

## Amazon Offers Perks Authors Can Use to Promote

By Carolyn Howard-Johnson

*Ahhhh, Amazon. When it comes to book sales, she strides on the sturdiest of legs.--Carolyn Howard-Johnson*

Among authors, Amazon.Com has earned its name. For many it is their most important tool for online sales; sometimes it is their not-so-gentle giant. It is a business many love to hate. Several of its policies are perceived to be anti-author. Because it has so many features that are an advantage to authors, I, instead, hate to love it.

Amazon will sell your books here and overseas. She may not cater to authors of any stripe, but she tolerates them as long as they are assigned an ISBN (the number on the back of your book near the barcode). Small or large publishers, subsidy, and self-published books may be found in her pages making her a unique buying and selling tool. She also offers -- with an outstretched hand and only a few guidelines—avenues that will expose your book to a very important target, *readers*. Because Amazon is fickle—always adding a feature or taking something away and always changing page designs, I can only attempt to give exact instructions for implementing the features she offers. It is important for you to sign in so that a little index tab sporting your name pops up on the home page. Mine says "Carolyn's Store." Yours will be equally well personalized once you are a customer. Click on that tab for a myriad of possibilities for you book.

Amazon's YOUR ABOUT YOU AREA is the cog in the wheel that exposes you, the author, to readers. Sometimes Amazon calls it your PROFILE PAGE. This area on Amazon.com is a page—much like a website of your own—that you can tailor to appeal to readers surfing for something to read. When a visitor to Amazon finds your book, or the reviews, essays, and recommended reading lists you have posted on the site, they will also find a link to this page where they can read more about you—not necessarily the private you, but the author you. Because these perks reach your targeted audience—readers--and because they cost you nothing but time, they are a bargain. Make them part of your promotion strategy. Here's how you post your page:

- Go to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).
- Find the tabs near the headline. You've signed in with Amazon so you'll find a personalized tab at the top of the page. Click.
- Find an area that says "Friends and Favorites" or something that indicates their perks like Listmanias, reviews, etc. Click.
- Find the link to *Your About You Area* or *Profile*. Install your page Add your picture or book cover art. Use a short synopsis of your book as part of your biography.

- While you're there, explore this area. There are many features here which I discuss in THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER: HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR PUBLISHER WON'T. The one you are reading is only one abbreviated excerpt from many I could have chosen.
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Now you have *Your About You Area* posted, you have the foundation for a virtually free media blitz on Amazon ready go. My favorite Amazon feature is their *So You'd Like To...Guides*. SYLTs are set up so that you can post essays, rills or rants on any subject that you wish. At the bottom of the article you type in the ISBN numbers (but Amazon calls them ASIN numbers) of books or other products related to the subject of your piece. Readers who visit the pages of the books you listed may then find your article available to read.

*So You'd Like To...Guides* are an excellent place to recycle your old articles (Learn more about recycling in Chapter 6 of THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER) because the interest of readers is as wide as the world and beyond. That means that pretty much anything you still own the rights to can be posted here to be read by book-lovers. Edit the material so that it relates to your book in some way. This connection is the primary reason for giving an essay to Amazon.

Here are some tips for contributing a successful *So You'd Like To*:

- Find the *So You'd Like To....* link on *Your About You* or *Profile Page*.
- Read the instructions and guidelines at the top of the page.
- Come up with a title that invites browsers to read it. One of mine that has attracted heavy readership is *So You'd Like To... Know More About Elizabeth Smart's Culture*. Every time Elizabeth's court case made the news, this essay got another spurt of curious readers and the subject of the essay is closely related to my award-winning novel, THIS IS THE PLACE.
- Copy and paste your article into the text window.
- Carefully edit. Amazon's free offer deserves to be honored with your best. Besides, you reputation as a writer is on the line.
- At the end, type in up to 50 related book, tape, and video titles according to the instructions. I used the book written by Elizabeth's parents and others on facets of Utah's culture including its renegade polygamist cells.
- Include some books on your list that will attract heavy traffic from book-lovers. That helps exposure. Longer lists are spotted throughout Amazon more often than short ones.
- You can use my *So You'd Like To... Guides* as examples by going to: [http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/cm/member-guides/-/A3JH18T58CY65P/ref=cm\\_hp\\_stats\\_sylt-count/002-9442750-5248854](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/cm/member-guides/-/A3JH18T58CY65P/ref=cm_hp_stats_sylt-count/002-9442750-5248854) So far I have 23 of them and each day they attract more readers.
- Include the title of your book in the body of the essay. If you have chosen your subject carefully your book will be a natural fit.
- Click on the *publish* button when you are done. You don't want your brilliant new ploy for getting hundreds of readers to go to waste. (My SYLT Guides have been read by more than 100,000 readers so far.)

- You may begin with a short list and add to it using the edit feature.
- Voila! This list will magically appear on many pages throughout the Amazon site. It will be targeted primarily to the books that you chose to list but may appear elsewhere.

I recently started helping authors I know by offering to include their books on one of the *So You'd Like To...* lists. I rewrote one of the BACK TO LITERATURE columns I had published at [www.myshelf.com](http://www.myshelf.com). It was an opinion piece on how important it is for authors to be accessible to their fans. Then I posted an offer to fellow authors who share a list-serve with me. I told them what I was doing and asked for volunteers. I also asked them to promise me they would be accessible to fans by offering a gift or a signature label to them if they were contacted. I had to turn away so many grateful authors who wanted to be included that I'm planning another article as soon as I figure out a new angle that will help other authors and give the right kind of exposure to my books. Here is the link for that essay:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/guides/guide-display/-/H3M5DP3WRXDS/ref%3Dcm%5Fbg%5Fdp%5Ffl%5F2/102-2927160-6432116./002-9442750-5248854>

Some of my SYLTs have made it to Amazon's top 100, but I haven't figured out the criteria they use and I can't find anyone else who has either.

There are at least a dozen other ways to use Amazon to publicize your book. Read more about how to do so in either the paperback or e-book version of **THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER: HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR PUBLISHER WON'T**. To purchase an e-copy go to: <http://starpublish.com/starbooks.htm> and to get the paperback, well, go to Amazon.com, of course!

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**Carolyn's THE FRUGAL BOOK PROMOTER: HOW TO DO WHAT YOUR PUBLISHER WON'T is USA Book News' Best Professional Book 2004 and winner of the Book Publicists of Southern California's Irwin Award. Her THIS IS THE PLACE and HARKENING are both multiple award winners. Learn more about her and download her FREE promotional e-books at <http://www.HowToDoItFrugally.com>.**