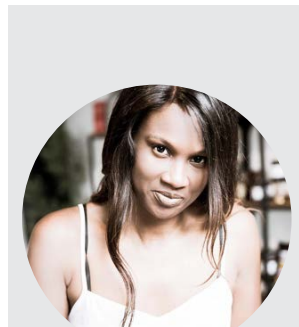


Marketing, money & motivation

by MV Ellis

With a twenty-year career spanning advertising, marketing, social media, and life coaching, MV brings a unique skillset to the business of being an author.



Come together right now – the pleasures and pitfalls of publishing in an anthology

In my two and a half years as a published author, I've taken part in three anthology collections of works by a variety of authors, typically around a common theme – so I thought I'd share some pearls of wisdom I've gleaned along the way.

Many authors use anthologies as a path to publishing their first work – they can be anything from a collection of short stories to a volume of full-length novels. The ones I've been involved with have had word limits ranging from 20k to 70k, so the variance is great. I personally shy away from the shorter end, where the limit can be anything from a few hundred to a few thousand words, but that's purely personal preference.

Anthologies can be run and managed by publishers, and entered into much like a traditional publishing contract, with the publisher appraising and approving

(or rejecting) the work on submission. Alternatively, they can be, and often are, run by an author or group of authors who arrange for a number of additional authors to publish together. In this case, the submission process tends to be different, with the work not being sighted before the author is accepted to the anthology.

In either case, one of the great advantages of an anthology is shared resources. If it is being run by a publisher, just like any publishing deal, there will be no cost

to the author, but they will have access to a plethora of resources such as editors, formatters, cover designers, marketing professionals, etc. Charity anthologies work in a similar way, with little or no cost to the authors, as external costs are kept to a minimum, or nothing at all, by negotiating contra, or other cost-neutral deals from the suppliers involved, in order to maximize the charitable donation at the end of it.

If the anthology is being privately run by an author/group of authors, often everyone involved pays a 'buy-in' fee, which is typically a small amount to cover expenses

related to producing and promoting the anthology. So for a smaller than usual investment, an author is able to put their work in the market with more bang for their buck than they'd get for the same amount of money working alone. This is particularly the case in 'list-aiming' anthologies where one of the main goals is to sell enough copies to make it onto a bestsellers list.

That said, in these arrangements, authors tend to still have to pay for their own editing and

proofreading, and cover art and teasers for their own book should they wish to promote it outside of the anthology (the anthology cover and teasers should generally be included in the buy-in fee).

Shared resources in, means shared resources out, so authors taking part in anthologies receive an equal slice of the profit, regardless of the effort they put in, or other differences in their contribution to the project – for example, bigger audience reach or social media footprint. This can be a great deal for some, but not necessarily for others. This point doesn't apply for charity anthologies of course,

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since all monies earned (unless arranged differently) go back in the 'pot' in the form of the charitable donation.

Working in a group this way can bring a number of added advantages, like a new community of author buddies to learn from and socialize with (typically virtually). Anthologies can include authors at varying stages in their careers, from brand new to well-seasoned, so the range of inputs and perspectives can be great. So too can the authors' audience footprints. As such, publishing with a new-to-you publisher, and/or group of authors has the fairly unique potential to reach new readers who may not previously have been aware of all of the authors in the anthology.

Another great advantage of anthologies is their typically temporary nature. More often than not, they are available for sale for a limited time – frequently around a season, holiday, topical event or charitable cause. As such, in most cases, the collection is available for a maximum of a few months, and then withdrawn from sale. At that point, the rights revert to the authors, and they are free to rewrite, reuse, repack, and/or remarket the work as they see fit.

Standard publishing deals tend to lock stories/books in with the publisher for at least a couple of years. This freedom to reuse the work relatively quickly allows authors to 'double-dip', and get more bang for their buck with the same material. Often authors extend the stories if the anthology version isn't full length, then

get another bite at the cherry by republishing the 'new' story outside of the anthology.

Not all publishers or projects are created equal, and a few pertinent questions asked upfront could save heartache in the long run.

Like any form of publishing where the author doesn't have ultimate control, anthologies do involve an element of risk. Apparently a group is only as strong as its weakest link, and this is definitely true here. Authors who don't pull their weight, or fail to produce good (or any) work can pull the whole project down (and in some cases *under*), and there's little the other contributing authors can do about it.

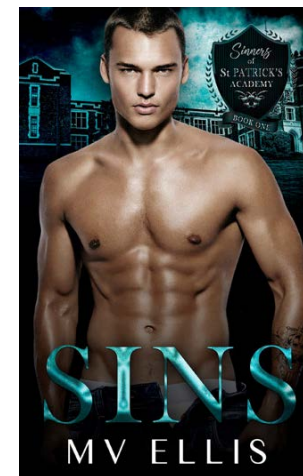
Likewise with the administration of the project, and in particular the appropriation of funds contributed to anthologies.

There have been a number of controversies in the past – generally with privately organized anthologies – involving disagreements and discrepancies around where and how the buy-in fee has been spent (if at all).

As with anything, my best advice is to do as much research as possible before getting involved with anything where money, time or reputation may be at stake. Talk to other writers, scrutinize the contract, enquire about previous sales.

Not all publishers or projects are created equal, and a few pertinent questions asked upfront could save heartache in the long run. That said, so far, my experiences have been at worst neutral, and at best exceptional, and on that basis, I'd highly recommend taking part in at least one anthology, just for the experience.

* MV Ellis doesn't just write romance, she lives it. She followed her heart halfway around the world to be with a man she sat next to on a wild 36-hour bus journey across sultry Brazil. Visit MVEllis.com to learn more.



Flinthart residency to be launched

Fans of Aiki 'Fight Like A Girl' Flinthart are invited to the livestreamed launch of The Flinthart writers' residency and online writing course on 14 October from 6-7:30 pm.

The Flinthart will be run by Queensland Writers Centre in 2021. The program is based on the work of Aiki Flinthart, who generously donated her Blackbelt in Writing series for adaption into online training. Income from the training course will fund the new ten-week residency.

For more details: <https://queenslandwriters.org.au/events/the-flinthart-launch>. Tickets are available on a 'pay-what-you-can' basis, with all income going directly to the Flinthart residency.