



# Eat cake more often...

Annie Porthouse explains how book groups can be a marketing opportunity for writers

**O**n a good day... as gratifying as a second slice of chocolate fudge cake.

On a bad day... as pointless as trying to drink from a sieve.

What am I talking about?

The task of book marketing.

Once the ridiculously late nights and endless mugs of extra-strong coffee are finally behind you, it seems somewhat unfair to be expected to battle on after your book is published and help sell the wretched thing. That's what publishers/agents are for, isn't it? No. Not really. At least, they can't be expected to do all the work. You aren't the only author they represent, after all...

So how can writers make the most of every marketing opportunity?

## Pub group

My local Wetherspoons recently asked me to be their guest author at the launch of their new book group. And yes, I do mean Wetherspoons the pub, not Waterstones the book shop. Every cell in my body yelled out an emphatic 'No', in response to the invitation. But naturally, being a writer desperate to promote her work, I accepted.

Quite a pertinent move, it soon transpired. The local press got involved, resulting in several write-ups (online and in print) both before and after the launch, all very conveniently promoting me, my books and website. And guess who alerted them to the launch?

As for the event itself, the modest (yet keen) turnout dutifully assembled to consume the coffee and biscuits. They were all presented with a copy of my first novel, the intention being that by the following session in a month's time they would have read the book and be prepared to discuss it. It was a fun evening – far less stressful than I'd anticipated.

## Get stuck in

So, you've got your website, blog and Facebook page up and running (You haven't? Well get a move on!). While awaiting a call from Oprah, inviting you onto her show to promote your book, and when you're not too busy organising your international book tour ... why not join your local book group?

Once established in the group, you could propose that your book is discussed (be prepared to gracefully accept both positive and negative feedback). Those who enjoyed it may then be willing to buy copies for others and generally become your own personal promoters.

---

*While awaiting a call from Oprah, inviting you onto her show to promote your book, and when you're not too busy organising your international book tour ... why not join your local book group?*

---

## A group of your own

No book group in your area? Then start one! A quick Google search will reveal a wealth of information regarding running a book group. Would a local bookshop be willing to host it? What about dragging your church into your master plan? It could be a powerful tool for mission: you can invite unchurched friends to discuss novels, perhaps a mixture of 'Christian' and secular fiction? If you're already involved with an ACW local writers' group, persuade them to help you organise a book group.

Not yet published? Use your book group to explore the psyche of your target readership. What do they feel makes a novel/poem/devotional book a 'good read'? Perhaps you could print out your first few chapters and invite honest feedback from the group? Their suggestions could be the catalyst that enables your baby to leap off your computer and into the bookshops.

When you next find self-promotion feeling as full of holes as a sieve, remember to make the most of every offer that comes your way. And when there's a distinct lack of offers, put yourself out there.

Take some chocolate fudge cake to offer round ... and don't forget to serve yourself that second slice!



Annie's novels *Dear Bob* and *Love Jude* are published by Scripture Union. In true Bridget Jones style, they tell the story of Jude Singleton, who's just started at uni. Annie has contributed to three other books and has had many articles published. When there's nothing decent on telly, visit her website: [www.annieporthouse.com](http://www.annieporthouse.com)