

Creating a Web Presence

Find more links, definitions and information on Emma's site:

www.emmaclair.com/web-presence

Who is this presentation for?

- Pre-published authors just starting out
- Almost-published (PRO) authors
- Published (PAN) authors

We'll reserve plenty of time for Q&A at the end!

Your Web Presence: Questions we'll address for each career stage

- What is the overall goal of my site?
- Who is my target audience?
- What is my goal for search engine rankings?
- What about design, tone and content?
- How much time and effort do I need to invest?

	PRE	PRO	PAN
Web goal	Get comfortable	Get professional	Build fans and sell books
Target audience	Friends, family, RWA	Agents, editors	Fans, industry professionals
Search engine goals	Own your name (URL)	Build name recognition	Build your brand
Design, tone, content	Experiment. Be kind	Focus on writing. Be professional	Genre-focused design. Content for fans
Time & effort	Your choice	Minimum necessary	A lot, get help

Pre-Published Authors

- What is the overall goal of your site?
 - Getting comfortable on the web
 - "About Me"
 - Blog vs. website
- Who is your expected audience?
 - Friends & family
 - Put your link in your email signature
 - RWA members
- Search engine ranking goal
 - Own your own name. You're starting to build rankings with your name and possibly your pen name.
 - Let's talk about domain names...
- Design, tone and content
 - Tone matters: be nice
 - Take a look at your Amazon, BN.com, etc reviews
 - What do your target editors/agents like?
 - Design: be professional
 - Content idea: Journal about your writing journey
- How much time and effort at this stage?
 - Doesn't have to be a lot
 - Spend time reading other sites and learning

- Experiment and get comfortable

Almost Published (PRO) Authors

- What is the overall goal of your site?
 - Get professional. You're marketing yourself and your viability as a professional author. Show you're serious about the business of writing.
- Who is your target audience?
 - Editors and agents
- Search engine ranking goal
 - Build name recognition
 - Register your real name, pen name(s), possible misspellings too. When someone searches on your name, does it come up in the top 10 in Google?
 - Start commenting on other peoples' blogs to get known in the industry
- Design, tone and content
 - Design: be genre-specific
 - Tone: be professional
 - Content: query letters, writing samples, etc.
 - Check your grammar and spelling carefully
- How much time and effort?
 - Minimum necessary. You should be writing!
 - Consider the help of a professional designer to get you set up
 - Spend time commenting on other blogs and sites and *include a link back to your own site* – this is great for search engine rankings

Published (PAN) Authors

- What is the overall goal of your site?
 - Keep your fans informed
 - Let your readers get to know you
 - Sell books!
- Search engine ranking goals
 - Build your brand: name-genre recognition. Associate your name with what you write (genre)
 - When someone searches for "historical romance" does your name show up in the results?
 - Get the help of a professional for an hour or two – but beware of online SEO services
 - Participate in targeted online activities to increase name recognition and fan loyalty
 - Choose your opportunities wisely and don't burn out
 - Ask about expected traffic (to the chat, blog, article) and planned promotion; make sure your URL is mentioned
- Who is your target audience?
 - Your readers
 - Keep them coming back for more
 - They want to get to know you
 - Industry professionals (editors, agents, marketing)
 - Demonstrate your professionalism; they want to see an active fan base and savvy marketing
- Design and tone
 - Design should match your genre, appear professional and be easy to navigate. Consider semi-regular redesigns with new book launches
 - Tone: let your readers get to know you, but keep bringing it back to the work
- Content
 - Content freshness is more important than content length

- Include a call-to-action on every page – sign up for my newsletter, join my fan club, enter my contest etc.
- Include a page or section with your backlist
 - Pictures of your covers (past and present if possible)
 - Notes on characters and plot, especially for series
 - Link cover pictures and titles to Amazon, B&N or vendor of choice
 - Provide a printable book list (PDF) that visitors can take into a store
- Photos of yourself
- Newsletters, Contests and Members-Only Content
 - Goal is to develop a loyal fan base
 - Once you start, you have to keep going
 - Set expectations, meet expectations – or lose fans
 - Start slowly – make contests quarterly instead of monthly, for instance
 - Newsletters “push” content to your fans – make it worth their time to read them
 - Early notice of book releases, behind-the-book insights, extra chapters, behind-the-scenes photos and stories, you name it!
 - Members-only sections: sections of your site available only to people who sign up
 - See eloisajames.com for a great example of members-only content
- How much time and effort?
 - A lot: consider recruiting or paying for help (pros & cons of “free” help)
 - Being timely and up-to-date is extremely important, especially if you want people to come back

IMPORTANT TERMS

What is a Domain Name and how do you get one?

Also known as a “URL” or “web address”. The unique name of a computer on the Internet. Users can type a domain name (for instance www.michellemcginnis.com) into a web browser to view a specific web site.

Domain names are also part of every e-mail address. For instance, since Michelle owns the domain name michellemcginnis.com, she also owns all the email addresses [@michellemcginnis.com](mailto:michelle@michellemcginnis.com). (ex: michelle@michellemcginnis.com, info@michellemcginnis.com, etc.)

To discover if a domain name is available to purchase, you can go to a site such as <http://www.dotster.com/go/whois> and type in the desired address.

Domain names generally cost less than \$10/year, and often are included free when you purchase a web hosting package. If you are being asked for more money for a domain name, check with a web-savvy friend. Someone may be trying to take advantage of you. See “Registrar” for more information on registering a domain name.

What is a registrar?

The company or service that provides domain name registration. A registrar may also sell web hosting, and it is often convenient to purchase web hosting and domain name registration from the same company – but it isn’t necessary.

Registrars to watch out for include Network Solutions and GoDaddy, which either overcharge or are overly aggressive in up selling additional, unneeded services. Domain

names should cost less than \$10/year. 1and1.com is a registrar (and web host) both Michelle and Emma have used without many problems in the past.

What is a web host?

A web host is a service that stores your information (or website) on a server, allowing it to be accessed by users on the Internet. Web hosts typically charge by the month, with discounts if you pay by the year. For most simple sites hosting charges should be minimal, around \$5-\$10/month. Web hosts often double as registrars, and offer hosting packages which come with one or more free domain names.

You can also get web hosting for free by signing up for a free blog on a hosted blog service such as Wordpress.com or Blogger.com. The advantage is an extremely easy-to-use CMS interface and pre-made, professional designs. The disadvantages include not having your own domain name and some limitations in terms of functionality, storage space and design.

What is a search engine ranking?

(Also known as "organic ranking" or "natural ranking.") The rank of a web site in a search engine's index of sites, organized by key word or phrase. Typically the goal of a site is to appear within the top ten listed results for a given key word or phrase. For instance, the *NY Times* site's goal would be to appear in the top ten results when people search for the phrase "new york newspaper" on Google.com.

What is Search Engine Optimization?

Also known as "SEO." The process of tweaking a web site to make its search engine ranking rise. Some techniques of search engine optimization include:

- Linking key words
- Including key words and phrases that describe your site's purpose, especially within the first sentence of each page
- Having other sites link to your site
- Frequent site updates

What is Content Management Software (CMS)?

Content management software (also known as a content management system, or CMS) is a way to manage site content without having to know any coding language. It has many advantages for both the novice and experienced site owner. With a CMS, a site owner does not have to rely on a webmaster every time she needs a text change.

All blogging systems are essentially content management systems, though some are more extendible than others. For example Wordpress.com, while built to be a blog system, also enables users with no web experience to create plain web sites with simple pages.

If you are working with a web designer to create a new site, asking for a built-in CMS can save you time and money in the long run. If you can find a web designer who will build on an open source (free) CMS system such as Wordpress, you'll have more options in the long run, since there are many designers and developers who know these systems.

HANDY LINKS

Domain Name

Find one: www.dotster.com

See who owns one: www.dotster.com/go/whois

Register one: www.dotster.com or www.1and1.com [see below]

Beware of GoDaddy.com (deceptive advertising) and NetworkSolutions.com (expensive)

Host Your Website

1&1: www.1and1.com

"Home" package costs \$4.99/mo (first 3 months free) – includes 2 domain names

Get Yourself a Blog!

WordPress Hosted: www.wordpress.com – *free* (your best bet!)

WordPress Installed: www.wordpress.org - download the software and run it on your own server; *free*

Blogger: www.blogger.com - *free*

LiveJournal: www.livejournal.com - *free*

Type Pad: www.typepad.com - *not free*

Track Your Website

Google Analytics: www.google.com/analytics - *free*

Read a Lot of Blogs in One Place! (RSS feed readers)

Google Reader: www.google.com/reader - *free*

Feed Reader: www.feedreader.com - *free*

News Gator: www.newsgator.com - *not free*

Emma & Michelle's Favorite Email Program:

Gmail: www.gmail.com - great way to read your local chapter's loop! Tons of storage and handy services, including calendaring - *free*

Track Yourself Online ("egosurf")

Google: www.google.com - type your name in quotation marks (ex: "Michelle McGinnis")

Google Alert: www.google.com/alert - track yourself (or anyone else!) [use quotation marks for an exact match – ex: "Emma Clair"]

Not sure what a techy term means? Look it up here.

Google: www.google.com – type in "define:" immediately followed by the word or phrase you're looking for (ex: "define:WYSIWYG editor")

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