

# Author Platform

For the 21st Century Author

# Patrick Hester



- Writer
  - SciFi, Epic Fantasy, Urban Fantasy
- Blogger
  - ATFMB.com, SFSignal.com, KirkusReviews.com
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# 21st Century Author

- The 21st Century Author has possibilities their 20th Century Counterparts never dreamed of
- The relationship between Author and Reader / Audience is tighter than ever before
- The relationship between Author and Publisher is changing & evolving

# The 20th Century Author

- The Old Model to Getting Published:
  - You write a book or story
  - Next, send a Query Letter
  - Secure an Agent
  - Your Agent sells the book
  - Your Publisher 'handles the rest'



# “The Rest”

- Copy-Editing
- Proof Reading
- Layout / Page Design
- Cover Art
- Marketing
- Distribution

# The 20th Century Author

- In the old model, the sale of Top Tier Author books subsidized debut authors
- Publishers were willing to take a risk with a new author and even lose money on a debut because Top Tier Authors were making them profitable

*“...there were quite a lot of people who sneered at ‘Robert Jordan’ but whose own books wouldn’t have been published without the Wheel of Time to subsidize them.”*

~David Drake

# What's Changed?

- With Borders closing, Amazon eating up profits (underselling / undervaluing books & eBooks), Barnes & Noble (potentially) struggling and those new fangled eBook things being so popular, Publishers are taking a harder look at who and what to publish. They want hits and sure things
- Publishing is a Business - Publishers are in it to make money

# The 21st Century Author

- The 21st Century Author has to:
  - Write the great story
  - Build relationships & an audience
  - Sell their work to Agents, Editors, Publishers, ***AND READERS***
  - Do Marketing
  - Make Appearances / Attend Cons



**You have the ability to  
directly impact your sales -  
so why wouldn't you?**

# Become the Brand

- You can take some control over your own writing career
- You can directly impact sales of your published works
- In some cases, you can profit outside the traditional Publisher/Author relationship
- You can leverage your personal brand for more lucrative contracts & advances

The more engaged you  
are, the more attractive  
you become to  
publishers, and the  
more successful you can  
be despite them

A poll of 321 published authors asked:

**Were you closely  
consulted on  
your publisher's  
marketing plans?**

**“There was no  
attempt at  
consultation.”**

**33%**

Source: Writer's Workshop UK

A poll of 321 published authors asked:

**Did you feel the eventual  
marketing campaign made  
full use of your skills,  
knowledge, passion, contacts  
and digital presence?**

**“What marketing  
campaign? (I never  
noticed one)”**

**38.4%**

A poll of 321 published authors asked:

**Did your publisher  
ever solicit feedback  
from you?**



**“Nope. No one  
ever asked me  
what I thought.”**

**45.8%**

A poll of 321 published authors asked:

With your next book, if some other reputable publisher offered you the same advance as your current one, would you move to the new house or stay where you are?

**“I’d move.”**

**40.0%**

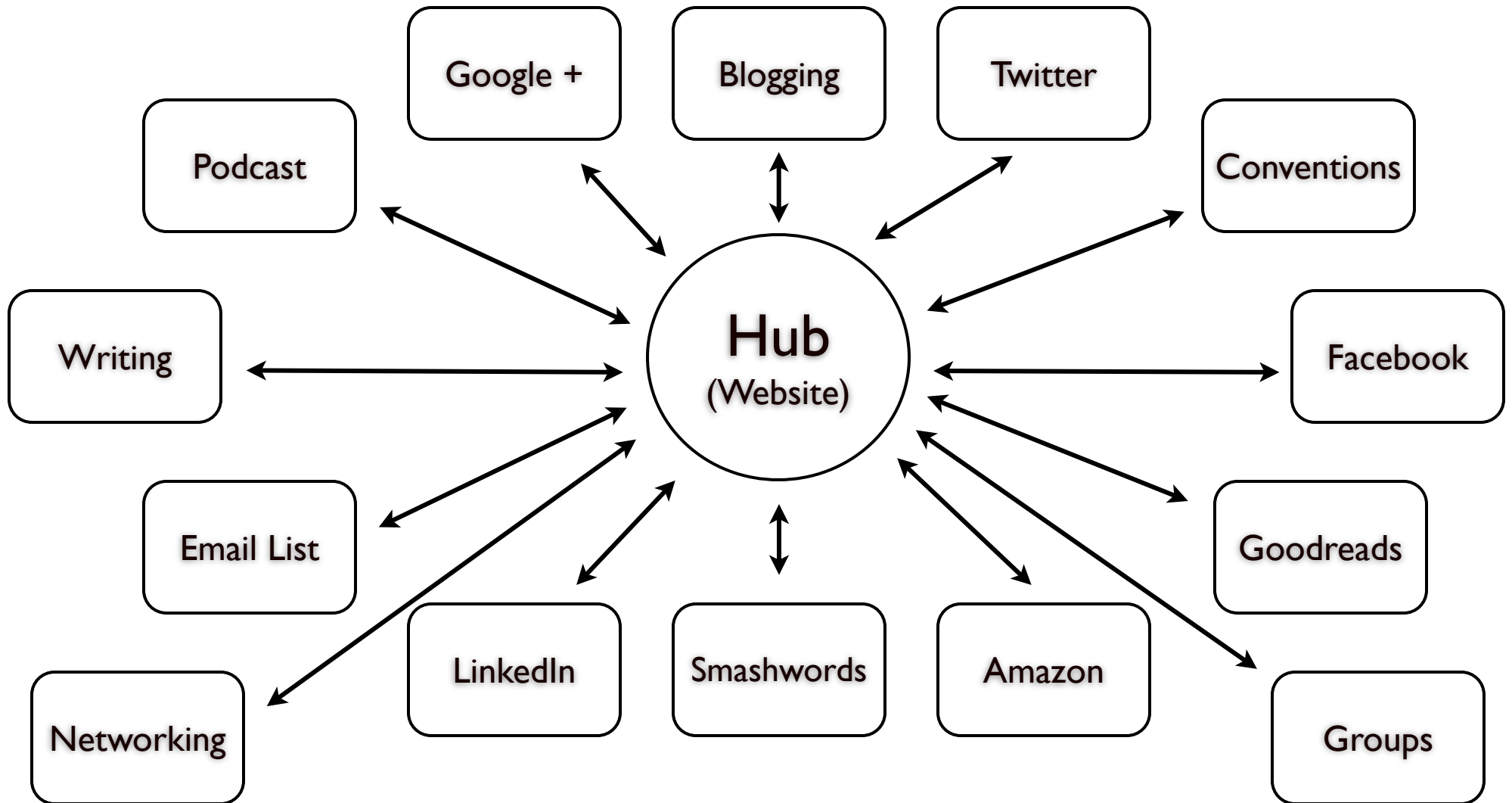
# The Author Platform

- Take control over your own writing career
- Directly impact sales of your published works
- Profit outside the traditional Publisher/Author relationship
- Leverage your personal brand for more lucrative contracts & advances

# What is an Author Platform?

- Essentially, it comes down to:
  - Your Visibility
  - Your Online Presence
  - Your Degrees of Separation
  - Your Marketability
  - Your Relationships

# The Author Platform





**DON'T  
PANIC!**

# A la carte

- Think of the Author Platform as ordering off the a la carte menu
- You only need to order the things you want and will use
- Picking from the menu, you can build the platform that works **FOR YOU**











# A la carte




## Social Media

Twitter  
Facebook  
Goodreads  
Google +  
LinkedIn  
Amazon  
(Reviews)  
Pinterest







## Networking

 LinkedIn  
 Conventions  
 Groups  
 Internet  
 Website  
 Blogging  
 Podcasts  
 YouTube

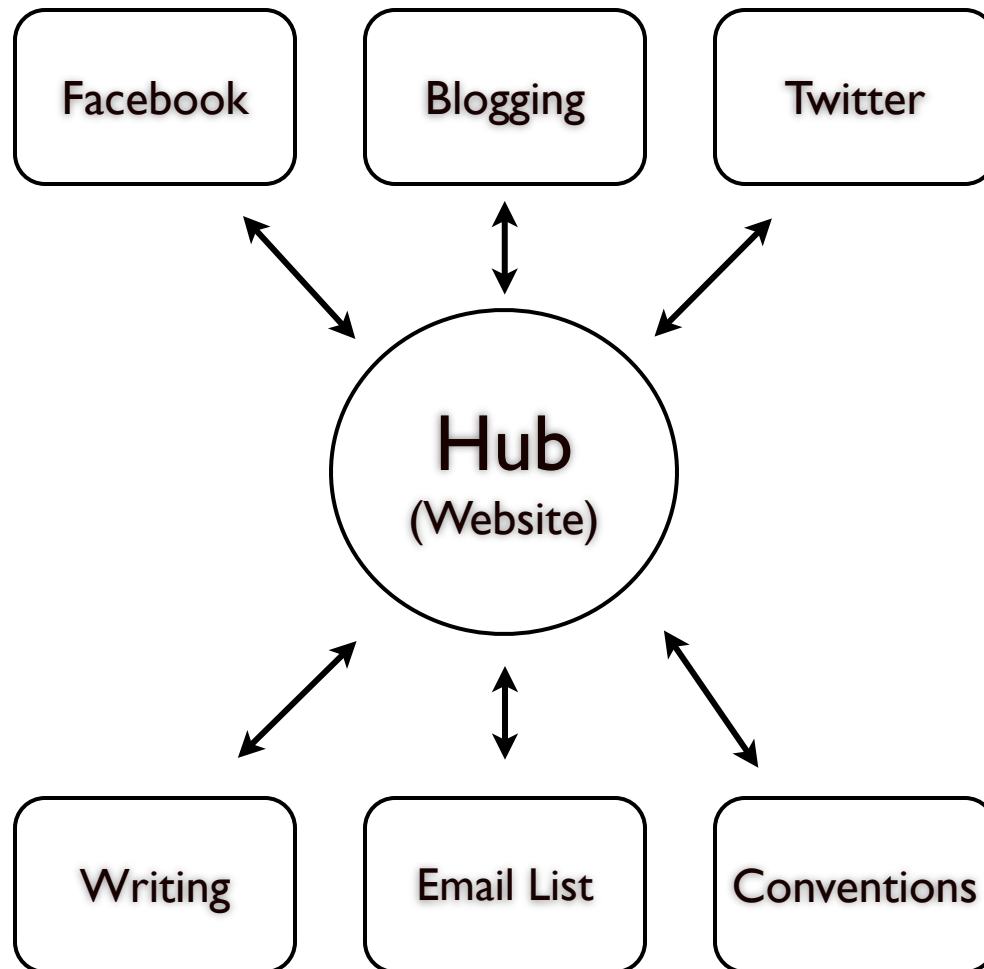
## Marketing

 Email List  
 Social  
Media  
 Guest  
Blogging  
 Book  
Signings

## Writing

 Books  
 Short Stories  
 Flash Fiction  
 Kindle  
 Smashwords  
 Traditional

# Sample Author Platform



# HUB / Website

- This is your home on the web
- All of your projects are linked from here
- Should be clean, easily navigated
- Should include contact information, agent information, Social Media Links, Links to your Books/Stories
- **MUST BE UP TO DATE!**

# Facebook

- 845 million active users as of Dec 2011
- 483 million daily active users on average in December 2011
- 425 million monthly active users who used Facebook mobile products in December 2011

# Twitter

- 2011: Average of 50 million Tweets per day
- Average of 140 million Tweets sent per day, in January 2012
- 182% increase in number of mobile users over the past year
- 300 Million Users in 2011

# Facebook Vs Twitter

- Both Facebook & Twitter are social media tools or platforms. They are designed to be SOCIAL at their core and connect people
- Facebook is more static, similar to a web page. You have the ability to put something into your stream and the people connected to you can see it when they choose to login

# Facebook Vs Twitter

- Twitter is more fluid - like instant messaging. Think of it like a cocktail party. You walk into the room and there are a lot of conversations going on all around you. You have the option to join any of those conversations, or start a new one of your own, but once the conversation is over, people move onto the next one

# Facebook Vs Twitter

- Authors, Editors, Publishers and Readers I have personally spoken with tell me that a Twitter Account or Facebook Page filled with links is an automatic turn-off for them
- They are looking for people, not links. They want to get to know a person
- Social media is about being SOCIAL
- All selling all the time will not win you fans



# Bloggging

- Easier than ever to get started
- Wordpress, Blogger, Livejournal (all free!)
  - No technical knowledge required
  - Setup in 5 minutes
  - They handle all the back end code stuff
  - You just blog
  - If you use a word-processor, you can blog

# Bloggging

- Interactive
  - Comments, 'reactions' (Twitter & FB)
- Highly Indexable (great for search engines)
  - Search engine indexing 'reads' your blog word for word
- Can actually BE your Website/HUB!
- Has to be something you will stick with & push out consistently or you will fail

# Bloggging

- A successful blog has consistent content
- If you start out with one post a week & you build an audience, then switch to once a month - you have built up an expectation with your readers of new content every week
- Blog about what you love / know so you will keep with it & push out consistent content

# Writing

- Obviously, you have to write - that's the whole point of what you're doing
- Treat your writing like a business - that's what it is
- Be organized, have your markets figured out, track submissions, keep your inventory growing while sales are going out the door
- Inventory is: Short Stories, Books, Poetry, Flash Fiction, etc.

# Writing

- Offering excerpts & free fiction on your site / blog is a great way to build an audience
- Some markets don't consider your blog or website as competition or as a '1st print market' (some do - always check)

# Email List

- An email list is ridiculously easy today
- Sites like Constant Contact, Mail Chimp, iContact, to name a few, all have easy to use templates and copy/paste code you can put right on your website
- Having an email list means you can keep your audience informed no matter where your books / stories are published

# Email List

- An email list built from your website is your list - not your publisher's list
- Your book publisher isn't going to promote the short story you wrote or the guest blog post you did - but the same readers who bought your book will most likely buy the short story or visit the blog

# Conventions

- Conventions have different areas of appeal:
  - Networking with other Writers
  - Networking with Agents & Publishers
  - Exposure to new & potential readers
  - Reinforcing relationships with existing readers/fans
  - Free Booze on the Party Floor



# Conventions

- Remember 'treat your writing like a business' mentioned before?
- Networking at a convention should be treated like business. If you are meeting an editor, agent or publisher for the first time, showing up in a t-shirt & jeans probably isn't the 1st impression you want to make
- No different than a Job Interview
- Know Con Etiquette before you go!

# Con Etiquette

- There's a time & a place to approach someone
  - Most authors, editors & agents expect to be approached post panel - so this is a good time to introduce yourself & say hello
  - If they are already in a conversation, interrupting them isn't a good idea
  - Some cons offer a koffee klatch - designated times/places where authors, editors & publishers make themselves available to chat

# Con Etiquette

- Be human
  - Walking up to an agent in the bar with your pitch on your lips won't impress
  - Introducing yourself, chatting with them (briefly unless otherwise invited) about their recent deals / showing an interest in them can break the ice
  - The same goes for your favorite author. If someone walked up to you and started trying to sell you something, how would you react?

# Time Guide for Social Media

- An hour a day
  - 15 minutes in the morning
  - 15 minutes at lunch
  - 15 minutes before dinner
  - 15 minutes before bed

# Bloggging

- You set aside time to write, so set aside time to blog
- Keep your posts short (200 words) and you'll find it easier to commit and follow through
- Add images to break up text

# A Picture is Worth 1K Words

- Odds are, you have a smart-phone - Use It!
- People love photos on Facebook & Twitter
- Shots of pets, kids, sunsets, weather and wildlife are big hits & help you connect

# 3 Rules To Market By

- Don't talk about politics
- Don't talk about religion
- Don't talk about BBQ

You want people to think of you as a writer, not as a member of X or Y group

# The Author Platform Is:

- NOT about SELLING
  - People don't like to be 'sold'
  - As you connect with your audience, 'buying' becomes a natural extension
- About building relationships
  - The more engaged you are, the more successful you can be



# Summary

- Publishing is changing
- Making yourself stand out is vital
- Keep it simple
- Be human
- Be engaging, not polarizing
- Stay consistent

# Patrick Hester

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