



Boston Authors Club

September 2023 Newsletter

- **JWH Awards Event - Join Us on September 12!**
- **Meeting the Market: Megan Posco, Book Publicist**
- **Reading Right Now: The Imposter's War**
- **Author/Author: Debuts, Awards, and More**
- **President's Musings: Building Community**
- **Yesteryear: How a BAC Engineer/Author (Almost) Invented the Future**

Meet the JWH Award Winners and Finalists

Awards Event and Reception

SEPTEMBER 12 from 7PM - 8:30PM

JOIN US TO CELEBRATE OUR HONORED AUTHORS!

At the

Waterworks Museum 2450 Beacon Street Chestnut Hill, MA

MEETING

the

MARKET

Megan Posco, founder of [Posco Publicity](#) is a nonfiction book publicist based in Cambridge, MA. Megan publicizes a wide range of subjects, from criminal justice and climate change to public health and political science. Prior to starting her own PR firm, she worked for many years in-house at trade publishers and university presses, including Hachette Books and Harvard University Press.

Megan defines her mission as leveling the playing field for academics, first-time authors, indie presses, and marginalized voices by providing high-quality publicity for books that address vital issues. As part of her pro bono work, she helps edit and place essays by incarcerated writers. In this interview, Megan highlights book promotion best practices and shares her advice for all authors.

Q: In your experience, when should authors start planning their book promotion, and how much time should they plan to devote to prepublication, book launch, and post-publication PR activities?

Most successful book publicity campaigns are built atop the foundation of the author's "platform." While platform-building entails more than just publicity, it is hugely important for any writer — including those who haven't yet written a book and those who never plan to. So, I would first recommend thinking beyond a single book launch and work on finding a way to reach readers that is sustainable.



As for the time investment, I can't suggest a specific number of days. Every campaign depends on what the author puts into it. If you rely solely on your publicist to brainstorm news angles, identify subject-specific outlets, and suggest topics for op-eds or original writing, you will sell yourself short. Your publicist will read your book, but you know your subject matter best. If you have a favorite newsletter, for example, forward it to your publicist instead of assuming they already know about it. I've worked with authors who had full-time jobs and those who had nothing to do but promote their book — in both cases, an author's commitment to promoting their book far outweighed the number of hours they were able to set aside. In general, though, I would suggest setting aside a minimum of three weeks (the week of launch plus the weeks before and after) for recording interviews, writing op-eds, etc. As for the actual book promotion, I like to start working with authors at least four months ahead of the publication date (preferably sooner, if there are print galleys available). I'm already booking well into Spring 2024, as are several of the freelance publicists I know, so I suggest reaching out as early as possible if interested in hiring outside publicity help.

Q: Are the traditional approaches like bookstore events and getting the book reviewed in print still a priority?

One thing I always remind my authors is that *they* get to define what success looks like for their books. If you love the good vibes of bookstore events and know that you'll get lots of attendees if you promote your events in your well-read newsletter, plan a bunch of bookstore events! If you care about the prestige that print reviews signify, make review coverage a priority. Many nonfiction authors are academics — maybe you're up for tenure next semester and want a great portfolio of mainstream press to include with your materials.

In all of these examples, success actually has nothing to do with book sales. So, I suggest nonfiction authors rely less on what they *think* they should prioritize and think deeply about what success really means to them. If, after that reflection, the only thing that really matters is the number of copies sold, there are many strategies to drive preorders, secure bulk purchases from organizations, etc. — but impressive sales numbers are a result of much, much more than publicity alone.

Q: What new strategies and trends do you find effective in boosting book sales and building an author's brand in today's market?

Rather than suggest a specific strategy or trend, I'd suggest authors identify a mode of online platform building and engagement that is, above all, sustainable. Social media platforms will come and go (see the dozen "Twitter killer" platforms that have materialized since its new ownership took over in November 2022). Instead of diving headfirst into the latest and greatest social media platform or app, which requires building followers from the ground up with each new account, you will be best served by identifying (or building) a corner of the digital world where folks are interested in relevant topics AND being realistic about how to engage with those people/potential future readers in a way that doesn't burn you out. If you hate spending time on social media, it's not a good idea to make it a central part of your book promo. If you like informal writing, consider starting a Substack but don't overpromise how frequently you'll send missives. The most successful author brands are built over the course of years, not months or weeks, so be sure that whatever you commit to doing, it's something you can stomach for the next five years. (Can you write a weekly newsletter for the next five years? Probably not. Can you write a monthly newsletter for the next five years? Probably.)

Q: What one "must do" publicity recommendation would you give to nonfiction authors?

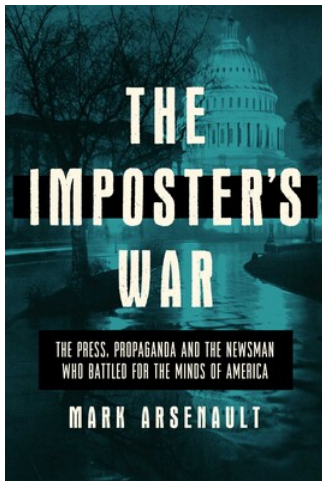
Unfortunately, there's no silver bullet. No single publicity hit will guarantee success. What I do recommend, especially to nonfiction authors hoping to position themselves as experts in their fields, is to start paying close attention to the media and thinking about how your book fits in to coverage.

If you want to be interviewed on NPR, for example, listen to it often, and ask yourself: Which guests effectively communicate their points? If the host mentioned that the guest has a new book, would you be inclined to buy it, based on listening to the interview? Why or why not? Take note of reporters who regularly cover topics relevant to your work. Do they tend to quote experts in their articles? Try to develop a sense of the reporters' interests. Based on your growing knowledge of their beat, would you book interest them?

It's incredibly hard to break through in the current media environment, so it's also important for nonfiction authors to keep a lookout for ways to connect their books to the news. Can your book connect to newsworthy events (i.e., Davos, international climate summits, or significant historical anniversaries)? Or larger trends (i.e., economic trends like inflation, labor market news like the WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes)?

Authors are much more likely to have reasonable expectations and a keen sense of what will land with the media when they take the time to really think through what makes a successful appearance on their dream NPR shows and how their book ties into conversations that are already happening in the news.

Reading Right Now



Doug Banks is the Executive Editor of the Boston Business Journal and of Providence Business First. He publishes a Five Things You Need to Know column that covers his current music playlist, a video he is watching, and a book title that he is reading, along with daily business highlights.

Many thanks, Doug, for taking time from your many editorial deadlines to share your thoughts on a nonfiction reading selection with BAC readers!

Q: What book are you reading right now?

A: *The Imposter's War: The Press, Propaganda, and the Newsman who Battled for the Minds of America* by Mark Arsenault

Q: What motivated you to pick up this title?

I learned about *The Imposter's War* when I was looking on the Must-Reads Nonfiction list by the Massachusetts Center for the Book / Mass. Book Awards. As a career journalist born and raised in New England, and a longtime reader and writer of narrative nonfiction, this book was right in the wheelhouse of my favorite genres. Its insights on the background and politics of World War I, and the unique role played by a mysterious and fascinating subject character (John Revelstoke Rathom, editor of the Providence Journal), made it a must-read for me.

Q: Would you recommend it to friends? Why or why not?

I would absolutely recommend this book — especially to anyone interested in historical nonfiction, journalism or espionage/spy narratives. It is deeply reported, and Mark Arsenault does the difficult job of offering a compelling profile of a hard-to-pin-down main character while giving a reader the context of various moments in history through smart choices and rich detail. I really enjoyed how fast it moves and how Arsenault makes relevant such subjects as propaganda, journalistic ethics and newsgathering for 21st century readers.

Interview by Mary J Cronin

AUTHOR/AUTHOR! September News



Congratulations to Bob Every, whose debut novel, *A Day Like Any Other*, received an award from the Military Writers Society of America.



David A. Kelly, author of the Ballpark Mysteries chapter book series, shares two books that launched this summer: *Football Mysteries #1: The Two-Minute Warning*. Can Kate and Mike discover who's out to get the Cowboys' quarterback

Based in Boston during the Vietnam war era, *A Day Like Any Other* is a tender story of love and redemption amid the violence of a nation torn by war.

before the big game?

Tee Time on the Moon: How Astronaut Alan Shepard Played Lunar Golf

Astronaut Alan Shepard's mission: Fly to the moon. Study it in more detail than ever before. Hit a golf ball in low gravity. But how far?



Daniel Tobin is thrilled to report that his trilogy of book-length poems, *The Mansions*, will launch on September 14 with a celebration at Word Bookstore in Brooklyn.

Daniel notes that the design of this trilogy has been in the works for fourteen years.

President's September Musings

Live where you write, write what you live?

A recent *Washington Post* column by data writer Andrew Van Dam assessed the U.S. states that tend to produce the most doctors, artists and writers. By using Census data, Van Dam found that there are, indeed, some states in which higher numbers of people report their profession to be “writer” than others. He notes that “writer” is a broadly construed category – it can be people who write poetry or public relations copy or any number of other things. I’d suggest that this might also account, in part, for why some states seem to have higher proportions of “writers” than others: people with more formal education tend to cluster in certain areas of the country, and these same people are more likely to think about “writer” as being a desirable way to list one’s profession.



Massachusetts ranks sixth on the list, fifth if you discount the top-ranked location, Washington D.C., which isn’t technically yet a state. We trail Vermont, New York, Oregon and California.

Van Dam also assessed which states seem to breed the most writers. Here, too, Massachusetts ranks fifth, after D.C., New York, Connecticut, and Delaware. (Delaware? Really? Apologies, Mr. President – it just seems strange that such a small state should birth such a disproportionate share of writers!)

Quite apart from any data analytics, as those of us who write know so well, writing can be a lonely endeavor. What’s enormously helpful and hugely gratifying is being part of a community of other people who get this. And that’s part of what I love about the Boston Authors Club – it’s an extended group of people who truly get this.

However, the BAC would like to be more than just a group of people who would identify their profession to the Census in the same way. We are hoping to become more of a community. And so you will see this year that we’ll be making more of an effort to put on events that get people together, and to partner with other like-minded organizations with a similar goal. We hope that you’ll become part of this – we’re very open to your ideas, and invite your participation.

Wishing you all a good start to your autumn, especially to fellow Massachusetts-based writers!

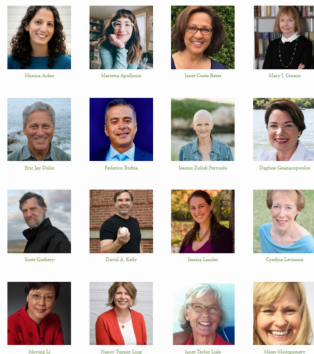
Julie Dobrow
BAC President

YESTERYEAR: How a BAC Engineer/Author (Almost) Invented the Future

What question pops into your mind when you hear that back in 1954, the inventor of the original Zoom was a member of the BAC? Do you wonder who it was? Curious about his ahead-of-its-time invention? Or maybe your main question is how an engineer/inventor ended up in the BAC.

*The answer to the first question is Winston Edward Kock (1909-1982). The answer to the second is two-way television over telephone lines, known commercially as Picturephone. Regarding the third, besides five highly technical books about sound waves, holography, and radar, Kock published a book of advice for young engineers, *The Creative Engineer: The Art of Inventing*. He*

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