

EPISODE 1

Can you write and publish a book in a year?

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Welcome to the first episode ever of the Author Revolution Podcast! I'm your host, Carissa Andrews.

To get started and seeing as this is the first podcast of this show, I'd like to tell you a little bit about myself.

I am an international bestselling indie author, freelance writer, award-winning graphic designer, and indie author coach. I am also the president of my local area's literary nonprofit, the Lakes Area Writers Alliance.

As an indie (or self-published author), I've published six full-length novels, two of which have hit international bestseller status, two novelettes, and one non-fiction title. I have also narrated, produced, and indie published five of my books in audiobook, as well as designed the covers for all of them. In my spare time, if you can call it that, I write online courses to help my fellow authors break away from the limiting beliefs that are holding them back from living their author dreams.



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A BOOK IN A YEAR?**

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Now, I'm not going into this list to pat myself on the back. In all honesty, it took me a good few minutes to sit down and work out those numbers and figure out those accomplishments because the past isn't what drives me. I'm telling you this because with the exception of one of those titles – which was my first book, Pendomus – every last one of those accomplishments was done in the past two years.

Now, that's not to say prep work didn't start before, but the hard work – the publishing and production of it all – that was done from October 2017 to now.

I feel it's appropriate to talk about this because today I want to talk about the concept of publishing your novels more quickly.

I know there are loads of you out there who are either just getting started or would like to write faster. Don't worry, over the course of this podcast and those to come, I know you will gain the insights you need to write and publish more quickly.

The truth of the matter is – you can accomplish this and so much more. You just need to get out of your own way. I have heard it over and over again. Authors think they need to learn more. Do more. Research more. Bleed their words onto the page until they are utterly drained. But you don't.

I am here to tell you right here and right now – you already have everything you need inside you to write your next novel. You do not need anyone else's permission or approval to get started. You don't need to become an astrophysicist to have a character who's a physicist. Or understand the exact protocol of every police department this side of the Atlantic.

What you do need – is the ability to find the information you need to create suspension of disbelief.

DEFINITION: The temporary acceptance of events or characters that would ordinarily be seen as incredible. This is usually to allow an audience to appreciate works of literature or drama that are exploring unusual ideas.

You do this, by giving enough details to allow the reader to believe what you write, but without going into so much detail that their suspension of disbelief is broken. And often times, it means keeping things simple and straightforward when we are not experts in something we are trying to describe.

Fiction, regardless of the genre, allows us to step into the life or lives of the characters we read about. The moment you hop from your brain to theirs – you have successfully suspended your disbelief in order to take on their role. Very rarely, as readers, do we question the thought process or the delivery of information we are given in a story. (Which by the way, is why unreliable narrators can be super fun for plot twists. But I digress.)

As authors, though, we often think we need to become an expert in everything we write about—or else we will be found out as the “impostor” we are. You feel me?

I call this crazy notion author impostor syndrome.

It's real and it's brutal. And you are not alone. Every single author has gone through this and you are by no means unique in feeling like people will think you're an impostor.

Interestingly enough, research done by the National Training Laboratory Institute for Applied Behavioral Science found that readers only retain 10% of what they read. That statistic has been repeated across numerous studies and other universities.

To put this into perspective for you – let’s say you spend five years pouring over research, interviewing people, getting your details PERFECT – and as soon as you put your book up for sale, you get crickets. Okay, so maybe your friends and family buy it – but beyond that... nothing. Nada.

To make matters worse, your book is up for a meager \$3.99 and even if you DO sell a copy, you’re only earning roughly \$2 (and that’s if you self-publish).

Ouch.

So, at this point you might be saying – geez Carissa. Why would I ever want to publish a book? It sounds horrible.

I’ll get to the why in a second.

But here’s the plain fact. 99% of authors never sell more than 1000 copies of their book.

So even if you get your book to match your idea of perfection, there is no guarantee it will ever go anywhere. All that work and effort will be, for better or worse, wasted. And unfortunately, most of the time, you won’t ever know until you try.

Now, you COULD curl up into a ball on the floor, chewing on your hair, and cursing the world for such horrifying odds. But I’m going to suggest something radical.

TAKE IMPERFECT ACTION.

Start where you’re at and keep going. Write your first book imperfectly. Publish it. Then write your second, your third. Get a feel for the process and trust it will guide you. Because it will.

Did you know that same study by the National Training Laboratory Institute found that we retain 75% of what we learn through practice by doing. In fact, I could stand up here – pontificate about the process of writing, but you would go home retaining a measly 5%. For those of you numbers folks – that’s less than what you retain by reading.

Henry David Thoreau said, “Most men lead lives of quiet desperation and go to the grave with the song still in them.”

Why do they do this? Because they never take the first step out of fear.

Screw fear. Screw impressing anyone else. Screw perfection or bleeding for our craft.

We want to see progress, not perfection. You’re writing fiction – not a manual on neurosurgery.

Obviously, this all starts with the perspective we place on how we look at being an author. And if you’ve never done this before – I want you sit up and listen because I’m speaking from experience here.

I spent 3 years working on my first novel and most of that time was spent in indecision. NOT writing the novel. In fact, I wrote the majority of Pendomus during NaNoWriMo 2010. But then I worried if it was good enough. If I was doing it right. And I’m going to let you in on a secret: I’ve felt that way for every single book I’ve written since.

Here’s the thing - until you know the entire process from start to finish – you will not have the tools you need to improve.

“Feel the fear and do it anyway.” ~Susan Jeffers, PhD in Psychology

Perhaps at this point, you're wondering how on earth this talk has anything to do with writing and publishing a book in a year. You know, I'm so glad you asked. Well, okay - wondered.

The most important step you can take in the process of writing and publishing your book in under a year is to get your mindset in place.

"Whether you think you can or think you can't - you're right." ~ Henry Ford

The moment you believe you can - you will.

I wanted to start here, because I've been where you are.

But if I can do it - you can, too. I have freelance clients, I run my own business, and I'm an author. All while having five kids who need my attention, a husband (who for some reason loves to spend time with me), and two crazy husky puppies. Not to mention, helping to guide and grow the Lakes Area Writers Alliance.

But for 2020 I'm pushing myself further. I'm launching four books in a rapid release (meaning one after the other) at the end of the year and I'm even list-aiming in an attempt to hit the NYT Bestseller list... solo.

Big dreams? Absolutely. Can I do it? Only if I believe I can.

Now, does this mean it will just fall into your lap because you believe? Of course not. Your dreams only show up if you do.

Let's face it, showing up is almost always the hardest part. And it's also the most elusive to nail down because when we start out, we can't see the bigger picture.

So, let's talk for a moment about the process of publishing your novel in a year. I'll try not to sneak a bunch of superfluous info in there (I mean, you're only going to remember 5% of this anyway, right?)

Mindset. Check.

Okay, so I want to also give you some actionable items to think about as you attempt to dive into writing and publishing a book in a year. Especially if you've never done it before. I wish I could teach you all the things. Unfortunately, there simply isn't time for that today, but I can guide you to the right answers.

Next comes the prep phase. Like any other project a book can seem like a daunting monolithic beast until you break it down into bite-size, actionable chunks.

When you first start out, it's best to really give this phase of your novel the time and energy it deserves. Because when you do, it sets you up for success and allows your brain to relax and focus on the writing – not the planning. When you get to the writing phase, you only want to focus on the writing.

Let's chat about the main areas you want to focus on when sitting down to prep your novel:

Idea / Story Concept

Character Development (Protagonist AND Antagonist)

Main Story Arc

Main Conflict

Outline

Seems simple, right?

A lot of people skip the development phase in writing and dive straight into writing. We call those people pantsers because they are writing 100% by the seat of their pants. I used to be one, I get it. But I've learned all too well, it can derail motivation and ultimately cost you. You spend more time than necessary floundering around, wondering what you're doing, where your story is going, and if you're even doing it right. So, if you're a pantser, you need to trade them in for a plotter's hat if you want to increase your speed and get your book published more quickly. Who knows – you might even realize you can publish a series.

Prep. Check.

We're heading into the most incredible time of year for us writers. NaNoWriMo is 6 days away. For those of you thinking, "Nano—whaaaa?" I'm talking about November – also known as National Novel Writing Month. This is the month when the whole writerly world (well for the most part) comes together with a single purpose – write the first 50K words in the first draft of a novel. If getting support in your mindset shift to write your novel and stay focused is important, I highly recommend joining their site and getting on board with their community. You can also check with your own local community to see if they're hosting any NaNoWriMo events.

It's a spectacular way to get and motivated and keep on course for publishing that novel in a year.

If you've never heard of Nano before... are you thinking 50k words in a month! Are they NUTS?

Take a breath, my friends. It's only 1667 words a day. Easy. Peasy.

Remember that mindset shift – it comes in handy here, too. Reinforce the positive belief and tell yourself it's not hard – it's EASY.

The cool thing is... the more you do write consistently, the more your brain gets used to it, and the easier it DOES become. Your brain is a muscle, after all. So, sit down, do the work. It will get easier. If you participate in NaNoWriMo – you could have your next (or first) novel done by start of December.

Think about that for a minute. Sounds great, right?

So, let's assume you did it. 1667 words a day. Step by Step. You've hit or surpassed 50K. And you finished your novel. Now what?

What comes next is revision. But for this one, you can't do it alone. Well, not entirely, anyway. You need another set of eyes on this incredible new novel of yours. Amiright?

So you either need to hire an amazing editor right off the bat... OR you need to start with critique partners (who are basically other authors who share feedback on each other's works). You can also lean on the feedback from alpha and beta readers before shipping it to your editor.

Alpha Readers will read your novel from the reader perspective, letting you know where they get stuck, what works, and what doesn't work. Basically, consider them great developmental editors – but who may not have the lingo to be able to accurately describe what needs to be fixed.

Beta Readers will read your novel, point out all those inconsistencies or troubles spots, but also provide direct feedback and editing with more accuracy.

Sometimes, you don't know which type of reader you actually have until you get their feedback – but ultimately, those are both crucial because they will help you make your manuscript stronger.

Now, for the sake of this talk on publishing quickly – what if you say, “But Carissa, I can't afford an editor yet.” Is that a license to hold off and do nothing?

OF COURSE NOT!

There are programs you can use to edit your novel to the best of your ability. Remember, done is better than perfect. (HINT: perfect doesn't exist.) The programs I recommend for editing are:

- AutoCrit
- Grammarly

Both are inexpensive - with the most expensive aspect being your time. But if you consider it part of the learning process, you'll embrace it and push through it. Do the best you can until you know better. When you know better, do better.

Good?

Okay, so revisions done. Check.

Finally – last but not least, is publishing your baby. As an indie author – I teach what I know and what I believe. The industry and publishing market has changed dramatically in the past decade. If you still think the only way to be seen as a “real” author is by being traditionally published – you are doing yourself and your book a disservice.

The truth is, that thinking has gone the way of the dinosaur, my friends.

Indie publishing your books is where the creative control and money is at when it comes to being an author.

This one might seem daunting to those of you who have not yet done it. But it's 100% doable and figuroutable. You might actually surprise yourself by how simple the logistical process is.

Not, it's not so say it's easy to publish and get sales, but it is easy to get your book out there and be published.

One of the best secondary benefits of indie publishing is being in control of your editorial calendar (meaning when and how you publish), this is a big one. Many people will hem and haw over the traditional or indie route – but if you're wanting to take control of your author career (because that's what this is!), then taking the bull by the horns and publishing your own novels gives you the control you're looking for. And remember, you want to publish your masterpiece in a year.

I recommend starting out with Amazon exclusivity – meaning you enroll with Amazon's KDP Select program for digital books so you can capture page reads through their Kindle Unlimited subscription service.

The reason behind going exclusive to Amazon is very strategic. To date, unless you plan on sinking a lot of advertising dollars into your marketing budget – they are the by far the best platform to help you as a new or emerging author get the most out of organic reach.

That's not to say they'll do all the selling for you, because they won't. But you will make far more money for your efforts by being exclusive. And yes, this is coming from true experience.



You can always go wide later – meaning publish to additional book sites like Barnes and Noble, Google, etc. and truth be told – if you create a paperback version of your book using the Kindle Direct Publishing platform, your paperback will be distributed to libraries, bookstores who decide to order it because it will be available through the Ingram distribution network, and even available for purchase from sites like Barnes and Noble.

If there's one thing I want you to take away from this talk, it's that you are enough. You might not have all the answers right away – but you have what you need to start the journey. Even newbies who have never published before can and do plan, write, and publish their books in under a year. You can too.

If you really want to level up your author career, you want to be thinking in terms of your long game. According to a recent post by Written Word Media, authors who make between \$60K and \$100K per year with their books have on average 22-28 books in their catalog. If that's the kind of revenue you're looking at generating with your books, you need to get focused and start writing, my friends.

For those of you who need additional support or simply are knowledge hoarders like I am – there are tons of incredible courses and online resources you can look into.

My company, Author Revolution, specializes in helping authors as they walk their journey – meeting them wherever they're at. I have online courses and one-on-one mentorships available, so you can always reach out for additional resources.

Next year I'll be launching my flagship course Rapid Release Roadmap and if you'd like to be on the waiting list for it, or would like to be a beta tester, email me at carissa@authorrevolution.org.



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I'll even send you my free Rapid Release Roadmap PDF that shows you the exact strategy I'll be teaching when the course opens.

One last thing - since this podcast is brand new, if you could go out and subscribe to it or leave a review on this episode, I'd greatly appreciate it. Your reviews will help other listeners find the podcast, too. Plus, I really enjoy reading them.

Well, that's it for me, guys. Go forth and be awesome.

"Do the one thing you think you cannot do. Fail at it. Try again. Do better the second time. The only people who never tumble are those who never mount the high wire."— Oprah Winfrey



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