

Episode 79

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SPEAKERS

Carissa Andrews, Joanna Penn



Carissa Andrews 00:12

I'm Carissa Andrews, international best selling indie author and CEO of author revolution. With more than 15 books published, it's safe to say I have made a ton of mistakes in my endeavor to become a full time author. The most important thing that I've learned in the past decade is that indie authors need to protect their creativity and their serenity. Being an author is a long game. And that's why I'm on a mission to teach other indies just like you how to publish books because the sustainable rapid release method, I created the author revolution podcast to give you insights and actionable step by step strategies to help you do just that. If you're an ambitious author, or one of the making, who's looking to create a long term author, career and a life you love, you found your tribe my friend, let's get your author revolution underway. Hi, again, indie author. Boy, do I have a special podcast episode for you today? I have to admit there are very few people who I'm nervous to talk to anymore. But today's podcast guest was definitely one of them. I've been following Joanna Penn's career since I first started out in 2010. At that time, she was still semi newbie, having only been published for two years, but she was already commanding the space as a guru and someone to keep your eyes on. I started following Joanne on Twitter. And I remember even chatting with her a number of times as I tried to get my indie author hat planted on my head. She's always been a wealth of information and incredibly kind, compassionate and patient with those who are willing to listen and learn. Now, for those of you who don't know who Joanna is, she is the acclaimed podcast host of the creative pen podcast. She's also a speaker, fiction and nonfiction author, and a futurist. Because of this, she has some of the most incredible insights into where the indie

author industry is headed. All while being firmly rooted in its modern origin story. We're about to talk about some things that just might blow your mind. I know it did mine. So I won't make you wait any longer. Let's get started. Thank you so much, Joanna, for joining the author revolution podcast I am, like I've said before we started the show, super excited that you were here today. Kind of a little intimidated, nervous, but we're gonna get through it. And for those who might be not in the know yet, could you explain who you are? And what it is you do and why authors should be picking their ears right now?



Joanna Penn 02:51

Oh, well, thanks for having me. And I write nonfiction as Joanna pen. And I have a podcast, the creative pen podcast, which I started in 2009. So it's a bit of a long running series. I'm always excited to be on other people's podcasts, though. It's always nice to be on the other side of the microphone. So yeah, and then I also write thrillers and dark fantasy and crime as jF pen. And I have another podcast, the books and travel podcast where I talk about books and travel and interview people on the places that inspire their writing. So I guess I have these two sides to my character. And I guess over the years, I've talked about all kinds of aspects of writing and publishing and book marketing. And yeah, I think so much has changed since I started sort of 2006 to 2008. But one thing remains and that we are writers, you know, we write books, and we have readers and we want to get them into people's hands. And yes, so there you go. Oh my gosh, and it's so fascinating to me, you You are all over with so many different passions and things that you are really interested in. And when I first started writing, oh, you know back in 2010 like I was following you even back then and I remember thinking, wow, this this lady is going to be going somewhere because I could already see kind of your divergence you you were doing you know multiple things at once. I think you're writing your first thriller novel. I want to say pen penta. Yeah, it was Pentecost, which is great. Yeah. And republished a stone of fire. So it's out there a stone of fire now, but yeah, I mean, that's brand author branding is a whole nother topic. Right? Well, speaking of that did like before I talked about the author branding part of it. Did you always already, like know, in the very beginning, when you were doing your fiction side and your nonfiction that you would want to help India's kind of learn how to do their own niche, you know, their own stuff? Did that come naturally because of what you were learning? Or like, how did how did the teaching other indies come about for you? Right? Well, I think it's very important for people to know that most of us just start doing things and then things happen. And so basically what happened is when I first self published this book, For the Kindle, I was living in Australia, I was doing a lot of speaking. And in the speaking community, a lot of people self publish and you know, print books. That's what you do sell them at the back of the room. So I was self publishing. But what happened is I got ripped off a number of times in that first year. Oh, and there is there are always scams. There are scam scam scams, right? So I, I, there weren't many

people talking about writing or publishing at the time, self publishing was sort of not trendy at the time. So. So basically, I start, I wanted to tell people about the issues and the challenges that I was facing. So I started the creative pen, it was actually my third blog. And I started in order to share my journey and to share my lessons learned because I was like, This is terrible. I don't want other people to get ripped off like this. This was some paid compilation books. This is still a thing. Yeah. And also, you know, this sort of pay this much joiner best seller thing. And, I mean, these things have been going on for decades. But I also at the time, I had printed 2000 books, and then didn't know how to sell them. And this was before print on demand really took off. So I was learning all this stuff. And I just wanted to share. So we started my blog in December 2008. Then I then I was like, you know, I don't know any author friends. I was working as an IT consultant. I literally didn't know any other authors and the people that I preached in writing groups, they were like, oh, you're self published. The second? We got that, too. Yeah. So he didn't want to know me. And so I was living in Australia. And I saw these wonderful Americans. And these Americans were doing great things. And they were not snobby at all. They were like, Hey, we're, we're self publishing, we're independent authors. And I was like, Oh, yeah, I wouldn't be one of those. So I started, this was really before the phrase in the author even became a thing. So I started podcasting in order to make friends. should really stop, stop doing this stuff. And then I'm like, Yeah, but I just learned all this new stuff. And I want to share that too. So when I stop learning, I will stop sharing, but until then, I guess I'm still going.



Carissa Andrews 08:18

I think you're gonna keep doing it until you die, then I'm sorry. I don't think it's gonna stop.



Joanna Penn 08:27

And that's the truth of life. And what's so interesting to me, with people coming in, you know, you people are like, oh, like, I published my first book in 2015. And I'm like, okay, so great. So your reality is around the world as it was in 2015. So for example, Kindle unlimited. When I started publishing, there was no Kindle, let alone Kindle unlimited. So it's like, things change all the time. And we adjust and we change, and we keep learning, and we change the way we do business. But again, the things that remain are, you know, the writing. Absolutely. So I think I read somewhere might have been on your blog, actually, where you said that you started in in 22,000. There we go. not 20 anymore. 2008 doing your nonfiction stuff. But then by the time I kind of entered your sphere on Twitter, you were doing, you know, doing the fiction stuff. So did you have any trouble separating the two kind of very distinct genres? You said, you know, your fiction stuff is jazz pen. Your nonfiction is Joanna. So was that hard for you to be able to keep the two pen names straight? Or did you know right away? Yep, I got to keep you separate. I know that there

are a lot of authors that really struggle with sometimes multiple genres where it's that distinct, but sometimes it's like, you know, they've got paranormal romance, and then they've got Cozy Mystery or something was then difficult at all for you. When again, when I started, there was none of this stuff was really being talked about. So I actually published the first three novels under Joanna pen and So I had everything under you on a pen, I had one website, the creative pen. And so people can find, in fact, at the creative pen, com forward slash first novel. That's my sort of journey of that first novel. And it's hilarious. I keep this stuff and there are YouTube videos. And I'm like, oh, my goodness, I've just discovered characters, and I just learned about dialogue. And it's really funny, and I keep it as evidence of, you know, what I didn't know. But one of those things is, and I guess this is one of the pros and cons of being self published is the pros are you can do anything you like. And the cons are, you can do anything you like, and then you realize later it was a mistake. Yes, yes. You're not gonna get the consequences. But what is great is you can fix it, right? So yeah, I my first three books were Pentecost prophecy and Exodus, which people might know if you have any religious upbringing, that these are quite religious words with meanings in in a Christian context, and I have a master's degree in theology, but I'm not a Christian. So what happened was, all these people were like, this isn't a Christian thriller. Why is this Scott have a religious name? And I'm like, Okay, so that was one thing. Another thing I got was, you know, Joanna is a feminine name. And obviously a woman. And I got reviews on my first books, which were I can't believe a woman wrote this as kind of this was before *Gone Girl*. This is before female thriller writers were more. Okay, reason that JK Rowling wrote under, you know, JK in male dominated genres, people use initials, in the same way that men writing in romance often use female pseudonym. So we can lament this to our heart's content. But so I was like, okay, so around 2012, I had these three novels that I was like, Yeah, I think the titles are wrong. I also was like, Okay, I need to separate this, because that was also when we were starting to learn about the algorithms and about how also bots works. And I was like, Okay, I need and I needed to separate my email list. And at that point, I had to, I basically republished, rebranded It was such a pain, I redid the covers, the names, the books, I did all kinds of things to separate the two and it was painful, let me tell you, but I am so happy. I'm so happy I did it. And it was most liberating. For me, it was great for the algorithms, it was good for my email list, I can be different people. And that really helps. Now, in terms of how many names I totally get why people struggle. And if you are only algorithm driven, then yeah, it makes sense to have more than one pen name. But I think if you want to be sanity driven and life driven, then don't have too many, especially if you want to do social media. If you want to do podcasting like this, if you want to do email lists, you can I find managing two active names pretty difficult. My mom also writes under Penny Appleton, and I kind of manage her books, that sweet romance, and that but I can't do that in an active way. So what I would say to people listening is don't go to over the top. So I have thrillers, dark fantasy, horror crime under jF pen. And it is difficult, for sure. Because I

mixed genres. And some people do not cross series at all. So some people are like, why don't you write another arcane thriller? writing this fantasy right now, whatever. But yeah, I think if you have this long term perspective, and you're really thinking about how you want your career to be for decades, then make it easier on yourself. Don't



Carissa Andrews 14:00

really know how many books do you have out now? It's a lot, right?



Joanna Penn 14:04

It's 32 ish, I think,



Carissa Andrews 14:07

Wow,



Joanna Penn 14:08

that is fantastic. But it's so funny, because of course, you know, I mean, you and I both know, people like Lindsay broker who started at the same time as me and she has like 70 or 80 books now. Oh, my



Carissa Andrews 14:18

goodness, that's, that blows my mind as well. Holy cow.



Joanna Penn 14:21

I wouldn't, ya know, say Lindsay's there were about three times as long as mine, each of the books, so basically has the equivalent of like, nearly 200 books to my



Carissa Andrews 14:31

oh my goodness,



Joanna Penn 14:33

the same thing, but it's also really important to remember that we can't compare ourselves to waiters who do things differently and who live a different life. And that's so important. You know, Lindsey is a friend of mine, but we're quite different people, and we live different lives. And she writes like, all the time and I'm more of a binge writer, I guess. I you know, and I might call a good day 2000 words and she calls a good day 10,000 words, so we can't compare ourselves to other people. So, sure I have over 30 books. And but that doesn't matter if you're writing your first book, we all start with no words, we all start with nobody listening. We all start with no one on our email. So just go at your own pace really don't. Don't force it. I think that's important. What have you found? When it comes to like, when you've gotten in your rhythm? Now you've been doing this for over a decade? Do you know like, roughly how many books you you will publish in a single year? Or is it something that kind of you just kind of wing and see what how your your goes? Yeah, I pretty much I'm very news driven. I don't like to market. I don't rapid release. I know you advocate that. But I don't write in genres that even necessarily, I'm not in queue for my name's I don't. Yeah, I again, I have a very long term perspective. And I cannot do anything that I, I chose to do this career because I want to write what I love to write and what I love to read. And the difficulty, really, I read across so many genres, I mean, I read hours every day, and I read tons of different books. So my my own work is very crush on that. And I just, I love, I love doing that. But it makes it very, far more difficult to sell. But it does make it satisfying to write. So as far as I'm concerned, I'm writing for the longer term. And I just wrote the books that my muse really, really wants to write. So although I have an idea, like in my head, like I have a list of about 12 novels that I've got vague ideas for, and I've got about six nonfiction, that I've got ideas for, and they have sort of more one liners in my folders. You know, one's called the South Pacific boat. That's literally all I have. And I know approximately what that is.



Carissa Andrews 16:58

Yeah, yeah.



Joanna Penn 16:59

But I really like that clip. But I went on a boat across the South Pacific, in the year 219 99. So that book has had a long time to think about it. And it's still not ready to come out as such. Whereas another book, so the shadow book, which I've been talking about for least five years openly and something I studied around the youngin shadow in psychology back when I even did a level so age 18. So that's the book I'm writing at the moment. I'm taking a long time.



Carissa Andrews 17:36

Right, right. Isn't it interesting how some of those concepts will sit and kind of just stew for a very long time before it comes out and become something that's really more powerful? It's, it's really interesting to me, I've had the same experiences.



Joanna Penn 17:50

Yeah, I think it's very important to in order for a book to really resonate for a long time. Ryan Holiday has a book called perennial seller. And that's what I'm aiming to write, it's not a book that hits the number one on Amazon, and then it's gone. It's a book that people keep buying, and buying and buying and buying. And that's more important to me. So, yeah, I think you have to write what's on your heart. And what's nice is that after 30 odd books, I still have books in my heart that I want to write and look, to be honest, if it doesn't sell very much, that's okay. Because I'll write another book. And some of them work, and some of them don't. And I think the more books you have, the less you have to be precious about that, which is good.



Carissa Andrews 18:36

Absolutely. So speaking of that, obviously, you're a wildly successful author and entrepreneur earning multi six figures. So with that in mind, what kind of advice do you have for indie authors who are listening who are either just starting out, or maybe they're mid listers, and they're looking for a way to, you know, hopefully get their their career to maybe not quite multi six figures, maybe they are looking for that, but really, just to have a career that sustains them a little bit more. Do you have any advice around what worked for you?



Joanna Penn 19:09

Yeah, well, I think my first piece of advice is think long term. Because, you know, I started writing in 2006. I did leave my job in 2011. So it took five years. But I only made I took a massive pay cut. It was about an eighth, I was making about an eighth of my salary. When I left that to become a writer. That's a big pay cut.



Carissa Andrews 19:30

Yes, that is a that is an absolute, like change in lifestyle right there.



Joanna Penn 19:35

We sold everything we sold our house, we sold our investment properties, you know, we took a real chance, it took a decade for us to buy another house. So I mean, you have to really decide what point what you're willing to give up for your career. But that was five years of writing on the side while doing a day job so that probably the first thing is do Don't give up the day job like keep it as long as possible and write and get to a point, so I, you know, and then what? So 2011, I left my job, it was 2015, I started making six figures. So that was not nine years of writing before I made six figures. And then it only took another year to get to multi six figures. But that was because at that point, the tipping point was into the multi six figures was, I had a lot of a lot of things. So I had a lot of books, I had a lot of podcast episodes at that point, I've been podcasting for six, seven years. So it had an audience. And I also had more traffic to my websites, which and I had lots of affiliate income. So yeah, so definitely building a long term business and having that longer term view is important. And also multiple streams of income. This is my soapbox and write, write my book, How to make a living with your writing is not just about books, it's about all the other things that you can make money from as a writer. And that, to me is the most important thing, because, you know, Amazon changed their algorithm, Facebook changed their algorithm, you know, this happens that happens, that suddenly vampires on popular anymore, all



Carissa Andrews 21:13

right,



Joanna Penn 21:14

what happened to the erotica writers when Amazon decided you can't have erotica anymore, and, you know, took it out the search engine or in there are lots of things that have happened over the years that have impacted different genres or even I mean, it's classic. This year in the pandemic, people want bridgerton Regency romance, they don't necessarily want darker crime, you know, they write fluffy, right, they want to be happy. They want that kind of writing. So it's really interesting how trends for things go up and down. So the best, the best thing you can do to control a long term career is to diversify, and to have income streams that do not relate to each other. And this is exactly the same. If you talk about financial investments, you need to If this happens, then that can still make you money. And then if this happens, then this can make you money. And that's what I have now. So and that takes a lot of time to build. And I think that would be really important for people who want to do this is, look, again, it's easy enough to make 10 grand in a month, there are plenty of people making 10 grand this month, but what about next

month, and next month, and next month, and next year? and the year after that? So what you want to be building? Is that sustainable income for the long term? Not the spike revenue next month? And then absolutely,



Carissa Andrews 22:43

yep, yep. And that's part of the reason why I'm, you know, with rapid releasing, one of the things that I teach on that is to do it in a sustainable way where it's, you know, rather than doing like a book a month, because I don't know about you, but I couldn't do a book a month, I would go absolutely mental. So I try to teach my my students who are wanting to, you know, kind of get to the point of earning more money faster to do it in a way that's not going to, you know, put them into the straight out burnout, or overwhelmed by focusing on just four books a year and trying to do it in a way that is working in their schedule, whether they're doing a book every quarter, or you know, saving it all up. And then you know, having it all written in advance and then releasing it quickly at the end of the year, let's say as an example. And it's just a way to another way to be sustainable in the way that they're trying to come up their publishing career. But I love the way that you're talking about all these different aspects of it to like the affiliate income, and being able to do things like that, because I don't think a lot of authors, especially new indie authors really think about affiliate income and the kind of ways that they can pull in money, you know, whether it's Amazon Associates or anything like that until they've been around for a little while. Would you agree?



Joanna Penn 23:49

Yeah, absolutely. And I think it's much more common with nonfiction authors, but I encourage all fiction authors to write nonfiction. nonfiction is very sustainable. It sells month in month out there, it's almost like there are no trends for nonfiction. They're always you know, there's always X number of people every month who arrive who decided they want to write a book? Or maybe they decide they want to, I mean, you write urban fantasy, right? So how to write an urban fantasy book, there are people coming in the market every single day, who wants to know, and it might only be you might sell three books a day. But if that's three books a day, every day forever, because they say a market that is a different market to the readers. I mean, to be honest, those are often readers of the genre anyway, so I would definitely in all you write a book about your research. So I'm writing my next novel is they have the martyr which is based on the martyrdom of Thomas Beckett, and I also have a pilgrimage book which will be nonfiction slash memoir, which will be related to that, based on my research and that again, crossover books. I think Want to encourage people to be much more open about the possibilities of what you can create? Like, it doesn't need to be just a novel mku, whatever. It can be a podcast series

with a sponsor, or it can be a nonfiction book about your research or, you know, I think you've got a witch series, for example, you could write a book about the history of witchcraft in America. And that reaches a completely different market, to which type novels and gives you another stream of income. So I want to encourage people to do that. And back on the rapid releasing, I have never rapid released. So I really, it's not something I could ever do, or would ever do. And I think it is actually a personality type. And I would say, yeah, if so if people listening, if you don't feel rapid releases for you, that's okay. Like, literally all I've ever done is writing a book, publish it, then write another book, then publish it.



Carissa Andrews 25:59

I love it. I that's what I did in the very beginning of my career. And it wasn't until I started realizing that it really enjoyed series that it kind of the rapid releasing component kind of really clicked and made sense in my brain



Joanna Penn 26:10

from a reader perspective. So for example, I've got 11 books in my arcane series. So I've only written. So that's across, I started the first one in 2009. So it's taken like a decade, over a decade to write 11 books, of which three are novellas anyway. And of course, if you are a reader following me for that long, it's like, wow, okay, one a year. That's traditional publishing speed, right. But what's interesting, of course, most of us will do your bookbub on our first in series, and Stena fire is free on all ebook platforms. And people find the series now. So yeah, the rapid releasing, but they're actually discovering an 11 book series now. So for readers, a book is new whenever you discover it. So again, I would just say to people, you can be a relaxed author, and realize that it might just take a bit longer, but for readers, the thrill of series, and all of that is still there. It just might be a couple of years time.



Carissa Andrews 27:11

Absolutely. Yep. It's just about having that patience to get the backlist set to be able to do those things. And I'll say, I am so thrilled when David Goffin was on the show, he was talking about the free booksy series promos I hadn't tried that before. And I just did that. For the the witches series that we were talking about just a second ago. And I have never seen the kind of long term read through that has continued since I did that. Even bookbub hasn't stood a chance. It's very interesting to me. How readers, you know, when they when they're going in there with that series mindset, how they will continue to just like follow the

whole thing. It's just been very fascinating. Have you tried the free book series promos?
Yes, yes,



Joanna Penn 27:54

I? Yeah, Ricky, I know, Ricky there. And they're fantastic. They're absolutely brilliant free books, the bargain books, the red feather romance. They're all fantastic for people to try and kind of add into your promo schedule. And what I'd also say is box sets, box sets are a superpower. And if people have not done box sets, please do box that, like people I know authors, some authors think oh, it will cannibalize my sales. But it doesn't because there are readers of boxsets. And yes, you know, they love them. So, and if you're wide, like I'm wide boxsets make me the most money on Kobo. And when you do like a bookbub on a wide box set, you make tons of money. And then if you have multiple box sets in a series again, like I have three box sets in my arcane series, and you get bigger chunks of money. I even have a nine book box set, which is about you know, you make a ton of money on places like Kobo and Apple because you can price high and still get the 70%. So, there are so many different ways to do this career. That's, I think, very important.



Carissa Andrews 29:00

For sure. Oh, my goodness. So I'm like, my brain is just spinning. I'm like, holy cow. That's so so good. So, so valuable to people who are listening, and not to completely kind of twist things a little bit. But there's a topic that you have been really into very, a lot and you've been very passionate about lately that has, I mean, honestly, I'm new to it. And so I'm going okay, I have to learn from you on this. But we're talking about artificial intelligence and how it affects writers and you are very much a futurist you you look into, you know, the trends that we've seen going on, you know, in our industry, and then you take that information you look out even further. So that's been it's been very interesting listening to your podcast as of late and you talk about how AI is kind of diving into all sorts of sectors of our indie author career or it could. So could you fill my audience in on some of the biggest ways that you have seen AI impacting the indie authors? so far.



Joanna Penn 30:01

Yeah, sure. Well, and it's funny because people think, you know, we were story lovers, you know. And so people are thinking killer robots and stuff like that. But that's talking about. I mean, all of us use Amazon, right? And Amazon's algorithm is an AI you know, newflash people, there's not some load of people sitting there going up, I think I should recommend this book to this person. It is an algorithm. And it is an artificial, I mean, the word artificial

intelligence or a phrase is not, it's like a blanket term now for so many things. But let's say algorithms. So then, of course, as soon as you use Amazon to search for a book, you are the algorithm is activated once you publish. And let's say you use Amazon advertising, okay, just as a classic example. So I have a number of books in German, I used dpl, which is a translation engine, an AI translation engine to translate the first draft of the books. And then I had a human editor and human beta readers, then I uploaded them on Amazon, these are nk you because I don't know German. And I put Amazon auto ads on that. And they just run. And many of us use Amazon auto ads, which, again, are an algorithm. So what else I mean, many of us will use Google to do research, you know, obviously, their search engine is run by an algorithm, we use Facebook to do advertising, or we do, you know, connecting with people on Facebook, Facebook is run by algorithms, we all know this. So everyone is already using AI, in their author career, that is just the way it is. And then I mean, you could look further into our lives, you know, Netflix is driven by an algorithm. And maybe you use Uber, which is an algorithm or maybe you get food delivered to your house. And their whole thing is driven by an algorithm. And so there's so many things that people already use, like map, map technology to get somewhere in your car is now driven by what's the fastest route, that's an algorithm. So when we think about the encroachment or the tools, there's a book called tools and weapons, and that's how I like to think about it is, AI is a tool. And it can be a weapon, we know the positives and negatives of Facebook, we know the positives and negatives of Amazon and Google and all these things, and most of us accept them. And if we don't, we leave this, right, like a deal with the devil, and most of us are taking them because our businesses are built on this. That doesn't mean we shouldn't be activists for change, which we should be, which is partly why I'm heavily engaging with this. Because if you leave it to all the techie people, they're going to screw it up. So we we get involved in artificial intelligence. But those are just some examples of the way we are already using AI. And I think why I'm so passionate about talking about it is it's not just our most of us have other jobs, like most people listening will have a job, and what's changing, and particularly the pandemic has accelerated the automation and artificial intelligence rollout in many companies by many, many times. And so what I want people to be aware of is how these things are going to impact our wider lives, as well as our author lives and to be prepared for that future. And to be ahead of the curve. So and again, there are very, very positive things and there are things that will be difficult. So AI voices are an example. So there are very, very good AI narrated voices. Now they're being used in gaming, which is obviously a massive industry far bigger than books, computer generated actors in the film industry is also a big thing. We've got people rent doing concerts in fortnight with avatars. I mean,



Carissa Andrews 33:57

it's crazy.



Joanna Penn 33:58

It is crazy. And I feel like authors are so stuck in a world that was new in 2014. And it's like, I'm sorry, people, you cannot think that this is the way it's going to stay. And I mean, the publishing industry is still obsessed with over digital change to ebooks or digital audio. And this is a decade old now. And people are still obsessing about it. Whereas I'm now looking into the 2030s. And going okay, well, how can we prepare for that? Because this is my full time career. This is my living, right? I want to be doing what I love in a decade in two decades in three, I'm only 46.



Carissa Andrews 34:40

Right? Right. I



Joanna Penn 34:41

want to be doing this for a while. So when I talk about this stuff, and it's so interesting, you asked because many people do not want to talk about this. They want to say oh no, everything's fine, everything's fine, but it will be fine if you know what's coming and you adapt to it and as absolutely the borrower Kevin Kelly Do you surf the wave and not drown in it. And that's my, one of my goals has always been in the creative pen to help authors surf the change and not drown in it. So that's, that's why I'm talking about it.



Carissa Andrews 35:11

I find it so fascinating. One of the podcasts I listened to the other day was about about today this morning when I was bringing my daughter to her big test. She had a huge MCA this morning, of course, and I find out yesterday, but I was listening to the podcast where you had the guy from Google on and you guys were talking about AI technology and how it can actually be applied to reading and narrating audiobooks. Hopefully, sometime this year, we might have access to that sort of thing. But also that you've, you've listened to the podcast about co writing, so AI helping you co write novels. And so it's like this, the possibilities in my mind, I started out as a sci fi, fantasy, genre bending author, it's for me, it's like I love I love sci fi, as well as fantasy and urban fantasy. And so there's a lot of things for me that kind of criss cross. And so, of course, my my brain spins off in this whole new territory, where I'm like, how did I not like put this together before now I must have had my head under a rock with too many kids or something I don't even know. And so you've like blown my mind. In the past few weeks where I've been looking at all these things going. This is the most incredible thing I've like listened to in a very long time.



Joanna Penn 36:19

So good. I'm glad you're enjoying it. I do aim. This is the thing after podcasting for Gosh, 12 years or something I have to I have to come up with ways to keep people's attention.



Carissa Andrews 36:29

Right? Well, you certainly got mine because I'm like, this is just the most amazing thing I have. I have heard in a while and my husband has been talking for a long time about how, you know, we're going to be having driverless cars very soon. And there's a lot of like futurist stuff that we talked about in our house. And it was so weird to me to be sitting here going, Okay, I kind of I kind of thought a little bit about the AI narration part of it, but not about AI helping you kind of generate a first draft, for instance, and how that could eventually become a thing so that you could write faster. And so there's a lot of different things that you you've kind of broached the subject on and I'm going this is just incredible. So what do you think, I guess is the most interesting thing that you're seeing with the whole AI generation and how things are converging right now? Is there one that we're you're most excited about it or the prospect of what's what, what's to come?



Joanna Penn 37:22

I mean, I wrote this little book a few months ago on artificial intelligence, blockchain and virtual worlds, which was what I was aiming to do a podcast on all of these topics. And it was there was there is so much going on. And you could put all these things in different buckets, you know, like you say, GPT three, which is this technology you're talking about, this sort of generates words, and there was an article this week GPT, three is generating over 4 billion words per day now. Wow. And there are over 300 companies that have now built systems on top of GPT. Three to help generate words. So if you are a content copywriter for a finance journal, I would be very scared. I mean, I'd be like, Okay, oh, I would use it to do my job, I would use it to help me write that. And it's also licensed in Microsoft, open AI is licensed to Microsoft. So we're going to see this kind of technology come into many areas, there's also an open source comparison now. And it's so this kind of text generation, but I've been trying it myself, I've been in the driver. And I think it's a bit like a car, you know, there's a car, it might be a really good car, but that car's just gonna sit there unless you the human, point it in the direction you want to go. And you say why I want to go visit my mom. And there's a very human reason to take that journey. And then also, you're directing it. So I didn't want people to think, Oh, goodness, the robots coming for our jobs. I mean, yeah, how do I work with the robots, but what I would say on writing fast, that's not what I think is important, okay, it's really important for everyone to realize that you cannot ever write as fast as an algorithm. So these, these will be able to

generate books, you know, like I said, 4 billion words per day, you cannot ever beat the machine. So what you have to do is learn to work with the machine to be more human. So this is where I'm going with it in that salute. Everything we do has to add to us being more human. So for example, the blockchain stuff and I had an article about it, the NFTs or the nifty ease. You know, this is a way for fans to be part of your world to have digital exclusives like we do. Signed hardback, for example. So I'm excited about blockchain because it's going to enable direct sales away from sites like Amazon or Wayfair. All of the people who take the you know, cut in the middle. So I'm excited about GPT. Three, because it might give me a different angle on my muse driven brain. I'm excited about AI voice, mainly because I want my books in different languages. So I narrate my books in English, my nonfiction, but could my voice also narrate my books in German? How awesome would that be? Right? As I was



Carissa Andrews 40:27

listening to that,



Joanna Penn 40:28

yeah, that's exciting, or things like, I'm excited about VR, because maybe you and I could do this in VR with a virtual audience. And that would benefit people listening to us, but also we could be more human, it wouldn't just be on a screen, we could see the audience, we could interact with them. So everything I'm talking about, is not about trying to be more like a machine as in be more productive, or do things faster, or it's actually to be more human. And that's the only way we're going to be able to keep earning a living in this new world is to just, you know, like a mug, let's say a mug that has fingerprints on from the potter, who made it in their local studio will sell for more money than the mass produced mug out of Chinese or American factory that is perfect. It's absolutely perfect and has no fingerprints on, but we will pay more on Etsy for the mug with a fingerprint on. And I want us to think about this in the author space, how can I put my fingerprints on my work? It's not. It's this is the author voice. This is the choice of how you talk to your readers. This is how we connect with each other and how we connect with our audience. So yeah, I'm excited about technology, but only in the way that it will serve us to be more human.



Carissa Andrews 41:58

Right? Well, and in some ways to it, it kind of opens up new new avenues that maybe we wouldn't have been able to do before. You had mentioned on your podcast about how you

know that the way that some of this AI augmentation for speech for reading for audiobooks can actually help a lot of authors who maybe can't afford to do audiobooks or don't have the time to read their own audio books. And they still want to enter that, that that market space until maybe they're they're earning more or have a little more experience and feel more comfortable doing it. You know, you don't I mean, so it's like it opens up other possibilities to that maybe they wouldn't have otherwise had, which is really beneficial to them.



Joanna Penn 42:35

Yeah, and also the audience. I mean, you think about we're very lucky in inverted commas to speak English. Audio in English is very developed, we do have a lot of choice to listen to audio books in English. In most countries in the world, in most languages in the world. They do not have an audio book ecosystem like we do. Like I was listening to a woman from Ghana, when I went to Frankfurt Book Fair. And she said, you know, in the in the Ghanaian languages, there are no narrators or studios, and people can't listen to books in their own language. And that's just wrong. And it makes me very sad. It makes me very angry that people resist AI voices, because they are being protectionist of an ecosystem that is very skewed towards English language speakers, and a particular type of English language speakers, whereas there are lots of communities who would benefit also, I would like my books to be available in every language in every voice, even like I said, you know, you're an American woman, you know, you know, and I'm a British woman, people prefer different voices. So why can't they have a choice, like you have a choice on your GPS system, or your



Carissa Andrews 43:53

which I always turn to the British one because I like to, I like to pretend he's Jarvis, my husband's from England. So I'm like, I gotta listen to the Jarvis version.



Joanna Penn 44:03

What you like, and I think that's very important. So we have to the what this comes down to, though, is licensing. So for example, if people sign an exclusive contract with a site like a CX, you're you have signed away the ability to create an AI version of that book, or if you've signed with a publisher, you've probably signed away story rights, entire audio rights to the whole thing. Whereas I think what we need to start thinking is when we do audio rights, we need to say, be very specific about Okay, I'm signing this contract for human single voice narrated in British English within maybe world territory, so that we can

start to split our audio rights. So my goal will be to have let's say, my AI book, for example, there is a version that is human narrated by me. Now, I should also I would also like to have an AI narrated version where you You can change the voice to whatever you want. And yeah, I might license that to Google, for example. And they would turn that into whatever they're going to turn it into. And then maybe one of my novels could be a full cast audio with music generated by someone or produced or whatever. And that's another audio, right? So, again, this is about expanding your mind. It drives me nuts how people get obsessed with Kindle ebooks in America. It's like, Yes, yeah, it's just one tiny, tiny part of your intellectual property ecosystem, and the potential that is coming in the next decade. Please just just try to sign away all this stuff.



Carissa Andrews 45:44

I'm even amazed how many people will forego paperback books? Yes, like, exactly.



Joanna Penn 45:48

Yeah.



Carissa Andrews 45:52

You're missing a whole area. Like that's super easy to fit fill right now. You don't have any.



Joanna Penn 46:00

It is crazy. I mean, even obviously, I was laughing. Even this is a few years ago. Now I was talking with an audio producer. And we were talking about worldwide English rights. So at the moment, people assume the definition of worldwide English. But what about, you know, we've got companies like Virgin and Elan musk and people, they're going to be people going in above our atmosphere into space tourism, right? So where's the license for offworld? rights? for it? Can Wow, actually listen to your audiobook on the way out of our atmosphere? Because if you've licensed worldwide English, does that apply? So this is stuff like that is like you write sci fi? It's hilarious to kind of consider this. But we should. We absolutely



Carissa Andrews 46:45

should. Because at some point, it could become a very real thing that we need to be talking about.



Joanna Penn 46:51

Exactly. And we all like, you know, we love to create but we're also business people we want to make money. So Hell yeah, you know, you can you can, at the moment, you can license your work to be played on a on an aeroplane flying from the UK to the US right? You can you can license it to be part of the in flight entertainment system. But why can't we license to a flight that goes out of our atmosphere. And again, I just people listening probably like, this is ridiculous. But so much has changed in the last decade. So again, I've been doing this I first self published in early 2008. So 13 years ago, as we talk now. And so much has changed so much, it blows my mind how much is changed so far, and how much change is coming. So I just as we are almost out of time, I just want to say to people, just keep your mind, open to the possibilities ahead and make sure that you can take advantage of these things as they come.



Carissa Andrews 47:49

I think it's so incredible that you have such such a powerful insight into that future because it really helps. Not only, you know, people like me who are interested in it, but people who are listening to this podcast who maybe haven't even, you know, maybe they don't even have a sci fi bone in their body, but are thinking Holy cow, I didn't have any grasp on the fact that me just writing this, you know, mystery book, could one day become something so much bigger. I mean, it opens up so many possibilities in in our minds and how we can actually embrace indie authorship and how we, as the entrepreneurs can actually take it to that next level, should we choose to really kind of, like you said, Follow that tide and rise with it versus like, drown in it. That's amazing. Thank you so much for pioneering that I really like I said, when I was first starting to listen to some of the episodes that you had, it just blew my mind. And so I've been bingeing so many of them, trying to wrap my head around it and get like kind of clear on the direction that everything could possibly go. It's just, I love it. I love learning new things like this. That's been really incredible. So thank you for doing all of that.



Joanna Penn 48:52

Oh, thank you glad you finding interesting.



Carissa Andrews 48:55

Absolutely. Well, like I said, thank you so much for sharing so many of your insights and

your time with us today. I I personally appreciate it. And I know that my audience does, too. Where can my audience find out more about you about what you do? Get involved with your podcast again? Your books, all that stuff? Where can I send them to?



Joanna Penn 49:13

Sure. Well, the creative pen podcast pen with a double n and my books are Joanna pen and jF pen on all the stores. And yeah, probably Yeah. And if you have any questions, Twitter is my best platform at the creative pen. That's fantastic. Thank



Carissa Andrews 49:29

you so much, Joanna, I really, really appreciate you being here.



Joanna Penn 49:33

So thanks for having me.



Carissa Andrews 49:35

Well, I don't know about you. But I am extremely blown away by the possibilities we indie authors have on the horizon, things to join us insights. Even if you don't find the talk on AI and how it might impact some of the ways we do business in the future. as interesting as I do. I hope you'll at least tuck it away in your back pocket as something to look into later on. Not everyone can be early adopters of things. I get that a Ai augmentation authorship, for example might be one of them. But understanding where the world is moving and the trends that are heading our direction could turn out to be a make or break decision as Time marches on. But again, only time will tell. Joanne has been around for a long while and she's seen the changes we in the author's have had to endure this past decade. Because of this and her love of futurist thinking. She is the perfect person to keep your eyes and ears trained on if you want to get a pulse on what's coming down the road for us. We obviously talked about a lot, so I will make sure to have all of the show notes ready for you including links to find Joanna and the titles of the books she recommended in the podcast. Head over to authorrevolution.org forward slash 79 to check them out. And be sure to check out Joanna's podcast, the creative pen, pen spelt with two ends, as well as her books and novels. You will be so glad you did. Now, as I said in the introduction, Joanna has been an inspiration of mine and someone I have frequently turned to for new information and insights into our work as indie authors. She has an incredible mind and I love the way she follows her Muse and documents all she learns so we can learn right

there along with her. Well guys, that's all I have for this week. I hope you enjoyed this interview as much as I did. Until next week, go forth and start your author revolution.