

Committing to social media

Today's entrepreneurs, including authors and illustrators, are increasingly challenged to sustain relationships with their customers and fans. In the past that meant replying to questions, correspondence, and fielding interview requests; then websites and blogging became part of the picture; now social media is added. There's LinkedIn (for business connections), Facebook (for colleagues and friends), Twitter (to track trends and find niche contacts), YouTube (to showcase your book trailer); and location-based networks, such as FourSquare and Gowalla (for planned and impromptu events). Clearly, social media is mixed with traditional media as part of our day's media montage – watching morning TV, checking online for weather, listening to radio in the car and online during work, skimming magazine headlines at the store, getting breaking news through newsfeeds, receiving mobile messaging on our phones and e-readers, and receiving updates via blogs, posts, emails and messages.

There are quick, easy and even fun ways to engage with fans and to make your presence known – commenting on posts, retweeting information relevant to you and your books, voting your preferences via Digg and Reddit, polling your Facebook friends and fans for input and feedback, and posting mini quizzes and surveys using sites like Polleverywhere, SurveyMonkey and Quibblo to engage your readers. You can even check how you're doing with Howsociable.com – just remember to allot how much time you want to spend, so you can keep your day job!