

AUTHORS PROMOTING IN REALTIME

The Growth of Author Videos

By Gary Michael Smith

We're a visual generation. Television aside, I have more colleagues who read online newspapers and magazines exclusively, as well as textbooks, users' guides, blogs, and forums than any form of print materials. These twenty- and thirty-somethings have grown up with the technology, and those of us who work extensively in such environments also are moving more toward electronic reading—even as baby boomers and beyond.

One particular growth technology is online video. As I once wrote in my column for *The Editorial Eye* ("Small-Screen Publishing," May 2007), an increasing number of writers and journalists are incorporating interactive materials, such as links to videos and other articles, into their stories. It's also becoming common to post not only video stories within articles such as the *Wall Street Journal*, but viewers can now find videos of the writer "talking" the viewer through his article. So you have the choice to either read, or watch and listen as with videos on the *Wall Street Journal's* *OpinionJournal.com*, *Yahoo!*, and many other sites.

Both book publishers and authors are finding video to be a wide-reaching marketing tool. YouTube aside, publishers are setting up entire sites for posting video clips of authors talking about their books, and authors are setting up their own portals to market their tomes. Blogs and forums are fine, and are a step above the old paradigm of having potential readers trust book reviewers' and journalists' opinions. But many readers now are finding it more valuable to have the author speak into a camera to discuss their latest novel or work of nonfiction.

Here are some of the innovators, starting with a company owned by a friend and colleague of mine here in New Orleans, Steve O'Keefe.

AuthorViews, www.authorviews.com - AuthorViews leverages technology to help authors and publishers present their books to core target audiences, including readers, the media, and the book trade. The broadcast-quality author videos, shot on location, originally last around 20 minutes but then are edited down to the best 2 minutes in a controlled studio environment. Upon approval from the authors, they are released online copyright-free since this is not the primary business of the company but rather an offshoot of online book publicity firm Patron Saint Productions. Although dozens of videos are posted on the AuthorViews website, they're also available on such video-sharing sites as Google Video and YouTube. Bookstores can download and install them to promote author readings, publishers can add them to their online catalogs, and writers groups can put member videos on their websites. Moreover, DVDs containing the entire videos are available as well. Three videos promoting my own books can be seen at www.authorviews.com/index/browse/neworleans/browse.php.

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Bookwrap Author Video Interviews, www.bookwrapcentral.com - Bookwrap features author interview video clips called Bookwraps that let viewers see authors as they talk about their books and writing. The video interviews are organized by author, book title, or the book's genre category. Each Bookwrap has up to six author video clips and supporting text information such as a sample chapter, synopsis, review quotes, and the author biography, and provides a complete information package on a book.

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The Growth of Author Videos, *cont.*

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iReadNet, <http://ireadnet.com> - iReadNet states its mission as “connecting authors and their audiences, bookstores, publishing professionals, and media producers, editors, writers, and publishers around the globe around the clock using broadcast-quality digital video and the Internet instead of airplanes and hotels.” iReadNet uses streaming media servers with Windows Media and QuickTime formats for both high-speed cable and DSL connections and low-speed dial-up connections to stream author videos free of charge to desktops, laptops, and handheld devices. After launching in 2002 as a video book tour site featuring two authors, iReadNet developed and launched three author news networks—PubBuzz (fiction and non-fiction), CooksRead (cookbooks), and KidsRead (children and young adult books)—featuring hundreds of video clips from book and author events around the country.

Penguin Group, <http://us.penguin.com/static/html/video.html> - “authors on video” gives a brief biographical sketch on this web page with an “exclusive video on” link to a highly-produced video of the author speaking about his or her book. The page is small but features the likes of Tom Clancy and Alan Greenspan among others.

BookVideos.tv - BookVideos.tv is a social media video site offers the back story about the lives, personalities, and the inspirations of authors. It also provides a forum where visitors can engage with the literary community. Using the site’s variety of social media tools, viewers can embed an author video on their own website or blog, email it, or share with a book club. Users also can subscribe to the videos using RSS, and add them to del.icio.us or Digg. It is aimed at book-club members and fans of authors who are interested in personal details about their favorite writers. Videos include such names as Dean Koontz (www.deankoontz.com/video/trixieT1.mov) and Oliver North (<http://bookvideos.tv/video/1169>).

The Random House Group’s booksatrandom, www.randomhouse.co.uk/offthepage/video.htm - No explanation is available from this The Random House Group UK-based website, but it’s pretty self-explanatory once you click on “View the video” where more than 80 author videos reside.

Reading rockets Video Interviews, www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews - Reading Rockets is a national multimedia project that offers information and resources on how young kids learn to read, why so many struggle, and how caring adults can help. The Reading Rockets project is composed of PBS television programs, available on videotape and DVD; online services, including the websites ReadingRockets.org and ColorinColorado.org; and professional development opportunities. Reading Rockets is an educational initiative of WETA (www.readingrockets.org/about/contact/weta), the flagship public television and radio station in Washington DC, and is funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

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