



# As the Author Learns

*Bits & bites about publishing & writing from*

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books that defy categorizing*

## What's Happening?

I can finally report on at least one of the promotional efforts I did this summer. I chose one of my self-published books and put it on sale for a week. Then I booked a spot with a promotional site which sends out newsletters every week, advertising books on sale.

I got my sales report for that month and it was a lot more than usual. Like, 20 times more than usual. Because this was a self-published book, I could access the detailed sales information for the month (the raw data, not what will remain once everyone takes their cut).

It turns out that book sold 35 times more copies during that 2 day period when I booked the ad spot. In one day it sold more copies than it had all year. Well, needless to say, I'm going to continue trying these little promotional binges and see if results really happen.

I do keep track of the promotions I buy to see if they have any effect, especially for the books that release with my publisher. Because of the time lag in royalty distribution it is tricky, but I am seeing more sales overall, especially in books in my backlist. So maybe something is working!



The Big Publishing Fuss this summer was the whole Anthropic lawsuit. It was in the news but you may not have noticed because it just affects authors and publishers. This is what happened (you can do a search to get more details; I admit I am sketchy about the specifics because it's all legalese to me).

Anthropic, an enormous AI company, grabbed thousands of books and used those books to train their AI program. They didn't buy the books. They got them from pirate sites or via other means (I'm not sure what those means are).

Some authors (not sure who) filed a lawsuit and the Authors Guild assisted in their defense. The *Atlantic* magazine published a link to the database that Anthropic supposedly used for this work. Authors could check and see if any of their books were included. I did and I had about a dozen books in there. Some authors (like Nora Roberts) had hundreds.

The lawsuit proceeded and the judge decided that Anthropic did a naughty thing by grabbing those books. But the judge did not say that using books for training AI was illegal; it's a subtle thing but it means that this can happen again. The company has to pay \$3000 per book to the authors--but that figure probably won't stand because of legal fees and wrangling and...you know.

The lawyers published *their* database of what they said were the books involved and, hmm, none of my books were there. Many authors found that the database originally cited differs a lot from the 'official' one.

Plus there's one additional Messy Point: all the books involved must have a valid copyright. In almost all publishing contracts, it states that the publisher will obtain the copyright for the author. But--oops--it turns out that a lot of publishers did not apply for copyright, so the authors can't be included in the suit.

I've always applied for my own copyrights, so no problem for me, but a lot of authors are having some serious talks with their publishers. There is some question, too, whether the publisher should get the payout or should the author?

Yeah. Big mess. Authors have until March (I think) of next year to file a claim. I'm going to doublecheck everything and see if my books were really used. The database is very clunky to use so it'll take some time to do it. Fun times in Publishing Land.

## In Other News

I'm pleased to report that my first-round edits are done for *Thorned*, my book set during the derecho timeframe. I'm always relieved when I get that first round done. That's when I know for sure if the story really hangs together. This plot was a little more complex because not only is there a murder, but there's a side plot about blackmail and other shenanigans.

One of the fun things about writing books is that I can design a whole neighborhood, including house layouts and landscapes. For this book I used the neighborhood where I used to live, but I created a different home for the main character in order to fit into the way I wanted the story to progress. I love looking at these kinds of details!

## What's Next?

I'm currently leading workshops at the local library about writing and publishing. I enjoy sharing information about how much I've learned through the years (almost 20 years!)

I'm also off on my annual Talk About Mystery Books While Gambling trip. I've decided my next book is going to be based on *Wuthering Heights*. I have the characters mostly figured out and I know where it will take place. While I lead the workshops, I hash out ideas for the book, so that's an added bonus. I want to get more of the plot mapped out during my gambling getaway so I can get the book written in November, for National Novel Writing Month.

That's the plan, at least. Wish me luck!

