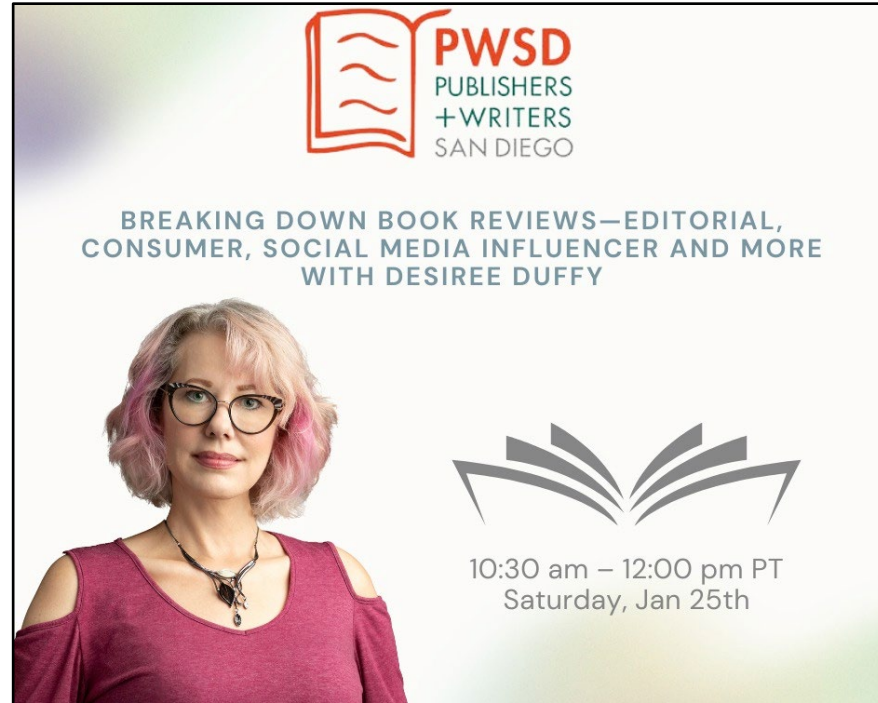


# Breaking Down Book Reviews

Editorial, Consumer, Influencers & More

Featuring:  
**Desireé Duffy**  
for  
**PWSD 2025**



# Breaking Down Book Reviews

Editorial, Consumer, Social Media  
Influencer and More

Featuring:  
**Desireé Duffy**  
at  
**WriterCon 2024**



# WHY BOOK REVIEWS MATTER



- **Credibility:** Provides a trusted, professional evaluation of a book.
- **Visibility:** Increases a book's exposure in the market.
- **Influence:** Helps shape public and critical opinion.
- **Marketing:** Enhances promotional efforts with authoritative endorsements.
- **Guidance:** Assists readers in making informed purchasing decisions.
- **Library & Retail Decisions:** Influences acquisitions by libraries and bookstores.



# THE CHALLENGES



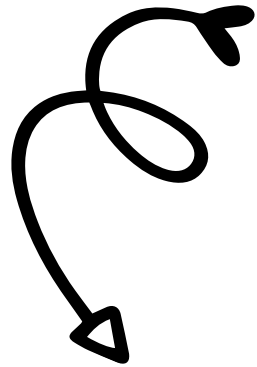
- Small and indie presses, authors, and marketers face their own challenges
- Understanding the types of reviews
- Learning how to approach each one, depending on your role in the process





# TYPES OF BOOK REVIEWS

- **Editorial, Trade, and Industry-Focused Reviews**
- **Author Endorsements, High-Profile Influencers, and Expert Reviews**
- **Consumer and Reader Reviews**



# BOOK REVIEWS SERVE DIFFERENT PURPOSES



- **Pre-publication:** for industry, bookstore buyers and librarians
- **Marketing:** promotion before and after book launch
- **Ongoing buzz:** gain readers and build your audience

Understanding these categories helps you strategize how to approach each one.

# EDITORIAL, TRADE & INDUSTRY-FOCUSED REVIEWS

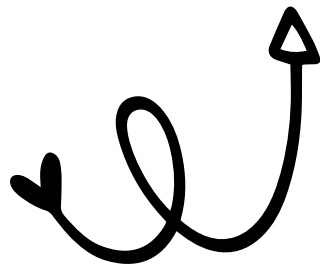


- Reviews written by professional critics, trade publications, and industry-focused platforms
- Examples: Publishers Weekly, Kirkus Reviews, Library Journal, Edelweiss, and NetGalley



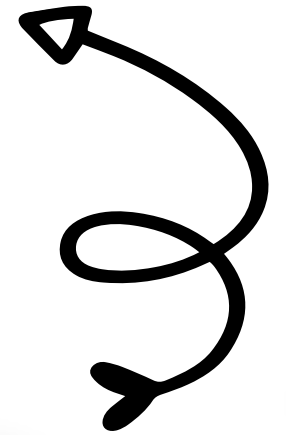
# PURPOSE?

- Build credibility with booksellers, librarians, and the publishing industry.
- Generate pre-publication buzz and secure placement in libraries, bookstores, and catalogs.



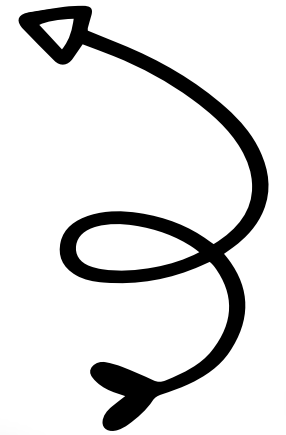
# HOW?

- Submit ARCs to trade publications (4-6 months before publication)
- Use platforms like NetGalley and Edelweiss to distribute ARCs to librarians, booksellers, and reviewers
- Research submission guidelines for each publication (e.g., Kirkus vs. Library Journal)



# BENEFITS?

- Editorial reviews can be quoted in press releases, backgrounders and marketing materials
- Strong editorial reviews can lead to bulk orders from libraries and retailers
- Gets the word out to the front line: a B2B strategy



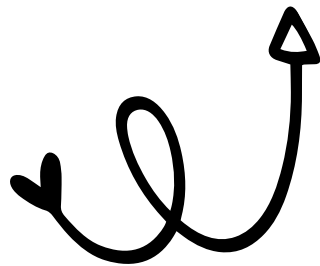
# AUTHOR ENDORSEMENTS, INFLUENCER & EXPERTS



- Solicited endorsements and reviews from respected figures, including:
  - Bestselling authors
  - High-profile influencers or celebrities
  - Experts or academic peers

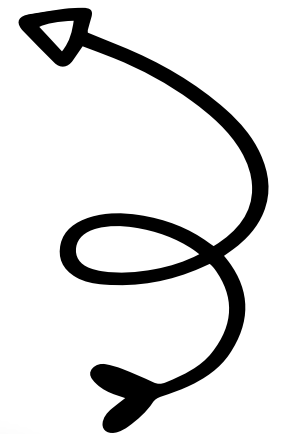
# PURPOSE?

- Leverage name recognition and authority to build credibility
- Align the book with respected individuals or niche influencers who resonate with the target audience



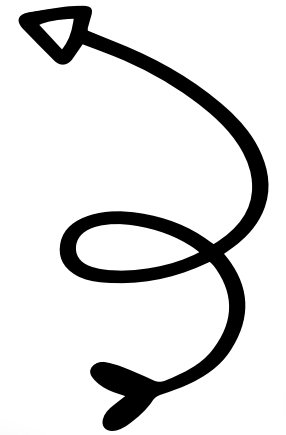
# HOW?

- Author Endorsements:
  - Publisher may have similar authors to reach out to
  - Use your connections with similar authors and swap endorsements
- Influencers:
  - Identify Bookstagrammers, BookTok creators, or bloggers in your genre
  - Reach out with personalized pitches, offer free copies, swag, compensation
- Experts/Academic Reviews:
  - Use your network of professionals in your niche
  - Reach out with formal requests or letter requesting a review



## BENEFITS?

- Endorsements can go on the back cover, press releases, and ads
- Influencers create visual buzz (e.g., Instagram aesthetics, TikTok videos)
- Influencer reach their audience, creating word of mouth buzz beyond an author or publisher's reach (most potential to go viral)

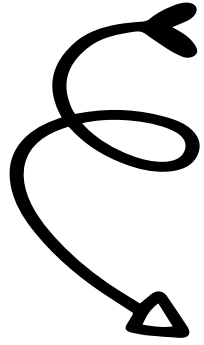


# CONSUMER & READER REVIEWS



- Reviews written by everyday readers on platforms like:
  - Goodreads.
  - Retailers (Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, etc.)
- Includes verified purchase reviews and community feedback





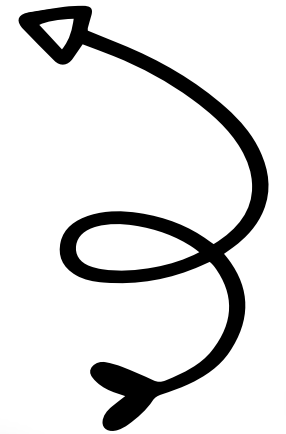
## PURPOSE?



- Social proof: Influence potential buyers with real reader opinions
- Volume of reviews improves visibility in algorithms on retail platforms
- A real consumer review is still one of the most trusted forms of marketing
- Helps with advertising, think how one needs a substantial number of reviews to get a “BookBub” promotion

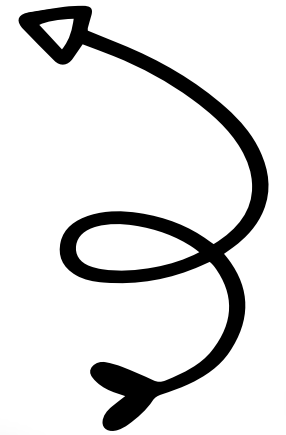
# HOW?

- Include a call-to-action in the book (e.g., “Enjoyed this book? Please leave a review!”)
- Use newsletters and social media to ask readers for honest reviews
- Offer giveaways to readers in exchange for honest reviews (if platform guidelines allow, careful of Amazon’s Terms of Service, for example)
- Be careful of paid reviews in this category, especially buying verified reviews on sites like Amazon



# BENEFITS?

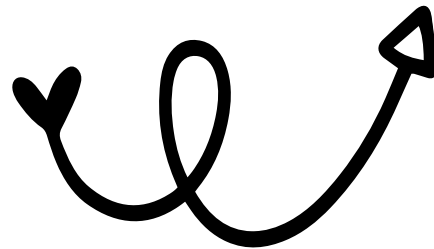
- High ratings and review volume can drive sales
- Reader reviews can uncover valuable feedback and insights into audience preferences



# ABOUT THE ARCS



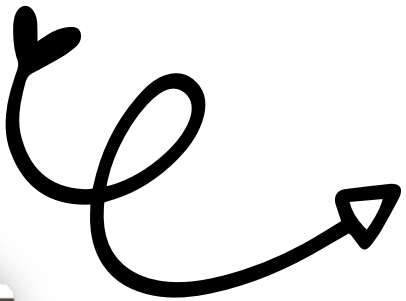
- It's okay if your ARC is unfinished
- It is common for ARCs to be sent out before final proofing
- A professional book reviewer will forgive minor typos
- While the manuscript is still going through final revisions, it can get reviews



# THOUGHTS ON STRATEGY



- **Diversify:** Use a mix of different types
- **Three-pronged approach:**
  - Traditional and B2B, like NetGalley, Kirkus, and others
  - Modern social media reviews with influencers
  - Relationships with reviewers cultivated over the years
- **Flexibility:** Make adjustments from one book to the next, and remember, what is best for your genre might not be what others are doing in different genres





# COMMON QUESTIONS



## When Should I Start Getting Reviews?

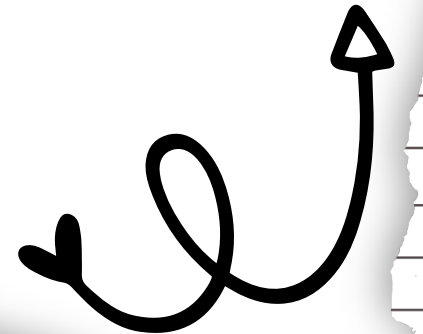
- **Editorial and Industry Reviews:** Start 4–6 months before publication. Submit ARCs early to outlets like Publishers Weekly, Kirkus, or NetGalley to generate pre-publication buzz
- **Author Endorsements:** Reach out 6–8 months before publication to give endorsers time to read and provide a blurb
- **Consumer Reviews:** Encourage readers to leave reviews starting at launch and throughout your book's lifecycle. Social media giveaways or digital ARCs can help

# COMMON QUESTIONS



## Should I Use Reviews from NetGalley or Consumer Reviews on Social Media?

- **Consider the Name:** Typically you want to promote someone with name recognition
- **Discretion:** Use shortened name: rather than Mary J. Jones, use Mary J. to be respectful of their privacy
- **Caution:** You don't want to accidentally use an endorsement from someone who does not align with your brand and values

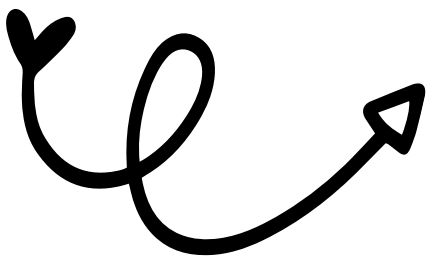


# COMMON QUESTIONS



## Should I Pay for Reviews?

- **Editorial and Industry Reviews:** These are worth it to establish initial industry credibility and awareness
- **Author Endorsements:** Possibly, many influencers require pay
- **Consumer Reviews:** Use extreme caution, you do not want to violate the TOS of sites like Amazon or Goodreads







# COMMON QUESTIONS

## Do Negative Reviews Hurt My Book?

- **They Are Normal:** Everyone gets them, even the biggest authors have haters
- **A Mix Is Good:** All 5-Star glowing but “empty-sounding” reviews are often a red flag, you want honest, reviews and that often involves having a mix of 4 and 5 star and a few lower ones
- **Negative Editorial Reviews:** Use as an opportunity to make fixes. Expert advice can help perfect your manuscript before it goes to print



# COMMON QUESTIONS

## Should I Respond to Reviews?

- **Consumer Reviews:** Avoid responding to reviews on Goodreads or other platforms. Readers may interpret engagement as unprofessional or defensive if you are responding to a negative review
- **Social Media or Influencers:** Yes, especially if they tag you and are gaining attention, this is what social networking is all about



# LIST OF SITES OFFERING EDITORIAL REVIEWS

- **[Kirkus Reviews](#)**: Offers paid review services for publishers as well as options for indie authors. Kirkus is often the first name that comes to mind when thinking of editorial book reviews.
- **[Publishers Weekly \(via BookLife\)](#)**: Indie authors can submit for free via *BookLife* or opt for a guaranteed paid review through *BookLife Reviews*.
- **[Foreword Reviews](#)**: A respected platform for indie and small-press books, trusted by librarians and booksellers.
- **[Midwest Book Review](#)**: Established in 1976, the Midwest Book Review is an organization committed to promoting literacy, library usage, and small press publishing. It publishes several monthly book review magazines.
- **[Books That Make You](#)**: Professionally written reviews are shared on its expansive network through its website, in the monthly Webby Award-winning newsletter, and social media.
- **[Library Journal](#)**: Particularly valuable for non-fiction and literary works, often used by libraries to guide acquisitions.
- **[Booklist](#)**: Published by the American Library Association, *Booklist* provides professional reviews used by librarians and educators for collection development and purchasing decisions.
- **[NetGalley](#)**: NetGalley helps publishers and authors promote digital review copies to book advocates and industry professionals. Publishers make digital review copies and audiobooks available for the NetGalley community to discover, request, read, and review.

# THANK YOU!

**Desireé Duffy**

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Make You, and The BookFest®

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