

Should authors keep their own mailing list of contacts?

Q: Do you recommend that authors keep their own mailing list of contacts? If so, what information should it include?

I think it's important to have a mailing list and to keep notes of previous conversations. You can keep this on a computer database, but an index card file can also work fine.

The basics are the contact's name, job title, organization name, address, phone, fax and e-mail numbers. In addition, you could include the type of audience the publication or station reaches, its circulation or audience size, the kind of books your contact does and doesn't want to see, the books sent in the past, the date of the last time you spoke with that person, and when you want to contact the person again. Our own list also holds personal information that may be relevant, such as whether the contact has young children.

You may want to keep some of the same information on contacts you've spoken to at associations, on booksellers, people you've met at industry conventions, and on individuals at your publishing house. Publishing is a tightly-knit industry and people move around frequently, so past contacts can often be useful in the future. It's also good to help contacts by putting them in touch with others who may be interested in what they are doing and by relaying information they may find useful. 4:5/93