

The Great Fiction Writing Challenge (GFWC)

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Raw Statistics

Records show 141 items in this category. With 47 weeks just past, this is then over three posts per week. Out of 513 published post – over a quarter of the posts since I moved to this site – about July 2010. Meaning, I increased my rate of posts. At an average of 2K words per post, this is then 280K words on this project (m/l).

- 125 original books written and published.
- 27 anthologies
- 2 full novels
- 96 individual short stories
- 637,533 words in single books
- an average of 3400 subscribers to my active list.

Prior Art

Practically, without mining the nearly 2400 unpublished posts imported from earlier blogs, articles on publishing show up regularly since 2010. I found a post on 10/06/2015 on “How to Publish 76 Books in a Year” - guess I busted right past that. This was after doing a breakdown of Steve Scott's “success story”. (Targeted niche marketing with advertising and short reads. Later he branched into more remunerative courses. Started out as an Affiliate Marketer.)

Some posts get out of the mechanics of simply publishing and start toward creative writing.

From “4 Vices You Must Lose to Build Your Author Platform” of Jan 24, 2017:

“If you think you are going to get rich from writing and publishing books, you may be living in an alternate universe. Here’s some approximate statistics:

- *70% of all people want to write a book.*
- *10% of those will.*
- *10% of those will get published.*
- *250 copies is the amount of books sold the first year.*
- *\$9,000 is the average lifetime pay out for any single book.*
- *Around 6 million ebooks are available on Amazon.*
- *Over 10,000 ebooks are added every day.*
- *Between 1-10% of published authors ever write more than one book.*
- *Most authors don't start making any decent income from their books until at least the 5th in a series."*

And:

"You need to work to your strengths.

- *If you have a big list, use that to launch your book to success. That also includes using ads, which are essentially using someone else's audience.*
- *If you have a big network, then involve them in your book launch. Again, you're using their network and their audiences. Affiliate and Network Marketing live in this.*
- *If you have a tremendous vision, then you can bring that world into existence. Study authors who are known for only a single work. Discover their back trails and compare them. You'll then see the commonalities that can form your own success.*
- *If you have access to or can crank out content in a flood, then you'll be able to access existing audiences and networks which you never have to build. And your works will run a bell curve of successes. Some will be huge, some never leave the launch pad as they fizzle. But your long writing and publishing career is the point, which can be as well-rewarded as any of the other three approaches.*

This was after a review of Tim Grahl's Launch strategies, where he isolated three ways to successfully launch a single book.

Big List, Big Network, or Long Game while you build the other two.

Grahl has no real experience in dealing with prolific authors and admits it. He opines that they may fall under Long Game. (But he should take several on as clients and come back when he has experience with these.)

Grahl has also no experience with authors who routinely write perennial-selling books.

In “Self-Publishing: How to Avoid the Greedy, Ruthless Bully” (Jan 9, 2017) I point out how there is a coming shake-up in ebook publishing. Most of the models that made the early successes don't now work as well.

This year's production tends me back to this point, that fiction authors are now earning their income through multiple passive streams. Fiction authors also usually have non-fiction titles and courses. Many have lucrative public speaking gigs. Many have podcasts.

Again, the examples I've seen is that they are running with the Content Inc. Model. They mastered self-publishing with advertising (FB + AMS) and then branched out to other venues.

With Amazon cannibalizing their own Kindle Marketplace toward pay-to-be-seen this year, the new author must consider building a content-business from the ground up.

In my blog, the first note of fiction writing was in 2 September 2017, when “Emperor's Scribe” was posted

Summary of Pre-GFWC Posts

Oct 1 - *“The Great Fiction Writing Challenge Begins”*

Here I point out (again) the Trojan horses of self-publishing on Amazon and ever getting discovered or having a livable income. Ever.

I make the point here of the pulp writers and volume publishing seeming to be the model. Starting with short stories and “short reads” instead of writing full 80K novels from the beginning.

Here I mention that I've gotten an idea for an un-named, very long story arc that will probably produce series of five books, all to be written as short stories to build up to a longer book.

Not to surprisingly, this is what I proved to be a viable option with “The Hooman Saga” where I completed three series of stories, publishing the anthologies of these, and completing the last as part of NaNoWriMo.

I've tested audio transcripts and found the whole process to be slower than simply writing. So dropped it out of my production.

And wasn't able to do podcasts as planned, simply because the production line is much different – and much slower. It took me most of a year to actually just get up to speed where I could actually write, revise, proof, and publish a 63K book in 20 days.

This article also mentions “How to Stop Feeding The Beast” - which was published Feb 2018. That is to cure writers of one algorithm-addiction they have of writing a new novel to keep their others selling. Being prolific has nothing to do with sales algorithms. I cover that more below. Writing to keep your books selling is just another job, with no benefits.

The better model is Content Inc. and I'll be working this up better in next year's challenge.

Oct 9 - “*How to Train Your Inspiration*” Part 1

Still completely accurate. The key point of straight-ahead writing is that it keeps you in your “zone” of creativity. Sure, you revise as you go – backtrack to put in an element if you haven't mentioned it before. But you only revise, you never re-write. And you make every book better than the one before it.

And you schedule your life to write regularly, only and always working from the joy it gives you.

In October, I got busy publishing the Plotto series of books, that have all to do with pulp-method writing.

And I pulled several good articles from these books.

A key work out on pulp-method writing was on Nov 6, 2019, “2 Short Stories a Week Gets You Pulp Speed With Benefits”. This also laid out publishing anthologies on a regular basis – which stems from that “76 books a year” idea earlier.

In November, additional to writing “The Hooman Saga: Book I, Part 1” as part of NaNoWriMo, I published several short stories on my blog – which ended up being 12 by the end of the year.

I created several articles to refine my ideas about creative/fiction writing methods.

Dec 8 - “Getting Three Writing Habits for Success Permanent” and “Writing Fiction: Why You Write and Publish Books”

Dec 13 - “Successful Fiction Writing: How Good is Good Enough?”

Dec 20 - “How to Train Your Inspiration, Part 2”, “Learning to Create Blockbuster Books by Fiction Writing”, “How to Study Fiction Writing and Survive in One Piece”.

Dec 23 - “Writing Fiction That Lasts: Two Types of Plot”

Two more GFWC posts came in through this:

Dec 20 - “Final Preps for the Great Fiction Writing Challenge”

Dec 22 - “The Great Fiction Writing Challenge – Core Goals and Base”

Results Posts

Week 01

Key points:

- Started keeping subscribers right off, as a metric from Content Inc. Instafreebie is being implemented.
- Already have “Becoming A Writer” created as a course [link]
- **Read only what you like, write only what you like – means drop it quick, and don't force yourself to read it.** (Even did this today with the first Harry Potter novel – starts way too slow, and over-descriptive for me.)
- Found out about the sabotage of my ebook publishing by someone on Lulu.com staff. And haven't published ebooks with them as an aggregator since – hardly at all, actually. (Replacing them with Streetlib this next year.) Their best use is print books.
- Did a year-end review of my PD books and non-fiction publishing. This regular income supported my GFWC all year.
- **I note that I have a lot of fiction work that is unpublished.**

- I've also dropped podcasts and admit I won't be doing advertising until much later.
- Still hold that LibraryThing and Goodreads are probably viable social media (later disproved.)
- Still mention the promotion habit, which I never got genned in through this whole process.

Additional Posts:

Jan 13:

“Why Authors Become More Prolific Writing Fiction After 40”,
 “Plots, Personal Inspiration, & Popular Fiction Writing Part I”,
 “Plots, Personal Inspiration, & Popular Fiction Writing Part II”,
 “Plots, Personal Inspiration, & Popular Fiction Writing Part III”,
 “Writing Fiction Habits: What NaNoWriMo is Good For”,
 “This Strategy Builds Your Writing & Publishing Success”,
 “The Lester Dent Pulp Fiction Writing Model”,
 “Writing Fiction: Learning Cliffhangers from Louis L'Amour”

Week 02

Key points:

- Got busy rounding up and publishing any fiction I'd done earlier.
- Writing with Google Docs
- **Key point is to get in daily practice of reading and writing.**
Note: I'm watching DVD's in the evening.
- Tried keeping a calendar of daily words written.
- Taking DW Smith courses
- Already behind in recording my texts

Additional Posts:

“How to Train Your Inspiration – Part III”

“The Scott Meredith or Aldis Budrys Plot Skeleton”

“Into the Dark, Trusting Yourself, Pantsing.”

Week 03

Key points:

- Moved to Mailerlite, off of Aweber
- Involved in reading several longer books, but wanting to get back to short stories, as that is what I'm writing.
- Going through a stack of books on writing. (A note here on why I prefer to convert books to straight text for faster study, as some of the description as to how I convert them.) **A common denominator to the rejected books were that they all taught or coached on the side. And so added thousands of extra words and their own particular terms.**
- Curating to Flipboard, and getting some news from them at this time (didn't work out, though – their algorithms are flawed.)
- A notice of Medium for publishing.
- A comment on RadioGuestList.com – (this also hasn't worked out well, after a year of subscribing to them.)
- I have Dorothea Brande's “Becoming A Writer” converted to audio, and as a course (alpha) – I consider creating a repeating podcast here.

Additional posts:

“Why Should An Author Bare Their Soul?”

“How to Start Writing Fiction Stories That Grab Readers”

Week 04

Key points:

- The vital need is to get published to paid sites – the point of this year long test is to see if publishing fiction is actually the route to faster income.
- Three R's – Reading, wRiting, pRotion.

- Invested in Instafreebie, RadioGuestList.com
- Suggesting Wattpad, LibraryThing, Goodreads.
- Bookworks.com and AuthorMarketingClub.com noted as additional ways to promote individual books.
- Note: **Should have been submitting to Wattpad and Medium as noted here.**

Additional posts:

“A Book is a Movie – Shots and Scenes”

“What I Learned from Studying 227 Craft Texts”

“How to Escape ZON, the Rampaging Elephant”

“Roadmap and Checklist for Authors”

“Why the Hell Are You Doing This?”

“Setting Up for Home Audiobook Recording”

Week 05

Key points:

- Audio book specifics worked out.
- Went through those books and wound up with 10 (to start with) based my analytics.
- Found an idea that you need a separate computer to write at – however, just minimizing all screens accomplishes the same result. This was the reason also for Google Docs – as it could be accessed both for writing and later publishing. However, the extra computer and steps just slow you down.
- **The idea of publishing a regular magazine of articles came up.**
- Found that one aggregator had dumped my books (due to their own inefficient methods) and so I'll still need to move them over to another – but that is part of this coming year's challenge.
- Published “How to Stop Feeding the Beast” - a non-fiction book.

Additional Posts:

“Getting Started At All – Tips, Tricks, Advice”

“What and How to Promote Your Writing”

“What Pure Stupid (Naive) Looks Like”

“The Best Ads Are Great Fiction, Always.”

Week 06

Key points:

- **Testing the daily habit of writing fiction.** Didn't work out for me. I was already writing almost every day before this. Shifting into fiction was the trick.
- **Core strategy: Build backlist – Get subscribers – Mail them – Build Audience.** I only recently really nailed down how to do this – but the main points are the same.
- **Flaw is chasing after uber-readers** (real name is avid readers, which is searchable) – instead you want to find people that like your particular approach to particular subjects, as well as your style of writing. Avid readers are to chase your Amazon standings – only half of your income (unless you drink the Amazon Kool-Aid.)
- And idea here to “write, edit, proof, record, and publish daily.” It's actually more a two-day cycle for a 6-8K book. Another test point for this coming year.
- I noted that my craft studies are basically done – mostly true.
- **Did discover that the top producers are all “pantsers”** (a diminutive term sponsored by plotters.) Except someone like Patterson, who has a team of ghostwriters and co-authors.

Additional posts:

“Yes, But WHY Are You Writing Fiction? Stages of an Author”

“Heinlein's Five Rules and Your Author Efficiency”

Week 07

Key points:

- Found I could generate 7 days of writing, 2K words per day on schedule. Then I got sick and was out for two days.
- Still testing DW Smith datums – his idea is that when you can't write anymore, you've past the “done” point and need to revise – then proof and publish.
- **10 year DVD series show us the hook, three acts, teaser in action.** Follow the character's evolution rather than a procedural story. This you can see in the Ghost Hunter's series.
- A note here is that I've been writing fiction since October in fits and starts to test a few of these theories. None published.
- 50 short stories a year first mentioned.
- Write one day, revise/edit/proof the next first mentioned.
- **Get your story done and published that week. Then work on getting two out per week.** This breaks the back of the Feeding the Beast problem, as you start publishing the “extra” book on pre-order.
- A point here to continue studying your craft. **“..the top end of writing has nothing to do with sales. Half-way up is when you start writing perennial-selling books, not just “blockbusters.” The world of writing and publishing is completely backwards, and per Sturgeon's Law “90% full of crud.”**
- Become the most successful writer you can and then the income will follow.
Ignore the “bestseller” rankings.
Ignore “reviews.”
Ignore “guru's.”
Find your audience, and give them what they want. Which will be exactly what you like to write most. Odd, but true. You will attract a quality of audience that appreciates your quality of writing.
The more you improve your writing, the broader audience you will attract.

- **Heinlein's Rules then revise to: 1) Write. 2) Finish what you write. 3) Revise/edit/proof until you're happy with it. 4) Publish it. 5) Keep it in front of people so they can find and buy it.**

No additional posts this week.

Week 08

Key points:

- There is joy in publishing your work.
- **Amazon doesn't fit into any lineup due to their peculiarities.** ASIN codes, for one – instead of standard BISAC codes. (D2D points out that Amazon won't allow you to pre-order through them to Amazon.)
- D2D does your epub. You have to remove their links (other works by this author) except where they publish for you.
- Lulu is problematic with epubs from D2D. Shortly after this, I quit publishing to Lulu for epubs as was only doing it for the ISBNs. Only two wholesalers require ISBN's, and D2D actually assigns these if you want them.
- Was using Publish Drive to post everywhere else. Later dropped them, as the returns weren't there. I'll pick this up again this year.
- The Lulu minimum of 32 pages of text points to 8K-word books, or collections/anthologies. Amazon has a 2500-word minimum for their short reads.
- **ProWritingAid recommended.**
- Audiobooks have dropped out.
- Need to set up bundles on Instafreebie – an idea.

No additional posts this week.

Week 09

Key points:

- Over 200K words published – backlogged books. Two were NaNoWriMo books.
- Wrote little – as I was getting rid of the “haunted” aspect of having these unpublished works around.
- D2D noted as a huge asset in this. They work from LibreOffice ODT files natively. And produce a nicely-styled print PDF to upload to Lulu.
- Discussion of the three “cliffs” Amazon drops your book off – and why you should be putting everything on pre-order and ignore them.
- Use of short stories to build backlist quickly – and enable other promotional offers.
- Idea floated of writing between 10-20K per week, or 80K per month. (20K gives you 1M words per year. It's about 3 6K+ books – and is for me about 6 days work full time.
- So the immediate goal became writing and publishing two original fiction books per week – short stories. Gives you a collection every month (or two.)
- A discussion here of how pre-orders increase sales, and how having a lot of books up there allows you to take a vacation, or recover from an illness with no worries.
- A discussion of getting your backlist built first and then worry about promotion. All the authors I've found with routine success had several novels already published, which people then found when they advertised the later ones.
- The idea that Instafreebie comes first, as this builds your list.
- Writing in four pen names, and can collect books up by pen-name as well.
- First mention of having 100-120 books (including anthologies) by end of year.
- General promotion: 0) Backlist, 1) Instafreebie, 2) Radio/Podcast Interviews, 3) Wattpad, Medium, 4) Weekly Podcasts. (Most of this is jumbled. I'll take this apart this coming year.)

- Ads might not be necessary – but we can test this in the coming year, as well.

No additional posts this week.

Week 10

Key Points:

- Started to sort out the “no-openers” from Instafreebie (freebie-seekers)
- Sort out here why audio “proofing” burns a lot of time – on both text and audio ends.
- This is working for me. Just genning in the habits of writing, and improving my quality as I go along.
- Emphasis: writing and reading daily, publishing and promoting weekly.

Additional posts:

“The Real Leverage of Book Giveaways – Instafreebie”

Week 11

Key Points:

- Instafreebie is returning regular subscribers now. D2D with current “also wrote” lists in those books helps.
- Experienced the love of writing just for itself.
- DW Smith workshops are noted as being slow – as you have to wait each week for a 3-5 minute video. His classic workshops have them all accessible. The value of his courses are questioned with all this waiting. Videos show as slowing my production as hard to get the data.
- Starting to improve my cliffhangers between chapters.
- *Beatrix Potter is all flash fiction.*

Additional posts:

“Online Business – Affiliate Marketing for Authors”

“Instafreebie – Audience and List Building”

“How Authors Discover Their Best Inspiration”

Week 12

Key points:

- 3 books published
- Researching cross-linking the five pen names on Instafreebie with D2D. Very nice. (Later dropped back to a single pen name as the costs weren't returning any more value than a single publishing name.)
- Starting to collect data on Instafreebie – mainly because no one else has anything published about them. Not even books on Amazon.
- Moved off MailChimp and Aweber completely, in favor of Mailerlite.
- *Facebook has a truly lousy user experience.* First time I'd been to see my own page (in order to shut them down.) Amazon is hardly better.
- Priority metrics are: 1) Subscribers, 2) Words published.
- Started “To-Do” lists

Additional Posts:

“Ghost Whisperer Plotting Lessons”

“Should you #DeleteFacebook?”

“Amazon Squashes Public Domain Books (Again.)”

Week 13

Key points:

- Two books published.

- Two fiction books sold – apparently driven from Instafreebie subscribers. Jump in book2read links as I've been sending people their way – never directly to Amazon.
- Still cleaning IF subscribers regularly. If they never opened the first five emails, then they are gone.
- I'm still working through a Ben Bova craft book, and also got stuck into a Lindsay Buroker book with nice cliffhangers in them.
- Reached the end of DW Smith. Returns of good data are too small. Still getting his daily blog posts, but these are starting to confirm that *his opinions based on his own experiences – and that doesn't make them workable truth for everyone else.*

Additional Posts:

“Instafreebie Errata – Tips, Tricks, Strategies” (Key)

Week 14

Key points:

- One book sale
- One book published
- A nice summation of what a “platform” is.
- Emphasis has to be on content before sales or ads.
- Medium is better for articles as they are ad free.
- Scientific Advertising – was able to tweak the imports I get from IF subscribers to find out what books they are coming in from, and some other fields – like what giveaways and what genre. Books2Read will tell you where your clicks went to.
- Started seeing that Flipboard traffic wasn't granular enough (and only gets sent if you repeat one of their posts.)
- The quarter breakdown has – 21 new books and only one non-fiction, - writing fiction is now write-on-demand, - book publishing is now about two days per ebook and 3- 6K per

story, - non-fiction wordage is about the same as fiction and this means I'm writing every day, - built up a new audience from scratch, - have four pen names to use while I master the craft.

- While its true that there are more people buying fiction than non-fiction, people spend more money on courses than books. So courses will always be present (and the only thing I see DW Smith really pushing.)

Additional Posts:

“Books2Read Link Tip – Draft2Digital Book Sales”

“Your Author Platform is Your Business”

Week 15

Key Points:

- Instafreebie still cranking in new subscribers, but have to import them manually every week in addition to catch all of them.
- Still using Mailerlite free service (under 1,000)
- Able to directly track a sale from Amazon through my own email work. Bitly link to Book2Read to Amazon.
- Quit DW Smith as not learning compared to the sheer opinion instead of real data that I then have to weed out. (“All SF is dystopia, YA needs a 'big attitude'. Westerns don't sell well.”)
- I note that SF and Westerns continue to sell regularly. The high volumes in Romance are dropping their average price down, and are mostly cookie-cutter spam books (on Instafreebie, anyway.) Meanwhile, people are expecting 100K Romance books – for .99 each. Not viable.
- One Smith opinion is that you can write anywhere, anytime, tired or not. Sure, but what's your reader experience going to be? Even truck drivers have to sleep to keep their rigs safe on the road.

- Nothing published this week as the story would simply not end. I had a huge narrative going, and it was simply becoming a novel. (Finally got to an ending point, and then didn't start the next half of that. Still haven't yet.)
- Last course I did of Smiths was cliffhangers. And found he missed the principles involved – because he just have out a list of tips.
- Goes into studies of Wattpad. Links in this week.

Additional Posts:

“Building Audience with Avid Readers”

“Even Fiction Writing Experts and MLM Gurus End Up Here”

Week 16

Key points:

- Priorities have been deep backlist and subscribers.
- Also to publish wide and never exclusive.
- GDPR changes made Instafreebie change mandatory opt-ins.
- More of a breakdown of how I can track what is effective by using bitly shortened links to see which ones are being clicked on.
- Starting to look at Wattpad, Medium, LibraryThing, and Goodreads.
- I'm seeing authors move off books and onto courses – or at least diversify into these as well. Grahl, Stephenson, Penn, Dawson, and (of course) DW Smith.
- *“A cliffhanger consists of a change in character, setting, or conflict (problem) that includes enforced suspense as the resolution is incomplete.”*
- Broke that overlong story from last week into individual books. Not ideal solution.
- Between fiction and non-fiction, I'm cranking out around 18K words per week.

- Fiction is more in demand than non-fiction, *until you start turning it into courses*. Most of the authors above have both in their business plans.
- At 2K per chapter, you can publish your 50K NaNoWriMo book through the year, twice per month. Good cliffhanger practice.

Additional Posts:

“The Secrets to Getting Paid for Your Craft”

“Writing Cliffhangers II: Where the Author Resolves All”

Week 17

Key Points:

- 5 books published. Currently at 39 books. Still at 2 books per week average.
- Hygiene and active lists. Instafreebie is a stop-gap as it's much faster than trying to get people to opt-in from inside your book. Still have to do weekly hygiene of unsubscribing the no-openers.
- At this point I'm mailing weekly to my list with all the new giveaways I'm part of, as well as new releases.
- Doing anthology every two months, and collections by authors every six months.
- Setting up my non-fiction to post on Wattpad.
- Improving tactics of auto-sending to all new subscribers, and also sending certain emails just to “clickers.”
- **My own mailings are bringing me more traffic than search engines. (And anything less than 30 seconds is just a bot – meaning my “bounce rate” is also my bot percentage.)**
- Using Instapaper to save articles as later inspiration for stories.
- Concerned that I haven't gotten my subscribers cracked over to buyers.

- Pre-orders on Amazon are .99 for three months plus one week – then back up to 2.99. Actually, the .99 level is starting to mean cheap quality. On my own site, the books are all \$1 as short stories, \$2 for smaller anthologies. (Pay What You Want.)
- Having to set up a list just for Instafreebie authors.

No additional posts.

Week 18

Key points:

- 500 Instafreebie subscribers in one week.
- **Funny unsubscribe from someone that said my emails were too frequent when she'd only gotten one. (You Can't Fix Stupid – or Trolls.)**
- IF strategy has been to get books into all possible giveaways and always have at least one giveaway of my own running.
- Did a big bundle of books – and no one clicked on it.
- A discussion of aggregators this week – short summary: D2D, not Lulu, not Smashwords. Do use Streelib and PublishDrive to get into EU. Best formatting is through D2D. Always publish to Amazon last.
- Still not running ads.
- **Social traffic to my site is acting like search engine bots – so: ignore.**
- Tried “blitz” giveaways, but the admin work on them and low responses makes them inefficient compared to month-long giveaways.

Additional Posts:

“How to Mine Your Completed Giveaways”

“Would you like a Mini-Firehose of Free Books?”

Week 19

Key points:

- Amazon playing its typical “stupid tricks” by finding that “instafreebie” giveaways were free books, and so D2D couldn't publish them. Meanwhile, those I'd published already on Amazon were easily re-published there. Bullies.
- Working through the Romance spam, finding that the clean romance and cozy mysteries bring better responses. But both take much more work to wean out the crap.
- Lots of figuring out on Instafreebie – mainly these went onto the “Errata” page.

Additional posts:

“How to Publish Paying Fiction on Medium”

“Building Audience with Wattpad Syndication”

“Improve Your Story Skills by Cross-Genre Study”

“How to Build a Buyer's Journey Road”

Week 20

Key Points:

- Amazon Associates – didn't work out for reporting.
- No longer using ISBN's from Lulu. (D2D also gives them for free – and simpler, on automatic.
- Starting “Still Interested?” emails to those who don't open any emails in 90 days.
- My templates for book covers and Pixabay images works well. I've extended this to Public Domain books as well – you can't tell which are modern fiction.
- **Started organizing my own giveaways about 3-6 months in advance.**
- Started publishing to Wattpad and Medium

- Some discussion of Leechers on Instafreebie – mostly not a problem if you track the worst. And limit submissions to 2 per author.
- GDPR chased most of them away.
- Finding that these pen names not only have their own genres, but also their own styles and voices.
- Two original fiction published every week is per FTB plan. Four pen names under regular production develops the content, through anthologies as well as shorts, to fill that plan – and then some. This FTB is the core of the whole year's production.

Additional posts:

“Giving Away Free Books, Opt-in's, and GDPR.”

“Writing Cliffhangers: Part III – False Trails and Red Herrings.”

Week 22

Key Points:

- Pushed through something on writing production. Started pushing for 3 books per week.
- Some different tests running in IF.
- An interesting point of how reading works – we don't actually think and live linearly.

No additional posts.

Week 23

Key Points:

- Found no shortage of inspiration for new stories.
- **Now laid out the target of 100 short stories in a year.**
- Started publishing a serial.
- Mastering pre-orders by sheer volume.
- Starting test on LibraryThing and Goodreads.

- Dropped klytics.com subscription as it's too Amazon-centric. Have to stay wide with all my work. My system has to build beyond the dinosaurs of Amazon/Facebook/Google/etc.

No additional posts.

Week 24

Key Points:

- Building up IF Authors list.
- Preliminary on ARC list, giveaway page.
- Four stories written in a single week. In four days.
- Editing simplified – proof on a smart phone.
- Hay and cattle cut this post short – did it the night before.

Additional posts:

“You Have an Instafreebie Book Feature – Now What?”

Week 25

Key points:

- Subscribers, Conversions, Pre-Orders – same old, mostly.
- Instafreebie Verified Status – useful for organizing things. Some bennies. Most points are in the “Errata” page.
- Most authors don't agree what “sweet/clean/cozy” are. I put up a page to define this. Boy did I hear complaints – but only from the spammers/scammers. Mainly, I sidestepped this later, as the Verified Status scene makes it simpler to just go for quantity – you avoid Romance as an organizer, other than YA/Teen genre. And simply reject everything that's crap. (Yea, and don't advertise to the SJW's that you don't accept LGBT books. Just don't bring it up.)

Additional posts:

“Organizing the Best Instafreebie Giveaway for List Building”

Week 26

Key Points:

- Analysis confirmed clean/cozy – started some tests here, and they proved the world isn't a friendly place. But winnable.
- Found I was too tired to write, so went back to editing an earlier book. **And discovered I don't have to write the entire world in order to write a book.** And I've taken on some great concepts, only to simply gloss over the major portions just to write a simple romance to symbolize it.
- Otherwise cutting down all the time I spend on IF giveaways. Just tiny bits each day.

No additional posts

Week 27

Key Points:

- **The writing and editing has worked up into a smooth flow – starting with a cover and marketing hook, then a story hook.**
- **Writing satire to get rid of angst. Typical writers. Take the easy way out.**
- Still consider that my best advertising is podcasts.
- Trying to get more short stories read. **Trick is that decent short stories are pretty hard to find.** Romances and Detective-Mysteries, especially. At least that align to our modern way of writing for TV movies.
- Practically, watching DVD movies has been the best way for me to digest these. The written word is more easily absorbed by reading – but so many books have the pacing way off. For short stories, anyway. (Even Harry Potter took forever to get started.)

Additional posts:

“Hooks and Descriptions: Getting the Fiction Readers to Buy”

Week 28

Key points:

- IF is down to minimum time, giving me more time for writing.
- Pushing Subscriptions and Conversions – somehow.
- Clicky and Bitly give me the best analytics. Google's interface has its uses, but is mostly to sell ads.
- Gumroad showing me how the conversions are working .
- **Starting writing first thing in am (all windows minimized) seems to work best. Shades of “Becoming a Writer” and “On Writing”.**
- Very simple to get ideas now. Executing with simple screen blanking (phone on mute) works best.
- Watch DVD's at night when too tired for many things (other than doing mundane stuff like collating this.) Walmart discount bins has been working for me, and ordering the long-running TV shows. (Later switched to DVD.Netflix.com)
- Working to get Wattpad and Medium stories up – split into four parts. Post to my site first, which then throws a draft over to Medium.

Additional posts:

“Plans, Projects, Fiction Writing – While God Laughs”

Week 29

Key points:

- Unsubscribes went higher for some reason. Analysis shows I'm only keeping some 45% of IF subscribers long term.
- Still working how to get people subscribing off the books themselves.
- Starting to just pile up my books on Amazon's farthest 90-day date.

- You can get stats from Medium and Wattpad for readers.
- Analysis of my own giveaways shows that people don't really like crap/spam books. IF is a way to test your covers and marketing hooks. With my own giveaways, I pile on all applicable books I have into these, and ensure IF itself is recommending me through their mailings. Cutting down to three genres and staggering these through the years. Set them up for one month, then extend the date for a second one – just to mop up all I can.

No Additional posts.

Week 30

Key points:

- Trying to keep in Wattpad and Medium on publishing original fiction to them.
- SL and PubD have dropped out with this process.
- Cozy Mysteries sell for .99 and 250 page books. Amazon's race-to-the-bottom strategy of commoditizing all books and authors.
- **Short stories verify out as the best way to start as a beginner.**
- **And “write to market” has become a spam game. You're better off writing to your soul.**

Additional Posts:

“How a New Author Starts from Nothing in Writing Fiction”

Week 31

Key points:

- Instafreebie is pegging out. Mostly a game of keeping newbies coming in while you filter them out. And send offers to the ones that continue to find your emails interesting enough to open now and then.
- LibraryThing is mostly for hardcopy books – and it takes a month to get them through Ingram's database. You can't put

your own books on Goodreads. So these two are not the “avid reader” source I’ve been lead to believe – like almost all social media, you should ignore.

- Publish Drive is sucking up to Amazon, so has started pre-filtering PD books. I don't publish PD to Amazon in general – but don't need them looking over my shoulder. So this means they go to Streetlib instead. (PubD has a filter I’ve set up to non-duplicate SL books, as well as D2D.)
- Got some guys posting to a membership on a social platform. After I turned off almost all the nagging emails they send, I was left with a crippled membership. So I ignore them, again.
- Started holding myself accountable with the To-Do's reported on from last week, above the To-Do's for this week.

Additional Posts:

“What You Should Know to Get Started Writing Fiction”

“A Beginning Fiction Writing Plan – For New and Old Authors”

Week 32

Key points:

- “Write short and narrow, publish long and wide.” (Means write only to the genres you are interested in, and publish as anthologies to all possible outlets.)
- Stick to your inspiration and quit trying th force them to do their job. Stories know what they want. Your job is to leave out the dull parts as an editor.
- Earlier stories can be inspiration for later ones. And can start a series on their own. “The Lazurai” became a 10-part series and an anthology. (As well as filling a plot-hole and co-authoring 7 out of 9 stories in “The Human Saga: Book II, Part 2”)

Additional posts:

“Recent Lessons in Writing Fiction”

Week 33

Key points:

- Changed “Free Books” page to become a “New Releases” page. Conversions, again.
- Promote getting people into my ARC page.
- Emails changing to be less about giving away free stuff and more about the new releases.
- IF Verified Status gives you something like 4X the number of subscribers as just having books there. Analysis still out on whether these are as good as straight IF book subscribers.
- About 8-1 IF-only subscribers on my list. Many will cross-subscribe as they stay on.
- Found again, I only need write a short story to access an entire world.
- In that process, I also found that I'd been writing short stories in the area of Hooman Probe prequels – so anthologized these into “Hooman Probe: Book I” with around 300 pages in it.
- Big catch up to do on getting original fiction to SL and PubD.
- Put the buy links into Medium and Wattpad – as long as they are on your own site. Probably should start including the Books2Read Author page.
- Rainmaker isn't an easy platform to use. And I'm suspecting this whole “sales funnel” concept to be a real load of crap.

No additional posts.

Week 34

Key points:

- Guest came in. Cut this short.
- Got the ARC membership running, in spite of.
- Updated Errata page

- (Guest got to see me start a book with the cover, hook, etc. He liked it.) And we did a podcast – which cut into my time.

Additional Posts:

“How to Self-Publish Your Book for Free: Sequences and Why's”

“Cost Per Subscriber Lead – Instafreebie Free Book Giveaways”

“Instafreebie Verified Organizer Free Book Giveaways Update”

Week 35

Key points:

- Published 7 anthologies – 6 “Readers” and one bi-monthly collection.
- **Instafreebie isn't such a hot resource. They are a very fast and inexpensive way to get subscribers, but that doesn't turn them into fans.** Still isn't paying its way – even though I've been able to get some books sold with it.
- Better way to build audience is through Wattpad and Medium.
- Anthologies enables you to build books for specific markets – one's big enough to run profitable ads for.
- Starting to lineup books in advance (covers, and titles at least.) This tends to work.

Additional post:

“How to Avoid Death by Sales Funnel in Fiction Writing”

Week 36

Key points:

-

No additional posts.

Week 37

Key points:

- Tracking total fiction books published – 77 now.
- Still staying away from new Instafreebie giveaways – and subscribers dropping with no-openers being cleaned. New verified status locked me into no organizer opt-ins on existing giveaways, so these being months out haven't given me the boost I was expecting. Also have just been running a single giveaway per month. IF percentages given here are – 40% opt-in out of all claims, and 50% of those leave in first four months, leaving 20% opt-in from total claims. I'm still looking forward to seeing what percents stick out a year.
- Some TV series like “Murder, She Wrote” and “90210” I left after the first season or two (still have them) as the pacing and content was too mundane. Dark endings “Battlestar Galactica” were similarly left. A few series I haven't started. Some, like “Angel” and “Librarians” I've gone back to over and over.
- Still a need to pick up the pulp masters – L'Amour, Max Brand, Robert E. Howard, Heinlein, some others that left a wealth of short stories around.
- Top writers have learned marketing. Or started out as marketers and learned fiction writing.
- Leanpub revived itself, after their \$99 per book fiasco. Now the first 100 books are free – but your minimum price is \$4.99 – so is really set for non-fiction (and have to submit in an arcane markup language. One advantage is that they can turn your book directly into a course.
- Marketing Idea: Weekly short podcasts of just the marketing hook and excerpt for these fiction works, plus what other books are linked inside, the ideas they discuss. Audiobooks for these short stories are probable, once my recording chops become second nature.
- Marketing Idea: Finish fixing all the books I already have – creating mini-courses on Udemy and Skillshare to promote the bigger course on Thinkific

- Planning for next year – one fiction story per week, and then take up my existing non-fiction books in order of demand and create courses from them. This includes the TGR podcast which is runaway demand compared to the rest. A few more avenues to examine before I commit to the daily chores of running ads.

Additional posts

“How I Train My Inspiration – Fiction Writing by Covers”

Week 38

Key points:

- Split out short stories (66) from total books (79)
- Added a 4K critique of “Angel” onto the “Buffy” article.
- Laid out general approach of having BAW course as additional to fiction writing for a business plan
- Created a new list for upcoming books – RSS feed with landing page by Mailerlite
- Found I had to actually unsubscribe no-openers, as simple removal kept them in the database and showed them up again when I re-imported them for new freebies.
- Got into finding art and creating covers (22) and set up the individual short stories for Hooman Saga II:2
- Still adding onto Lazurai series, which take an idea across several universes. Incorporating cliffhangers.

No Additional posts.

Week 39

Key points:

- **Republishing flash fiction anthologies with each story being the feature – much like old 45RPM records, with a story on each side. Gave me 12 more books.**

- Wrote two short stories which each were about 1.4K, and so were each a front for the other. Both satire. An idea floated here that flash fiction might be the way to solve this goal. But I still prefer the 6K fiction in general.
- Started re-considering Content Inc model for fiction authors. I'll need to take this up in the next challenge more fully, along with re-study of Copyblogger material. Floated the idea of this summary becoming a course – but perhaps with the blog lessons. We'll see.
- Instafreebie is changing it's name to Prolific Works (less limiting.)
- Narrowed down to four broad genres – with SF, Fantasy, Mystery, YA/Teen (Romance). My three lists are SF/Fantasy, Mystery, Romance. So simply run three giveaways in rotation to keep down overhead.
- Got a payment from Medium. \$1.13 for non-fiction I published there.
- Point surfaced – you have to have faith in yourself and the system you are using. Both change constantly, both are constant despite changing.
- Overall emphasis of next challenge needs to be conversion. Pulizzi didn't have anything like Instafreebie to get subscribers.
- I want to take a few weeks at end of challenge to mop up and prep for next challenge as I did for this one. (As this summary.)
- Verified Organizer allows you to set a list for your opt-in's – as now I'm getting random books by others in addition to my own. I don't know how granular the opt-out process is – so can readers opt-out from just a single list out of many?
- Mailings are more scheduled now – one every other week, on Tues, for New Releases (2nd and 4th weeks) Weekly (Thurs?) for ARC. This next year will have non-fiction going out on 1st and 3rd weeks. Occasionally, I'll have that fifth week in there (twice a year.)

- Conversions means emailing clickers. Specific to onboard them. Also need more sequences.
- I've noted about an office I had built, but have to make time to move into it.

Additional posts:

“Finding Success in Fiction Writing In Spite of Everything”

“Cracking 6-figure Book Sales – Mid-list Publishing”

Week 40

Key Points:

- Still vacationing from IF giveaways. Watching what happens.
- 14 books published this week – see the notes on 45RPM publishing above.
- 96 fiction works published, 78 short stories.
- **A new RSS feed email for original fiction stories (in 2K episodes.)** Again, these go on my own site, and then can be transferred simply to Medium and Wattpad.
- **An article boiling down 53 “experts” gave me four main points: 1) Focus and go niche, 2) Over-deliver content, 3) Build Network relationships, 4) Launch Early - done is better than perfect.**
- Narrowed down to just getting my 100 short stories written and published, along with anthologies.
- Work on publishing dropped a hole in free publishing (Wattpad/Medium)
- **Did a study of Erle Stanley Gardner and H. Bedford-Jones. Found “This Fiction Business” which lays out a book for modern “pulp method” writers. Also went to Wallace Cook and his “Plotto”.**
- **This led back to other pulp authors – and the emphasis on “perennial-selling” books, not just bestsellers.**

- I have a “pulp method” anthology to produce – and the idea H. Bedford Jones says that a book doesn't have to have a “plot” to be a success.
- Started preps for daily hand-milking our milch cow.

No additional posts

Week 41

Key Points:

- Started writing serials in earnest. Because a fiction work I started ended up too pat. So changed the ending and that segued into the next book. Three books in series and its anthology – all written and published in a single week.
- Found Amazon is cannibalizing itself by posting ads and getting rid of “also-boughts”. Used to be space for 12 books on a page. Now half of these are sponsored.
- Brought back to the point that “Amazon works as well as you send traffic to it.” And that this isn't audience building (except the hard way) – you need to build audience on Wattpad and Medium instead.
- *Again says that I should be podcasting my fiction blurbs for each book – note to set this up for next challenge.*
- Saw that my not using IF/PW, I was burning money each month. So started getting back into joining other's giveaways.
- Paused sending to SL and PubD for now – just concentrating on getting the original work out. *Catch these up as part of next challenge.*
- NaNoWriMo upcoming – will be devoted to just “Hooman Saga”. Early stages of organizing this – intend to write a longish serial of perhaps 12 stories. So, about 72K words in a month. 3 per week.
- Note here that Wikipedia has a standard of 100 books published in a year for inclusion in their “prolific authors” list. (But you can't do your own entry.)

Additional posts

“Prolific Works' Advice for Fiction Writing Emails”

Week 42

Key Points:

- Started up increasing my giveaways and so increased subscribers. There is a lag to this, as few giveaways start up immediately – and those that do have few claims.
- 20 book sales this week.
- 4 books published in serial, with anthology
- Started counting down how many books in how many weeks.
- Work on another serial sets me up for NaNoWriMo. Different from Bradbury's “Martian Chronicles” and “Illustrated Man”.
- I have several covers ready in addition.
- First mention (actually) of cutting down to just one fiction book per week for next year. So I can publish several non-fiction books as well as building courses – themselves being a publishing event.
- Dropped out Medium/Wattpad publishing.
- Serials are pretty simple now – your first chapter of the next book is excerpted as the last “teaser” of the book you just finished. A short chapter, probably.
- Prolific Works starting a “course” on Kickstarters. The idea is to use my NaNoWriMo book for this, even though I can publish it all for free.
- **Four stories in a single week pretty maxed me out.** That does get me up into the range of the 20K words per week Gardner and Bedford-Jones were producing. But they had sales to support them. I'm being sponsored by my non-fiction hardcopy sales, mostly.
- October ending mid week made me shift gears. Also, Black Friday shopping (Wal-Mart on Thurs eve, Auction the following day.)

No Additional Posts

Week 43

Key Points:

- Dropped everything except writing.
- Wrote 5 books this week, as serial, but only published two. Rest are bugged in D2D. Because I didn't write them as individual books in their own right. Several were just a few chapters – too few for D2D. (Also called them parts, which gave them fits.)
- Emphasis is to shoot for 18K per week. My preferred method of writing continues to evolve. Last week's production was 18K, but in 6 parts. All this is part of getting set up for Nov NNWM push. Stories are all in 6 parts: hook, 4 acts, teaser. (Four acts is setup, two try-fails, a try-succeed, and teaser – following Doc Savage model, updated to modern TV series.)
- Last year NNWM was a full novel, as were the other successes there. This year is completely different approach, while still linear in plot.
- Kickstarter training still hasn't started.
- Did a list for kickstarter pre-release. Got some clicks, but no one signed up.
- These serials also all are building teams – again goes to Doc Savage and modern TV serials.
- **I note here that I still don't have a working model for writing fiction – only on how to write fiction, not selling it.**

No Additional Posts

Week 44

Key Points:

- No books published as was going to hold these back for use in Kickstarter (and wait both 90 days to run the Kickstarter and also 90 days for their fulfillment.) A breakdown of this showed it wasn't going to work out.

- Originally thought Kickstarters were to build audience -but the real scene is that they are there to boost conversions and train your avid readers.
- Kickstarters, as laid out, are for marketers who also write fiction. Net profit is zero. Even if you make the goals. My problem is that I have income from my books that pays for my publishing costs – so this is just a practice in going along with their training.
- Meanwhile, I signed up for all the training I could from other sources (Reedsy, plus finding the crowdfunding write-ups.)
- And – you can run your own kickstarter with nothing more than Mailerlite and Gumroad.
- The PW program is for authors that only produce 1 or 2 books per year, not the prolific ones.
- Creating a new anthology would be appropriate for this – but again, not with all the limits these people have.
- Some work out of next year's challenge – of adding audiobooks to the mix (recording short stories), as well as the non-fiction route of publishing PD works in a niche of interest – batches with the “also wrote” lists of links in their back, plus tying them into courses.

A breakdown here of what I intend to produce each week.

- And that How-To Anthology on Pulp Method needs publishing in Dec.
- Note: Next week's To-Do's is simply writing stories and evaluating kickstarter to see if worth it.

Additional Posts

“How to Build a Profit-Making NaNoWriMo Habit”

Week 45

Key Points:

- Three books published.

- Now up to 113 books published for this year, 91 short stories, 21 anthologies, 2 complete novels.
- Hooman Saga expanded to 13 books by counting the first in the series written a month or so ago. Organized the covers by Heroes Journey and made notes about the main action in each (as kept in Calibre.) About all the plotting I do – working these back and forth to make sure the ideas work within the cover and in relation to the others front and back.
- Kickstarter Data: **Copywriting is fiction writing.** Their model means purposely not publishing. My model is publishing each serialized book as itself, then publishing the anthology. Indiegogo is a better match for authors than Kickstarter (as you keep whatever you make) DIY crowdfunding with a list+gumroad is more likely. The network use brings up Jeff Walker's Launch Formula – and the idea of doing a book launch instead of a kickstarter.
- And the possibility of one book per week giving you four launches a year – based on the 90-day pre-release model. You are writing the stories for the next anthology while promoting the last one.
- Again, a self-starter, sustainable author doesn't need to do kickstarters. (They need to launch courses.)
- Subscriptions have ceiling – as my new subscribers are matching un-subscribers. Goes back to hotting up conversions. A lot of this is dropping out Romance giveaways.

No Additional Posts

Week 46

Key Points:

- 3 new books published, 116 books, 94 short stories, 21 anthologies, 7 weeks left.
- Just did writing this week – and proofing/publishing.
- Ditched three covers/books as were slowing down the pace of the story arc. Revised two covers to include either a moon or at least a wolf in every cover. And always – don't look back, except to see what you could improve moving forward.

- Before I finish a book up, I write the marketing hook for the next story – and include that in the teaser.
- D2D with their auto-updated “also wrote” lists in the back of each book is a godsend.
- How I Write Books – is in this report. Character conferences like a script read-through. You work to just “leave out the dull parts” as you transcribe the stories they tell. Key point is to enjoy every moment you're writing.
- Getting A Book Ready to Publish – 13 step process mentioned.
- My advantage is being a trained graphic artist and going through a grammar course three times, plus having blogged for a decade to polish my non-fiction writing style.

Additional Posts

“How I Won NaNoWriMo in Just 21 Days of Writing”

Week 47

Key Points:

- Wrapped up the last book (over 12K) and also published the anthology. In 20 days.
- Note to do a full analysis of subscribers – particularly the Verified Organizer giveaways.
- PW training finally resolved as coaching – where they have about a dozen students and are reviewing everyone's kickstarters to make them work best.
- I won't be doing this kickstarter (as not needed) and will instead be working out a launch program – selling the book, subscriptions, and premium subscriptions - plus giving away audio along with them. All based on one book per week, plus audiobook.

No Additional Posts

What I Learned

I purposely set out to do a full year challenge of testing what I was recommending new and existing writers do. Fiction writing had to be tested. I had over a decade of non-fiction publishing (starting before ebooks became a "thing.")

The general consensus was that you can make more income from self-publishing fiction than anything else. That turned out to be a big "yes, but..." And mostly showed that you had to do certain steps to get discovered by your fans, first.

What I mainly accomplished was *to prove the model of "pulp method" writing-publishing*. Not that it will make you any more income than "just" publishing a novel per month (Amazon beast-feeding) but it can bring you considerable more joy.

The bottom line summation: *Authors are in the content- business, and have to learn how to run a content-business*. And that becomes the next year-long challenge.

This years production genned in life-long habits of writing. And being able to generate new fiction from an endless supply of inspiration. I've shown that anyone who can arrange their lives to support their art can be as prolific as they want to. Writing is work, but it doesn't have to be hard, slogging work. And its more fun if you do it for yourself - and your audience.

Statistics:

At 47 weeks, the product list shows:

- 125 original books written and published.
- 27 of these were anthologies
- 2 were full novels
- 96 were individual short stories
- 637,533 words in single books
- an average of 3400 subscribers to my active list (starting from 0)
- 513 blog posts in addition - at an average of 2K per post, this is nearly 2 posts a week, and about 280K additional words.

Influences (not "Influencers")

The main influences I had at the outset were:

- Tim Grahl
- Chris Fox
- Mark Dawson
- Nick Stephenson
- Geoff Shaw
- Joe Pulizzi
- Dean Wesley Smith

None have all the pieces to this puzzle, only parts. Each have their own string of success stories and testimonials.

But the real answer is this: *You can only compare yourself to yourself.* Take everything else "under advisement" until you have thoroughly tested it for yourself.

The top five in that list are devoted to self-publishing - and they all promote and use ads to get their 6-figure incomes.

Pulizzi sold his Content Marketing Institute and is now working on his charity foundation, that I can tell. Smith owns his own publishing house and generates most of his income from running and selling courses, also as near as I can tell.

Additionally, I've done a lot of studies into reverse-engineering the business plans of many authors, especially those who wrote during the "Golden Age" of pulp magazines.

Along the line, I sieved through some 227 books about the craft of writing, and selected less than 20 that gave evergreen advice. The rest were mostly also-rans, and repeated what others said with their own slants and special terms.

("Influencers" are useless - like trying to use Twitter or Facebook in the real world. Another stupid human trick invented in this most recent, decadent decade.)

Key Writing How-To Books

"On Writing" by Stephen King, "Becoming a Writer" by Dorothea Brande. Elsewhere, I've listed several more - by Ray Bradbury, Ben Bova, and others. Pick authors who incidentally wrote books on

writing - not the ones who work as a professor or course-producer and have incidentally written fiction as well.

Prior Art

I've published many books in this area when I wrapped up a particular line of research.

One white paper I wrote, "How to Publish 76 Books in a Year." Which I thought was a bit of a stretch at that point. (And by test have blown straight past that - by nearly double.)

A book I finished and published early in 2018 was "How to Quit Feeding the Beast." This talks about being Amazon-centric in your publishing and trying to beat their algorithms.

Both of these basically point to the idea of writing between one and two short stories every week. Plus self-publishing them - immediately.

That doesn't mean anyone is going to discover them, especially starting from the gutters of Amazon with the other 6 million books there.

What I Did Accomplish

A habit and confidence of writing at almost any time and being able to publish a 6-8K book (on average) in a little under two days. Four books is pretty much my max-out point. (I did write five books a couple of times, and one week did six. But the total words per week was seldom over 24k. Meaning, the stories tended to shorten instead of lengthen.

20K is doable, but for me it was always dropping everything else to just write. That is who Erle Stanley Gardner and H. Bedford-Jones produced a volume of one million newly-written words per year. Consistently.

Publishing isn't writing, since this includes the many anthologies and combined flash fiction short reads. Anything more than 2500 words is a book, according to Apple and Amazon.

That said, a spreadsheet generated today by my Calibre program showed that I've published 2,057,564 words this year so far.

What's prolific?

More comfortable for me is two 6-8K short stories per week. And I've nearly done this - and intend to in the last few weeks of this year. That alone would be 100 books.

Per Wikipedia, this is anyone who's published over a hundred books in a lifetime.

You'll note on their list is that the top writer of all time wrote and published nothing but short stories and novellas. And single-author anthologies are also counted.

What Worked - What I Recommend

Overall: writing is learned by *writing*. And there is no substitute. Really great writers wrote for decades - most of their life, usually. And always worked to make each book better than their last. Sure, read a lot of books you love. Always and only write what you love. Then move on and read/write some more. It's a continuing process. A spiritual adventure.

Key was doing a lot of study of all these great craft books.

And lots of DW Smith courses (particularly his "classic" ones on Teachable.) Until I finished learning what I could from each of these mentors.

And then testing everything - and throwing it all away. Having the books and lessons to review as needed, but otherwise just to use what you've internalized into your own writing habits.

No school has all the teachers. And you'll wind up where you've learned all you can from someone. Sure, go back and re-study all you want. And write your own books about what you learned, (See my Really Simple Writing-Publishing and my Plotto series.) There are four traditional way to learn - read/listen/watch, practice, teach, write texts.

No two writers write the same way - thank god. So don't bother comparing yourself to someone else's success. Love what you write, as you write, or your readers won't either.

I found out that editing is over-rated. The authors I've studied up learned almost exclusively by writing a lot. Lots and lots. Some

now recommend developmental editors as a good idea, but then admit that they didn't learn that way and now don't need one.

That said, try ProWritingAid.com as an inexpensive self-editing resource. Again, learn what you need to improve your style. But write your own style, not anyone else's.

Follow perennial sellers and chase up their back trail. Louis L'Amour was told after 10 years of writing that his books had never gone out of print. You can find the same scene with Max Brand, Shakespeare, Robert E. Howard, Jack London, and many others. Their common attributes were writing for decades and all starting out with shorter works.

Just forget the "bestsellers" these days. You can buy these NY Times positions, as well as the rest. "Amazon bestseller" is a tawdry joke. I've had several. They come, they go. If you throw enough advertising at your book, then you can keep it up there pretty much indefinitely.

The perennial sellers like Shakespeare aren't running ads. So look up dead authors who consistently sell well. Start with the top 100 downloads on Gutenberg.org to give you an idea.

Inspiration is unlimited. While every possible plot has already been written, there are infinite combinations of actions, themes, characters, settings. Exponential.

Stories are alive - they only want to be told. Try to keep out of their way and do the best you can at translating them into words.

Start by rounding up all the unpublished work you have and getting it published - preferably under a pen name. This gets that out of your system and then you can simply get on with improving your craft.

Key Lessons - What I Did and How I Would Do It Over

1. **Build audience *first* though Medium and Wattpad.**
The simple way to do this is to go ahead and publish everything wide through Draft2Digital, StreetLib, PublishDrive, and (directly to) Amazon. And publish them all 90 days as pre-order. But then set these up as individual 2K chapters on Medium and Wattpad and link (using books2read.com) to your book - although you may have to set your book up on your own site and give out the other links

there. (And if StreetLib and PublishDrive ever generate a link service like Draft2Digital does, you can bet I'll post them as well.)

2. **This means daily writing, weekly publishing.** That I did most successfully.
3. **This builds your backlist.** And you add to this by compiling anthologies - people like value of big collections. In series. Writing short works will build into larger ones. And writing short stories will enable you to learn your craft and try new approaches without the major expense of 300-page first/second/third drafts.
4. **Giving away free books to get subscribers doesn't mean you have true fans.** I invested heavily in Instafreebie (now Prolific Works) in terms of time and money. That's a short cut to having a list. But then you have to train that list to buy your books.
5. **All this points to building your content-business on the side.** But taking a year just to build your writing habits is/has been invaluable.

Some Other Key Breakthroughs

The plot model that works is both traditional and modern. Hook, three acts in four parts, teaser. That is the modern TV series, and longer movies. Shakespeare also used most of this. He had to write for the "penny-farthing" crowd in front so they'd quiet down to allow the box seats to hear. (Like Macbeth's three witches intro.)

Serials are just having the first part of your next book show up in the last of the one you're now working on. Cliffhangers are simply ending the chapter in the middle of an action or emotional scene. Then you conclude that action or scene somewhere else, later. Again, study the long-running TV series.

My own best system was to get inspired by great cover art. Build that cover (or commission it), write the marketing hook, then write your story hook - and keep going until you're done. Then revise, proof, publish. I do that straight through instead of writing a bit each day. Just simpler for me.

Writing short stories as serials, publishing each one, then allows you to turn right around and publish the collected anthology the next day

- because they are all individually proofed already. It's then just a formatting job.

The top producing authors are/were all straight-ahead writers. ("Pantsers" is a diminutive term that is more a meme than useful description.) Pulp method writers like L'Amour would finish one book, then put in a fresh sheet into his typewriter to start the next. H. Bedford-Jones, who pulled down \$50K per year in the middle of the depression (which would mean 6- and possibly 7-figures today) even said in his "Fiction Business" book, that plot might not even be necessary to have a good, entertaining story.

Heinlein's Rules can simply be updated to today's market as:

- 1) Write.
- 2) Finish what you write.
- 3) Revise/edit/proof until you're happy with it.
- 4) (Self-)Publish it.
- 5) Keep it in front of people so they can find and buy it.

That last line is interpreted by many as running ads, but doesn't have to be.

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I used four pen-names to study the four main genres I wanted to write in. And while I didn't/don't write Romances, each of the pen names ended up writing a romance in their respective genre (even a satirical one.) As covered, pen names can be disposable if spectacular failures.

I dropped audio proofing as too time intensive. This next year, I'm getting back into audio by cutting back on fiction to "just" one book per week (while intending to be working on three books every week, although that fiction book will complete on it's own and the others may only publish as chapters. (The other two being non-fiction works.) That one fiction work will be published as an audio book as well, though. Look for lots of podcasts from me.

Packaging two or more short stories (flash fiction) that are otherwise too short (under 2500 words) can give you the equivalent of a 45RPM record - both sides are great art.

"Amazon works as well as you send traffic to it."

Copywriting is another form of fiction writing.

Summary

As laid out earlier, I have an unusual skill set, that took me over 5 decades of polishing to finally point at fiction writing. Very few people can do what I did, but many authors knew little more than how to write and have been just as prolific. All this write-up - and this years-worth of work - is just to give you the invitation to go ahead and try.

Luck to all of us.

[Visit LiveSensical.com](http://LiveSensical.com) for more information about the Great Fiction Writing Challenge