

Episode 199

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SPEAKERS

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Carissa Andrews 00:04

The indie author revolution has been around for more than a decade. But we indies continue to push the boundaries of what we're capable of. From getting over initial prejudices, to staring down perfectionism and author impostor syndrome. We've become a force to reckon with. Now after years of hustling, grind, we indies are rebelling again. Gone are the days of publishing a book a month until we drop, and in its place, we're sowing the seeds of a better way away with more ease, abundance and flow. Get ready to learn about in the authorship from a whole new perspective. We're about to cover everything from releasing your poverty mentality to manifesting your millionaire author destiny. I'm Carissa Andrews, and this is the Author Revolution Podcast. Well, hi, there, everybody. Welcome back to the Author Revolution Podcast. Oh my gosh, guys, this is episode 199. Like what I just realized that this morning when I was getting ready for everything, I'm like, Okay, here we are, we're at the end of the one hundreds. I'm gonna celebrate by getting this episode out and then going on to continue wanting to pull my hair out with a wide strategy. Yes, that's right. Today, we're going to be talking about going wide. And about some of the trials and tribulations that I've been dealing with as I go through all this because I want to, number one, help you understand what this looks like. So if you're a new author, if you're someone who has only ever published with Amazon, and you've been thinking about going wide or going direct or any of those things, I kind of want to give you a behind the scenes experience based off of what's been happening in my urban fantasy realm. Because let me tell you, it's been harrowing. It's been a little bit strange. And here I am going to talk about it. Why not? Let's go for it. Okay. So last month, as you know, I decided to create a Shopify site. It was actually in July, so technically, it was two months ago, but I haven't wrapped my head around the fact that it's September yet. So here we are. So in like the middle part of July, I started creating my Shopify site, it went live literally the last day on Harry Potter's birthday. Why know this information? I don't know. But went live on July 31. And so last month, August was the first month that my store was live. And I love it, like the site I love, everything about it is great. It's been fantastic to be able to come up with new ways to interact with my readers, it's been going well, I can't say I'm earning like a super ton just yet, because I'm still or was still mostly exclusive to Amazon. And while I have all of my paperbacks and I have all of my audio books, I haven't tested out ads for everything yet, because I've been working on my strategy, my exit strategy for going wide. And the reason for that decision was because my store is my home base. Now I want it to be the place where

readers will go first. And hopefully, ideally, purchase from me instead of through the other retailer sites, right. And so I'm undercutting everybody, by \$1. It's not a super ton. But if they purchase a single ebook from me, I'm undercutting at \$1. And then I'm also having the option to bundle things, whether it be audio books with the ebook version, whether it be the audio book bundles of the whole series, whether it be ebook bundles of books that you probably couldn't get otherwise. So for example, Diana Hawthorne doesn't have an omnibus edition, but you can get a bundle on my site. Or if you wanted to purchase the accidental Alpha series, you can get a bundle on my site. Or if you want to get all of the books that Diana Hawthorne is associated with, for the most part, you can get that in a bundle as well. So I have like a crossover between the Diana Hawthorne stuff and the Windhaven books. I don't however, have awakening put in there as of right now, even though she's technically in it. It's something to think about down the road, something may be new to add at some point. But do you get what I'm saying? There's all these new ways that I'm trying to experience and interact with or like, try out or get things put together for my audience. I'm also working on special edition book boxes. And I'm working on maybe a Kickstarter for that to be able to make it really exciting and fun for those who actually participate with it. So all of these things are in motion, right. And in the meantime, in the process of it, I was trying to come up with my exit strategy for all of my books. I decided to pull them so that I can have Diana Hawthorne's books bundled with Wynn Haven I was excited to get the Windhaven books you know, bundled in new ways and discounted and do all the things. These are my most popular series. But they were tied to KU and I no longer feel it's the best place for me because the KU page reads rate is going down and down and down, I can earn a lot more if people are buying the books, obviously, it's even better if they buy them for me, because now I have access to those royalties right away. It's a win win situation in that. If I can get my ads working, if I can get everything going the way I want it to go. And I'm not saying their ads aren't working, I'm earning through my store, which has been so fun. And so phenomenal to see like coming through with the notifications from Shopify, not quite where I want it to be, ultimately, obviously, but it's still getting there. So my wide strategy all came down to okay, I want to have access to do these bundles. I want to be able to create these experiences for readers who love to read books. And even if you liked KU, you can actually purchase all of these books for you know, almost the same price as a month of KU, whatever. However, I have them bundled. And so that like I had them all ready to go in the back into the store. I knew they were going to come out. And my first book to come out was midlife wolf bite, it was supposed to come out. Keyword very supposed to come out on August 25. It came out, it was fine. Everything is beautiful. It was out for about six days. And all of a sudden, it's back in KU on the store side. Not on my end. I've looked I've gone through it is not enrolled in KU. But on the store side. It is right. What the crap is happening here. I have no idea. So I reached out to Amazon. And I'm like, Hey, guys, just so you know, my book is not in KU, and it's showing NKU Can you please take it out of there? Oh, well, when you have your book and blah, blah, blah, 72 hours, typical response. I think I got that stupid email six times so far, six times. And I finally was getting kind of fed up with it. I'm like, you know, I want all of my books out, I wasn't going to take them out in one big clump, I wasn't going to be that person because I wanted to just let them come out. I know that Amazon will do like little push notifications, letting your audience know that, hey, if you want to get this book, get it now before it comes out of Kindle Unlimited. They do that sort of thing. So I was planning on leaving it all going right until they drop off. My last book would have come out in October. So October 20 would have been the first time where I could start really getting going on this wide situation. But I was so irritated by Amazon. And now I love Amazon. They've done wonderful things for me in my career. But this was very frustrating. And it still is. So I let them know that hey, you know what? Let's just make this easy. I want all of my books out of KU. Okay. They said, within the hour of that email, could you not super fast? All of my books were out of KU. Except? Yes, that's right. Midlife, we'll find the one book that was out before all of them. It's still there. It's

still showing as KU. I reached out to them again and said, Hey, guy, is it still there? Remove it. Oh, what Asin? Is this that you're talking about? The asin was in the email. So I don't even know why they're asking this question. Sent them the Asin. Still in there. From their side, they're saying it's not in there. But they didn't look, the store side is showing KU. Now. Here's maybe where the glitch is happening. And I know that this doesn't have to be like this because I can see the books in there. It is currently a prime reading title. Right. So it's in prime reading for the next three months. It did click over on September 1. So more than likely something weird glitched out because of the prime reading situation. And it's trying to shove it into Kindle Unlimited, even though it is not. So from an author perspective. I don't even know if I'm technically getting page reads even though it's showing NKU. But it's not enrolled. So are they getting the page reads? But I'm not getting the royalties? I don't know could be happening. Right? So and because I can tell you right now my page reads have gone down because there's no books in KU anymore. I mean, it's not completely gone. Because obviously if people get their KU stuff going, and they do all the things, and they leave it in their library, you could have paid reads from someone who borrowed your book 15 years ago, as of right now, like obviously Kindle Unlimited hasn't been around that long, but you get what I'm saying doesn't it's not tied to that as long as the book was in their library, and they finally read it, you get those patriots. So here I am trying to get to midlife wolf bite out of KU from the store front side. It's still there. It's still frustrating for me. But they took out all of my other books. So now I am left with holy crap I need to get all of these books loaded number one on my site, which is what I did first. That was my strategy and made sure all of those eBooks are available on I cite, they can be downloaded. They can be purchased by themselves in a bundle, all the things, there's tons of new variants that I had to create and have in there, which was fantastic, right? But now I'm also having to go through the distributors and deciding Do I go direct with Apple? Do I go direct with Barnes and Noble? Do I go direct with Kobo, which, by the way, I've decided to go direct with Barnes and Noble and KOBO. I've chosen not to do that with Apple, because it found I found that it really doesn't matter. In speaking with one of my apple representatives, it really doesn't matter if it's through their site, or if it's through draft to digital, so that's fine, I'll use drafted digital makes my life easier. And in the process of that, though, even though I have no store links on my site, other than my own store, like everything's going to my own website back back matter, and everything is tying right back to my site. So if they want to get the next book, go to my site, they want to leave a review, go to my site, you get what I'm saying. I want to see the next book in a series go to my site. But I had like, in my bio, a little line that said, you know, visit my Amazon store or see me on Amazon, you know how in vellum, it has those little lines where you can like list your different links while I had one for Amazon. So of course, I have to remove that now, because Apple will not allow a book that has a link to a competitor. Fair enough. I don't need it in there anyway. So I took that out. It's going through the process again. Now all of this is to say, originally, as these books are coming out, and we're talking this is like 15 books, guys, it's not a small number. So I'm in the process of pulling all of these titles out, I'm getting in the process of figuring out how I wanted to release them, like, can you put them up for preorder? No, you cannot. I mean, technically you can. But according to Apple, they want to see the original date because they don't want to confuse readers. So they would much rather you put down the original date it was up for sale, the original date it was launched, and then just hit publish so that readers know how long this book has been out so that they don't think it's a brand new book. I get it, it's fine. So there's no pre orders on any of my books. And I'm in the process of going through this list of books, and getting them out on the different distributors websites, which is a task in itself, because for me that means for different sites. So I failed to mention, I'm doing Google Play as well. So the Google Play dashboard, Barnes and Noble, and Kobo dashboards, I'm all working on them through their own native sites. And then everything else I'm doing through draft to digital. So that's four different sites that I'm having to put my books up into, and get ready to go, you know, out to distribution. And now I'm finding

obviously, I have to remove a link out of all the back matters of all of my books, that's fine. But do you see what I mean? It's like, all of a sudden, there's this like, huge snowball of things that are going on. And I wasn't fully ready for it. So now the strategic um, a number two, strategic, the strategic side of my brain is like, Okay, let's do this thing. Let's figure out how to get all these books in there as quickly as possible. And while Jenny's helping with some of it, there's a lot of it, I do myself because I need to see how certain pieces are working. And I have had lots of my books wide. But it's been a while like it's been, I don't even remember when I pulled the rest of my books out. So like the penta, Hamas Chronicles and awakening and merciless and final five, they were all out of KU for quite a while. And I don't remember the process. So I wanted to go in, I wanted to figure out how it works. I wanted to see how each site works differently. I wanted to experience Barnes and Noble because I hadn't done any of my books through Barnes and Noble direct before. And so it's just been an interesting experience to see the different platforms to see how they work, which ones are better, which by the way, I will say Barnes and Nobles back dashboard is fantastic. It's so good. Compared to the other sites, including Amazon's even though it's simple, and it's you know, whatever, the UI, the user interface is just so great. And I really like the way that they put the work and effort into that dashboard. So if anyone from Barnes Noble hears this Good job, guys, it looks absolutely great. So here I am trying to come up with my strategy. And my head feels like it's exploding because not only am I doing all of my books and getting all of them up onto the dashboards in the sites so that they can start getting distributed. But I have like Zowie Baba is coming up. And so I'm trying to get Oracle ready for that and trying to make sure it's going to be ready to rock and roll by the 20th but I have to have links before the ninth and all the things in addition, I'm doing you know the four books five days course and I'm still writing in my rom com. And all of this is going on at the same time as like trying to build this strategy of going wide. Now for me I'm not super great at tons As of moving parts for the same book, and so I'm trying to wrap my head around, like, what's the best way to deal with, and India's external sites, because I like to let my partners because the in my brain dealing with a a wide distributor or another retailer, they're a new partner that I'm working with. And I want to be able to show them the love, right? I want to be able to get reviews on those sites, I want to be able to figure out, you know, where my readers are, are they excited that they're on these new sites. And yet, in the back of my mind, my mind is going your site is the one that matters most. So the fact that it's on your site needs to be big, the fact that it's on your site means I have to do something, to really get readers excited to come get these books wide now. And all this is to say, like, there is no right way I don't feel to go ahead and launch your books, my brain has been trying to rack around this concept of like, how do you get your books wide? How do you make sure that they are fantastic. And now, maybe I'm going about this the wrong way, maybe there is a really great way to promote the wide aspects, you know, obviously do book Bubs. And, you know, try to get the wide readership, reach out to newsletter swaps, and do group promos and whatever that are specific to wide audiences, I get all those strategies like I'm there, I'm going to be using them at some point. But at the same time, as these books are coming into the new platforms, and as these books are starting to hopefully be seen and gained some traction, my job, my first instinct is still to go to my site first. And to make a big deal about my site first. Does that make sense? So my strategy, as we're going forward is to just kind of like, soft, launch all the books, get them all up on the sites, and then one by one, rather than making a big deal about them, you know, right away, as soon as they're in there. One by one, I'm going to start doing like a promo stack or a promo launch, where like Book One would be free, I'll do a free book, see, and make sure that everything is going wide. Let people know that for the first time ever, these books are in a wide like retailer space, because none of these three series have ever been fully wide. When I first launched secret legacy. That book was the only book that was wide first, because I was trying to list him for it, if you remember, right. And that's the only book that's the only book I did like that. So it's going to be interesting to see how wide readers respond to

these books. And I want to be able to get them excited. But I also don't want to spend a ton of money gaining those readers, I want them to find me naturally. And if they find me naturally by going to my site first and then going, Oh, she looks cool, or this book looks cool. And then they go to their wide retailer and find it. Fair enough, go for it, use the book store you feel most comfortable with. But at the same time, I feel like if we funnel as authors, the people to our site first and allow them to figure it out from there. I'm sorry, these readers are smart, they're savvy, you don't have to have links on your store. For them to go, let me copy this title. And then go search for it on Barnes and Noble. Like they'll figure it out. I have. There's the readers for crying out loud, we don't give them enough credit. I know a lot of marketers out there like make it as easy as possible for them to get the book where they want to get the book. I disagree with that. I think if we as our author platform evolves, as our store evolves, you don't see Amazon going, Hey, this book is also available over on Barnes and Noble and Apple, here's a link to that. No, they want you on their site. They want you right there. They want you purchasing through their experience. They're not going to send you to another store. Same should go for us. So as I've been working through this strategy, the more I keep coming back around to it really doesn't matter that the books are going to be wide. I can mention it. I can do some promos, because that's fun, because I feel called to do it. I can mention that the books are available on certain sites, blah, blah, blah. But at the end of the day, it's about my site. It's about where I want them purchasing through. And so it doesn't matter. There's that there's no reviews on those books yet on other sites. It doesn't matter if you know Apple is having a freakout because there was a link to Amazon, none of that matters. All that matters is I am now right now today capable of selling my books on my site. And so one of the first things I did was create a new ad so that book bundles were featured, because that was a new thing I couldn't Do Before then unless I did that for the genomics Chronicles, which, obviously, I can definitely do as well, I have a an ad running so that they're going directly to the series start pages to so that they can check out the books there. There's all sorts of ways we as authors can, like, get people excited about our books. And I really do feel that, in this transition, these growing pains of going wide or going as a direct store, it's up to us to decide what's most important. And it's up to us to decide how we want our readers to interact with us. And it's up to us to become the entrepreneurs that we have always been, but really embrace it so that we can start to grow and stop playing small and stop playing as if we are so grateful for these retailers, when in actuality, we've been funneling hundreds 1000s of dollars into their ad systems, we've been sending people in traffic to their site, making their site grow exponentially. We've been doing all the things to help them be better. But what have they done to help us. And it's not to say that they haven't done things, they've helped us with experience, and they've helped us with exposure, there are things that they've done. But at the end of the day, we've helped them way more than they've helped us. And so it's time to start thinking bigger, it's time to start thinking, like the entrepreneur, author we are. We have books, we have products, we are the creative force behind these things. And it's time for us to start taking that into effect, and making sure that we do big things with our author careers. This is the next level of authorship. This is the next level of indie, author space. And being wide allows us the opportunity to do what we want to do in our own store. I think it's less about being wide in some ways than it is about having the control again, it goes back to control the indie authors love this right? Goes back to the control we get to have by having everything under our roof, we can sell them on whatever sites we want to sell them. If we didn't want to sell them on Amazon at all, we have that choice. So there's all sorts of ways we can interact with it by not being in an exclusivity agreement with any stores. From this point forward, at least as long. As long as I can get Amazon to let go of midlife wolf bite, I am going to be a wide urban fantasy author. And when I go and start launching the rom coms, they are going to already be wide, like they will never be in KU, I'm not ever going to put them in that exclusivity program, not even for 90 days. So it's interesting to see how my mindset has shifted this past year. And it's not even because of necessarily the

conversations we've had with people like Katie Cross or to Morgana best. All these people have such wonderful ideas. It wasn't because of that. It's because as I started creating my own store, my own mindset shifted. And it's that mindset and perception that can put us in a different place and on a different trajectory than know whatever people talk about. So if you haven't considered how to next level your business, if you haven't considered what a direct store like Shopify or WooCommerce store would do for you, I really encourage you to start thinking about it. Because it's just the transition from one place to another has been so profound in my mind in the way that I handled things in the way that I'm thinking about my author career, that I think it's truly going to be the thing that sets authors apart in the coming years, we are going to be doing incredible things. And it all starts here. It all starts with taking ownership of the amazing books that we create, and going all in with them, of loving them so much that we go all in with them. You feel me. And at any rate, those are the trials and tribulations I've been having so far, in this transition of going wide. It was unexpected, the way it kind of went down. It's unexpected still, because a midlife wolf bite was out for six whole days before they flung it back in there. And all this is just concretizing in my mind that these external retailers are not everything. We put a lot of energy and effort and thoughts around how to make the retailers happy. And I really think it's backwards. Sites and companies like Apple do so much more for helping authors be seen and working with them more directly. I'm having more of that personalized touch than Amazon ever will. And I get there the biggest retailer, I get it. So we have to be on there if we want to be seen in that regard. But at the same time the tables are turning, like, readers are going to author sites, they are buying books direct, there are people making millions of dollars on their own Shopify stores, as authors, and why not me? Why not you? Why not give it a try? You know. So, as this wide transition happens, I've let go of the overwhelm, of doing all the things and trying to be everything to everyone. And instead, I'm recognizing the reason I've done it. The reason I'm going wide, is so that I have control of my books, I have control through my site. And so my site is number one, everything else is secondary. And it doesn't matter the strategy of launching them elsewhere. It doesn't matter how fast they go, it doesn't matter when they hit, it doesn't matter what sites get them first. What matters is that I have the control, I need to do what I want to do with my books. So hopefully that was helpful. I know, it was a bit of a Drama Fest for this one. I'm not usually into drama, but I'll tell you what, it's been frustrating. It's been a frustrating couple of weeks. And you know, when I say couple of weeks, I mean like from the first until now, which is obviously five days, but I was struggling with my strategy. Well, before that, like I was trying to figure out how I was going to do this as each of these books were coming out in staggered timeframes, like I had books starting to come out in August, all the way through the middle of October. So I was trying to come up with strategies on like, Okay, this book coming out, then this book is going to come on, then I'll do an announcement on this day of do I like try to put them all in staggered, so that their rapid releasing a month apart, like I was thinking about all the things guys, like seriously, I was looking at the strategy, and all the different angles. And ultimately, at the end of the day, when this went down, it was like, you know, it doesn't matter. I'm just gonna start going through one series, get it all posted, let it do its thing, do the next series and knock them out one at a time and just let them start, you know, hitting the stores. And when they're all out there, when all the stores have the books, that's when I'll start you know, promoting and doing fun things. I'm not going to worry about anything else because right now they're already there in my store right now. I already have control. And that's what matters most, at least to me. Okay, whew, that was quite the tirade. See, see you get me going about this stuff. And I get very passionate about making sure we're not getting the short end of the stick with this. It's very crazy. It's very surreal is what it actually has been an interesting couple of weeks. Alright, guys, if you'd like to download the transcript of today's podcast episode, you can head over to authorrevolution.org/199. Crazy Crazy. I can't believe this is last in the hundreds. Wow, that is some phenomenal stuff. So next episode, it's our magical 200th

episode, there's gonna be some fun stuff happening there. I might even do a giveaway, who I'll have to think about that. Maybe I'll be doing a giveaway next week. So stay tuned, hang tight, and like check it out. Okay. All right. Have a wonderful rest of the week. Enjoy your process. Enjoy thinking through your own strategy when it comes to your books. I hope you'll consider going direct sales at some point in your author career if you haven't already done so. It's been an absolute blast from my end of things I have to admit. So it's definitely something I'll be doing with my rom com as soon as I have that first book ready, I'll be putting it up into a Shopify store and rebuilding that rom com site. So I've got the name, I'll just change it up. Because that's what I do. Alright, guys, have a wonderful rest of the week, get the words on the page. Don't forget to get signed up for four bucks, five days. We'll be launching that course on October 1. So that's coming straight up. That's over at authorrevolution.org/4books5days. And in the meantime, go forth and start your author revolution.