

# **Blogs are a Growing Trend to Help Authors, Readers Connect in Cyberspace**

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One of the hottest things hitting cyberspace is the weblog. Last year, about 32 million Americans were reading blogs and that number is steadily growing according to a study done by Pew Internet & American Life Project. Weblogs, known as blogs, are personal websites written in a chronological fashion where the creator expresses his thoughts and feelings on a variety of issues. Currently on the Internet you will find blogs for anything that tickles your fancy – politics, religion, cooking, gardening, parenting and even literature. African-American authors are entering the blogosphere and creating sites to not only express their views on current news and trends but as a promotional tool to market their books and a place to connect with their readers. Timothy Stelly, a northern California author uses his blog as a marketing tool and a platform to share the writing craft. “Blogs are often used to promote books via excerpts and the posting of reviews,” said Stelly, who plans to place several reviews of his book *Tempest in the Stone* on the site. “My blog is a compilation of short stories and writing exercises that I hope are thought-provoking and give visitors an idea of the various genres I work in--poetry, crime-drama, political satire and horror.”

When authors post regularly to their site, usually daily or weekly, it brings frequent traffic to the site producing name recognition and a strong readership base. “You stay in their mind, and this helps when it comes time for them to buy a new book,” said Brandon Massey, Atlanta-based horror author. “They’ll buy a book by an author they remember.” Since blogs are a part of the World Wide Web, they bring a global connection to the author. Blogs can be easily found on various search engines like Googul, increasing search ability and traffic to the site. These reasons allow the author an opportunity to promote and sell his book in places that he might not be able to travel.

Additionally, authors are also using blogs to intimately connect with their readers and other authors. Blogs give readers more direct person-to-person contact with their favorite author than attending literary conferences or book signings. “It provides another channel for me to interact with my readers, and potential fans. Besides, a lot of other writers are launching blogs,” said Massey, whose latest novel is the *Other Brother*. “Soon, a writer having a blog will become as essential as having a website.”

D. Lee Hatchett, an Atlanta author of the *Black Angel* series, a science fiction trilogy, agrees with the direct connection with readers and fans. “I get numerous letters from readers about things that I am going through,” he said. “Some offer advice, some offer criticism, but all of them offer me a little piece of themselves, which of course, is priceless.”

The personal dialog between reader and author provides the author with valuable feedback on how readers view the book. Many authors have learned through their blogs what readers really want to read. This interaction helps authors to strengthen their writing craft and provide books that their fans will read and enjoy. “Some of the works I worried about receiving negative feedback from were well-received,” said Stelly. “Sometimes relevant questions were posed and advice was offered.” For Hatchett his blog not only brought critical feedback but a unique opportunity to connect with someone who shared a similar personal experience. In his posted comments, on the prologue to his book *The Gift*, Hatchett shares about some ancestors who were hanged. A visitor read the comments and connected him to Tamathy Pless, whose son was allegedly hung in Coweta County in 2004. “Once I heard of her, I had to meet her. We met and became fast friends,” he said. “She has even accompanied me to book signings where I have read my prologue and she has talked about her real life experience.”

As more and more readers and authors interact with each other via the blog; authors are creating new and different ways to maintain the conversation and marketability. “Eventually I’d like to experiment with publishing a serial novel via my blog. I think it would be a cool gift for my readers,” said Massey. Stelly sees the future of his blog as a shared effort among writers and authors. “I hope to expand by using essays

on history contributed by other authors, posting them and asking the author to notify people about their article.”