passion with practical strategies for financial success. It positions me as a relatable author who can offer guidance on navigating the challenges of the writing profession.

Together, these pieces offer a blend of practical advice, motivational insights, and transparency, providing a comprehensive view of the writing and publishing landscape. Whether you're an aspiring author, a passionate reader, or someone interested in community-focused initiatives, this media kit is designed to connect with your interests and offer actionable knowledge. My goal is to share the inspiring journey of becoming an author, while also providing a deeper understanding of the industry and its broader impact on society.

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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 17, 2024

Melissa Lee
PR Director
Toledo MetroParks

Local Community Gardens Initiative to Promote Sustainability and Nutrition

Join us in fostering a healthier community through our new initiative to create community gardens, promoting sustainability, nutrition, and connection.

Toledo, OH– Toledo MetroParks is excited to announce the launch of a new initiative aimed at creating community gardens throughout all major parks. This project seeks to enhance local food security, foster community connections, and promote sustainable gardening practices.

The initiative will kick off with a community meeting on October 30th at Wildwood MetroPark starting at 2:00 PM EST. Residents are invited to learn about the benefits of community gardens, share ideas, and sign up to participate in the project. “This event is a wonderful opportunity for residents to come together, learn how community gardens can enhance our neighborhood, and contribute to healthier lifestyles,” said one of the organizers. “We believe that these gardens will not only beautify our community but also foster connections among neighbors and provide fresh produce for everyone.”

The community gardens initiative invites residents to design and plant gardens in public spaces, schools, and community centers, fostering collaboration, building community, and enhancing the local environment. “Everyone wins with this program,” said the leader of Metroparks Toledo Foundation. “This is great for the environment and the community receives fresh food.”

This initiative offers hands-on gardening workshops on topics like composting, sustainable practices, and soil health, empowering participants to grow their own gardens and take ownership of their green spaces. A community food garden will provide fresh produce, promote healthier eating, and reduce food insecurity, while also beautifying the neighborhood. Through interactive sessions, participants will gain skills in nurturing seedlings, creating compost, and using eco-friendly methods, while fostering camaraderie and sharing the joy of homegrown food. Beyond improving access to nutritious food, the initiative strengthens social connections, supports biodiversity, and creates valuable green spaces, contributing to a healthier, more vibrant community.

Community gardens offer a fantastic way for neighbors to connect, learn, and grow fresh food right in their own backyards. Residents interested in getting involved are encouraged to attend the meeting, where they can share their ideas and learn more about how to participate. Whether you’re an experienced gardener or a complete novice, everyone is welcome to join the effort. Our goal is to bring people together while promoting sustainability and healthy living.

The Toledo Metroparks system spans over 6,000 acres, offering diverse recreational opportunities such as hiking, biking, birdwatching, and picnicking. From Maumee Bay State Park’s serene shores to Oak Openings Preserve’s woodlands, the parks showcase the region’s rich

biodiversity. They also host educational programs and events, like nature walks and sustainable gardening workshops, which promote environmental stewardship and community engagement. These activities deepen residents' connection to nature, while fostering a sense of shared responsibility for preserving the area's natural beauty.

For more information, please visit www.toledometroparks.com or visit your local Park and talk to the receptionist.

References:

American Community Gardening Association. (n.d.). *Community gardening*. Retrieved October 23, 2024, from <https://www.communitygarden.org/>

Metroparks Toledo. (n.d.). *Doneghy inclusive garden*. Retrieved October 23, 2024, from <https://metroparkstoledo.com/features-and-rentals/doneghy-inclusive-garden/>

From Manuscript to Market: The Unseen Journey of Authors

Featuring Insights from Codie Crowley, Author of *Here Lies A Vengeful Bitch*, on Navigating the Challenges of the Publishing Journey

By: Melissa Lee

Every book begins with a simple idea that ignites a writer's passion, but the journey to publication is often long and challenging. Aspiring authors face a transformative process that tests their creativity, dedication, and resilience. From the initial spark of inspiration to the final draft, each step requires patience and perseverance.

The writing process varies among authors; some meticulously outline, while others let the narrative unfold organically. Regardless of the approach, the journey is rarely straightforward. Writers often battle self-doubt, face the pressure of meeting deadlines, and go through multiple drafts—each stage offering its own exhilaration and exhaustion. But the challenges don't end with the final draft. Publishing, too, is a grueling process that demands perseverance. Whether it's finding the right agent, navigating rejection, or deciding between self-publishing and traditional publishing routes, the process can be just as draining as the writing itself. From editing to marketing, the author's work continues long after the manuscript is complete, often requiring a mix of creativity, strategy, and patience. The road to publication is filled with uncertainty and hurdles, but it's also a necessary part of bringing a story into the world. The satisfaction of seeing your work published and connecting with readers, however, makes the journey worthwhile, no matter how challenging it may be.

"If you want to be a published author you first have to decide if you want to be self-published or go to traditional publishing. This is extremely important because if you self-publish, it is not so easy to switch to an agency. They look at your book sales and they want to know they can make money off of your work," Author Codie Crowley said. "Either path you choose is your decision, it just depends what you want out of it."

After completing a draft, authors seek feedback from beta readers or writing groups, a crucial step that helps identify strengths and weaknesses. This constructive criticism can be difficult to accept but is essential for refining their work.

Codie stated, "I have had my book reviewed and revised a thousand times and had to rewrite different sections. I was frustrated at first, but once I seen it made my book stronger, I realized it was necessary."

Next, many pursue literary representation by crafting query letters, navigating a daunting cycle of rejections. Finding the right literary agent is no small feat, and the process often feels like an endless maze. A single perfectly crafted query letter is crucial to catching an agent's attention. With so many submissions flooding their inboxes, agents typically spend just a few seconds on each letter, meaning one misstep—whether it's a small error in the pitch or a lack of clarity about the book's target audience—can result in an automatic rejection. It's not just about the quality of your manuscript; the query letter has to be flawless, demonstrating both the strength of your writing and your ability to sell your work. Unfortunately, if an agent rejects your manuscript, you typically cannot resubmit the same book to them, even if you've made significant revisions. This means writers must carefully consider where to send their queries,

ensuring their work is a good fit for the agent’s specific interests. For those who do manage to secure an agent, a new partnership begins—one that helps refine manuscripts, strategize pitches, and navigate the competitive publishing landscape, all while leveraging the agent’s market knowledge and industry connections. However, even with an agent, the road to publication is still a tough climb, with no guarantees of success.

“Querying can make you feel like your book isn’t good enough. It takes long and a tremendous amount of dedication. It is nice if you find a writing community that can help you improve your query letter so that you have a higher chance of gaining an agent,” stated Author Codie Crowley.

Once accepted by a publisher, authors begin the phase of editing, design, and marketing. This collaboration often illuminates the work, as editors polish the manuscript and discuss cover design and marketing strategies.

Codie said, “It took me ten years to get one yes from a publisher after I got my agent. Don’t give up. The process is long but it is worth it.”

As the release date approaches, authors experience a mix of anticipation and anxiety, often using this time to engage with potential readers and build buzz for their books.

“This was the most fun part for me. Seeing people want Advanced Reader Copies of my book just to read it before it is published. I also got to meet with the marketing group for my book and was able to pick what I wanted to be gifted for pre-orders.”



Author Codie Crowley at her job in Salem, MA

Finally, publication day arrives, bringing new challenges as authors face public reactions. Positive reviews can be uplifting, while negative feedback can sting. Yet, this phase reminds authors that their journey doesn't end with publication; it continues as they strive for growth and evolution. Every book launch brings fresh opportunities to connect with readers, expand reach, and learn more about what resonates. And even though the road to publication may be long, the author's work doesn't stop once the book is out—it's only the beginning. The true challenge—and thrill—lies in staying committed to the craft and embracing the ever-evolving journey of being a writer.

For many authors, publication day is a momentous event that marks the culmination of years of hard work, and for those with agents, it's often an event they don't have to navigate alone. While the road to publication is long and challenging, the role of a good literary agent doesn't end once the manuscript is accepted by a publisher. Many agents go the extra mile to help their authors celebrate their success, organizing book signings, promotional events, and even release parties to help authors connect with their audience and build buzz around their books. These events can be invaluable for authors, providing them not only with a sense of accomplishment but also with tangible opportunities to engage with readers, garner press, and further promote their work. A strong agent knows how to leverage industry connections, ensuring that their author's book gets the best possible exposure and a strong start in the market. For Crowley, having an agent who actively supported her during this phase of her career made the experience even more rewarding, allowing her to share her accomplishment with her community and fans in a way that felt both personal and professional.

“Publication day was the best. My agent set me up with a book signing event and a small party along with it. Seeing my book on the shelf is the most amazing experience anyone could ever go through,” Author Codie Crowley said.

The road to publication is a demanding yet rewarding experience, shaping not only their careers but also their identities as writers. Each step brings them closer to their dreams—one word at a time.

Why Becoming an Author is Amazing: The Power of Words and Imagination

The Magic of Becoming an Author: Crafting Worlds, Connecting with Readers, and Leaving a Lasting Legacy

By: Melissa Lee

There's something extraordinary about becoming an author—something magical that transcends the ordinary and transforms you into a creator of worlds, a shaper of lives, and a weaver of stories. Sure, the process may be long and challenging, filled with moments of doubt and frustration, but when you take a step back and look at what it truly means to be an author, the rewards are incomparable. Writing is not just a job or a hobby; it's a privilege and a powerful form of self-expression that allows you to make an impact on the world. Here's why I believe becoming an author is nothing short of amazing.

You Become a Creator of Worlds

One of the most incredible aspects of being an author is the ability to create entire worlds from scratch. Whether you're crafting an eerie, haunted mansion or building an entire fantasy realm, as an author, you hold the reins of your imagination. You get to design every detail—the landscape, the characters, the laws that govern that world, and the twists and turns of the plot. There's an unparalleled freedom in knowing that your mind can bring anything to life, whether it's a high-stakes murder mystery or a haunting ghost story that sends chills down your spine.

The act of creation is powerful. As an author, you have the ability to transport your readers into a world they've never experienced before, offering them a glimpse into your mind and the universe you've built. It's like becoming a god of your own universe, where the rules are yours to make and break. The thrill of crafting a compelling story and having it unfold in front of you is what makes writing one of the most empowering and fulfilling experiences you can have.

You Connect with Readers on a Deep Level

There's a unique and profound connection that happens between an author and their readers. When you write, you're not just putting words on a page—you're inviting others into your world. You're offering them a way to explore your thoughts, your fears, your fantasies, and your ideas. As an author, you can touch lives in a way that few other professions can. A reader may pick up your book at a time when they feel lost, alone, or uncertain, and your words could be the very thing that makes them feel seen, understood, or comforted.

Stories have an incredible ability to evoke empathy, to help us understand perspectives that are vastly different from our own, or to make us feel less alone in our struggles. For me, this is one of the most rewarding aspects of being an author—knowing that something I've created could resonate with someone else, spark an emotion, or even change the way they see the world. It's

a powerful form of communication, one that transcends barriers and connects people through shared emotions and experiences.

Writing Allows for Constant Growth

Becoming an author isn't a one-time achievement—it's a lifelong journey of growth and evolution. As you write more and learn from your craft, you begin to understand yourself better. Writing can be a deeply cathartic process. It allows you to explore complex emotions, confront your own fears, and question the world around you. It's a way to process life's mysteries, to work through personal challenges, and to reflect on both the mundane and the extraordinary.

The beauty of writing lies in its constant evolution. Each story you write is an opportunity to push yourself, to try new techniques, and to explore new genres, characters, and themes. Becoming an author means that you are never done learning, never done growing. Each book you write teaches you something new—not just about the craft, but about who you are as a creator. It's a journey of discovery that is as personal as it is artistic.

You Get to Share Your Voice with the World

In a world where so much of our communication is filtered through social media, marketing, and external expectations, writing offers authors a chance to speak directly from the heart. When you write, you're sharing a pure, unfiltered version of yourself—your thoughts, your beliefs, your fears, and your ideas. Whether you're telling a deeply personal story or weaving a fictional tale, the words on the page reflect your unique perspective.

For me, this sense of self-expression is one of the most empowering aspects of writing. It's a space where you can be fully authentic, unbound by external pressures. It's a space where your voice is valued, where your creativity can flow freely, and where your personal ideas can take shape without limitation. As an author, you have the privilege of speaking directly to the world, of sharing your truth with whoever is ready to listen.

You Leave a Legacy

Perhaps one of the most incredible things about being an author is the opportunity to leave a legacy. Books are timeless. They exist long after the author has moved on, and they can continue to influence, entertain, and inspire for generations. When you write, you create something that outlasts you. Your stories can become part of someone's personal history—something they return to over and over again, a piece of their own emotional landscape.

This idea of creating something that has lasting impact is what drives many authors. Whether your work is shared with a few readers or reaches millions, the potential for your stories to live on is something truly special. You are part of a larger literary tradition, and your words could influence others in ways you may never fully understand.

Becoming an author is amazing because it grants you the power to create, connect, grow, and share your voice with the world. It is a journey that is as much about the process as it is about the product. It challenges you, rewards you, and ultimately offers a way to make your mark on the world—one story at a time. The privilege of being able to craft stories that not only entertain but provoke thought, spark emotion, and leave a legacy is an experience unlike any other. And for those of us who take on this journey, there is nothing quite like it.

Can Authors Just Write Books for Income?

The Financial Reality of Being an Author

By: Melissa Lee

The dream of writing books for a living is one that resonates with countless aspiring authors. The idea of becoming a full-time writer—spending days immersed in worlds of their own creation, crafting stories that capture the imaginations of readers—sounds like a dream job. But the question often arises: can authors *just* write books for income? Is it possible to support oneself solely through book sales, or is writing a book more of a passion project than a reliable career path?

In a world where self-publishing has exploded and the digital marketplace makes it easier than ever to get a book into the hands of readers, it might seem like writing books for a living is not only achievable but maybe even the new standard. However, the reality for most authors is far more complex than simply writing and waiting for the money to roll in.

The Financial Reality of Book Sales

First, let's talk about the income from book sales. On the surface, it might appear that writing a book, especially a bestseller, should bring in substantial revenue. While it's true that some authors do achieve remarkable financial success, they represent a small fraction of the writing community. According to various industry reports, the average self-published book earns under \$500 per year, and traditional publishing offers authors even less—typically a small percentage of the cover price, often between 8-15% for print books.

For an author to make a significant income from book sales alone, they would need to consistently sell tens of thousands of copies, and that's not including the hefty marketing costs, agent fees, or publisher cuts involved. It's important to keep in mind that even a well-written, well-received book might not hit the sales numbers required to make a living from it alone.

The Unseen Work Behind the Words

Most successful authors don't just write books and call it a day. Writing, especially at a professional level, is a labor-intensive process that goes far beyond drafting a manuscript. There are countless hours spent researching, plotting, revising, and editing. And then there's the promotion—building an online presence, engaging with readers on social media, attending book signings, pitching media outlets, and networking with other writers or literary professionals. For many authors, the bulk of their income comes not from the books themselves but from these additional activities: speaking engagements, teaching workshops, or consulting.

Furthermore, traditional publishing often requires authors to have a platform or an established following before landing a book deal. This means that new authors, even those with a compelling manuscript, must often spend years building an audience and establishing

credibility before they can see any meaningful returns. The writing itself may be the passion, but the income relies heavily on a writer's ability to sell themselves and their work.

The Need for a Multifaceted Approach

So, can authors *just* write books for income? For most, the answer is no—at least not without significant diversification. The income from books, especially for debut authors or those in niche genres, tends to be modest at best. To make writing a sustainable full-time profession, authors often rely on additional revenue streams, such as freelance writing, editing, teaching, or public speaking.

In fact, many successful authors find ways to branch out beyond the page. Some run creative writing workshops, others publish multiple books per year, and many have turned to writing blogs, newsletters, or even ghostwriting for others. These additional projects often help them fund their primary passion: writing books.

It's also worth mentioning that many authors turn their books into franchises, expanding their reach through film or television adaptations, merchandise, or spin-offs. The ability to diversify and adapt their work into multiple formats can turn a single book into a sustainable income source.

Passion vs. Profession

At the heart of this discussion is an important question: should authors expect to make a living solely from their books? Writing has always been a passion, a calling for many, and for some, the act of writing itself is the most fulfilling part of the process. The financial rewards, while desirable, may not always align with the effort and time put into creating a book. For many, it's not about making a living but making a mark, telling stories, and finding meaning in the words they write.

That said, the landscape of publishing has changed. The rise of self-publishing, crowdfunding platforms, and digital marketing has made it easier for authors to make money from their writing, even if that income is supplemental rather than primary. Authors today have more control over their careers and can tap into different income streams, whether through e-books, audiobooks, Patreon, or other platforms.

Conclusion: The Reality of Writing as a Career

In conclusion, while it is possible for some authors to make a living by writing books, it is not the typical reality for most. The idea that an author can *just* write books and earn a substantial income without putting in extensive work elsewhere is unrealistic. Success in writing, especially financial success, often requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond the writing itself.

For many writers, the reward is not solely financial but personal. Writing offers an avenue for self-expression, connection with others, and the fulfillment of a creative calling. While book sales may not always provide the income many authors dream of, writing remains an essential and meaningful pursuit. However, for those hoping to turn their passion into a

profession, it's crucial to be prepared for the complexities of the industry—and the realization that a successful writing career will likely involve much more than just writing books.

Speech

Into the Dark: The Art of Crafting Suspenseful, Immersive Stories

By: Melissa Lee

Good [morning/afternoon], everyone.

Let me take you somewhere—imagine this: you’re walking alone through the woods, the wind howling around you. Suddenly, you hear footsteps behind you, but when you turn, there’s nothing there. The silence is deafening, and your heart races. You know something is watching, waiting... but what?

Have you ever felt that chill down your spine, when you can’t tell if the thing you’re afraid of is real—or just a figment of your imagination? It’s that space between certainty and doubt where fear thrives. And if you’ve ever felt that, then you already know the power of a good story.

As I’ve often said, *“The best stories are those that leave you wondering what just happened, and what might be lurking around the next corner.”* The thrill of suspense, the unknown, is what keeps us hooked, page after page. In fact, did you know that 70% of readers report they’ve been emotionally affected by a thriller or horror story? It’s proof that fear, when done right, is a powerful vehicle for connection.

Now, I’ll be honest—while I write thrillers, mysteries, and horror stories, the scariest thing for me? Making my deadlines! But in all seriousness, the art of storytelling, especially in these genres, isn’t just about shocks and scares—it’s about how we make readers feel. It’s not just what they see in the pages, but what they feel in the moments between the words.

Today, I’m here to show you how writing in these genres—thriller, mystery, witchy, and horror—doesn’t just entertain. It allows us to explore deeper human experiences, provoke thought, and, most importantly, build emotional connections with our readers.

Whether you’re a reader, a writer, or just someone who enjoys a good mystery, we all share in the power of storytelling. It’s that compelling narrative that keeps us turning pages late into the night, and it’s that same power that we, as writers, can harness to create lasting impact.

I’ve spent years writing in these genres—crafting suspense, twisting plots, and creating characters that stay with you long after you’ve turned the last page. And today, I’m going to share some of the techniques I’ve learned along the way.

First, we’ll explore how to create immersive worlds that pull your readers in. Then, we’ll dive into the art of developing rich, relatable characters who drive the plot and evoke empathy—even in the darkest of circumstances. Finally, I’ll talk about the importance of building a

community around your work—one that’s just as passionate about suspense and the unknown as you are.

Let’s start with the first key element: creating immersive worlds.

When you’re writing in thriller, mystery, or horror, it’s not just about crafting scares or throwing in plot twists. It’s about building a world that feels as real as our own. A world where suspense isn’t just an afterthought—it’s woven into the very atmosphere. The setting, the mood, the tension: these are the elements that make your readers feel like they’re *right there* with the characters. It’s this sense of immersion that keeps them hooked, constantly asking, “What’s going to happen next?”

But while the world sets the stage, it’s the characters who truly bring the story to life. In these genres, your characters must not only drive the plot, but also be people your readers care about. Even in the most terrifying or bizarre situations, readers need to feel connected to your characters. Whether they’re heroes, antiheroes, or even villains, they should have depth—flaws, motivations, and desires that make them relatable, even if they’re facing things that no one should ever have to confront. These characters aren’t just victims of the plot—they’re key to the emotional connection your readers will feel throughout the story.

Finally, let’s talk about something that can truly elevate any writer’s craft: building a community of fellow writers and readers. The relationship between writer and reader doesn’t end once the book is closed. In fact, it’s just the beginning. A strong community can help you grow, receive feedback, and continue evolving as a storyteller. You can foster this community through social media, book clubs, online forums—anywhere that fans of the genre gather and engage. Not only does this help you improve your craft, but it also allows readers to share in the journey you’ve created, keeping them connected to your work long after they’ve turned the last page.

So, in conclusion, writing in the thriller, mystery, witchy, and horror genres isn’t just about keeping your readers on the edge of their seats. It’s about using fear to explore deeper, more universal human experiences. It’s about building immersive worlds, creating unforgettable characters, and fostering a community where your readers feel they’re a part of the story. I hope you now see how these genres offer more than just a thrill—they give us a chance to reflect on who we are, what we fear, and what drives us. At its core, writing in these genres invites your readers into a journey, one that challenges them to confront their fears, to question morality, and to dive into the unknown.

Today, we’ve explored how immersive worlds, relatable characters, and a strong community can elevate any writer’s craft. And remember, it’s not just about writing a good story—it’s about creating an experience that resonates with readers long after they’ve closed the book. Thank you for joining me today, and I encourage you to explore your own journey into the unknown.