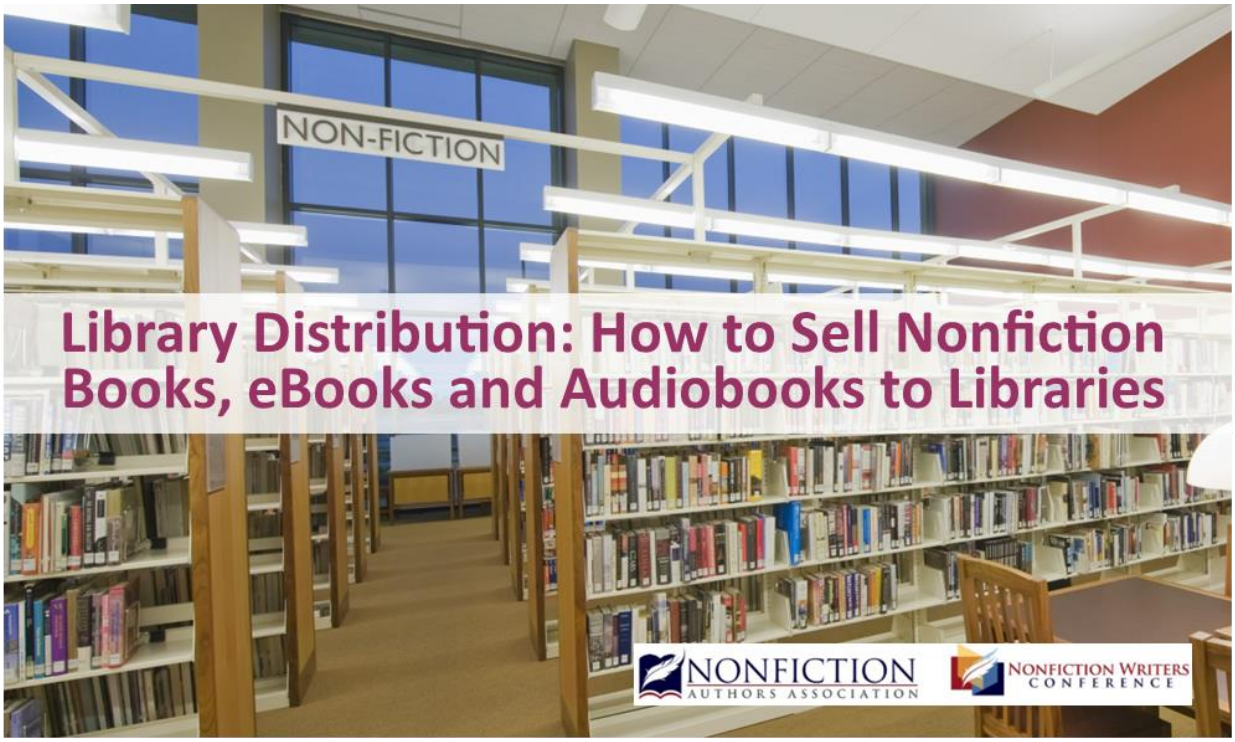
Library Distribution: How to Sell Nonfiction Books, eBooks, and Audiobooks to Libraries

Stephanie Chandler



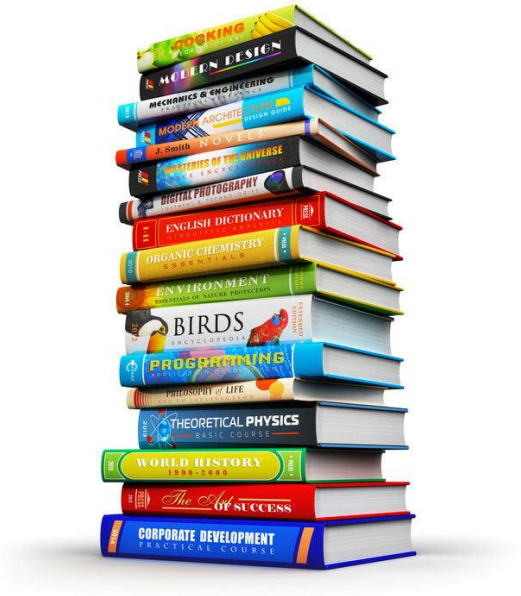
Selling your nonfiction books to libraries can create a significant sales opportunity for all the different formats of your book including hardcover, paperback, ebooks, and audiobooks. Often libraries will purchase several copies of each format at a time.

Library buyers are especially interested in unique topics that aren't heavily covered or previously covered at all, so if your book focuses on an uncommon topic, your chances of getting acquired are higher than average.

Libraries also scrutinize books and expect to see top-quality production and editing, an index for heavily referenced books, and require an ISBN and barcode. Some also require a Library of Congress Control Number and/or a Catalog in Print record, although these aren't as essential as they once were since most libraries are acquiring books based on demand and promotion instead of browsing Library of Congress catalogs.

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Also essential, make sure your book has reviews on Amazon—as many as possible—since this shows librarians your book is popular. And there is a good chance they are checking on Amazon too. Goodreads is another source of reviews that librarians can check, so ask readers to write reviews there as well.



Most libraries won't acquire spiral bound books without the title on the spine. They also avoid workbooks. Anything meant to be written in isn't a good fit for a library.

These are the most common ways to market your books to libraries:

- Advertise in the publications librarians read.
- Get your book reviewed by publications read by librarians.
- Exhibit at library acquisition events.
- Participate in collaborative marketing programs through publisher's groups or by teaming up with other authors and publishers and place ads in publications.
- Conduct mail campaigns and send sell sheets and/or postcards directly to librarians.
- Get media attention for your book to drive public attention and interest. Librarians are people too and they're always on the lookout for books that are gaining popularity.

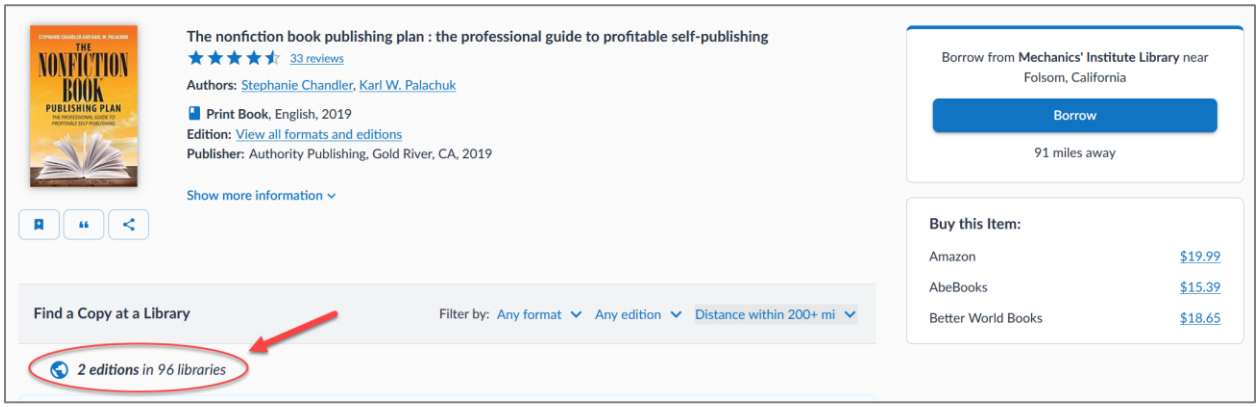
Read on for links and resources to help you accelerate success in getting your book acquired by libraries.

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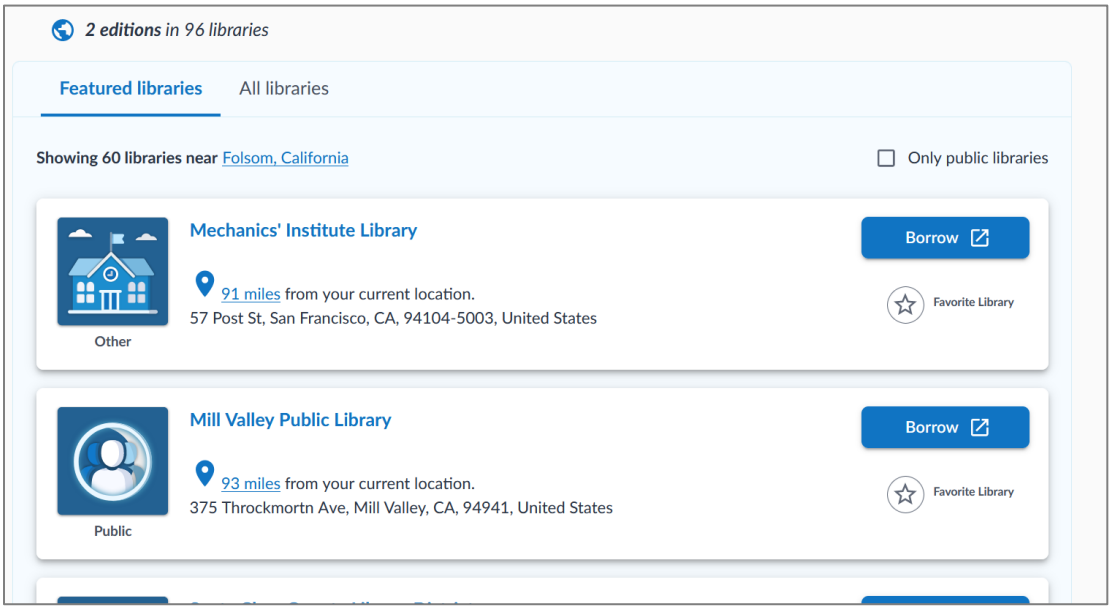
FIRST, Find Out if Your Book is Currently Carried in Any Libraries!

Use the World Cat website to find out if your book is being carried by libraries, and if so, which libraries. **Type your book title in the search bar on this page** and it will show you results.

Here is a screenshot for my book, *The Nonfiction Book Publishing Plan*:

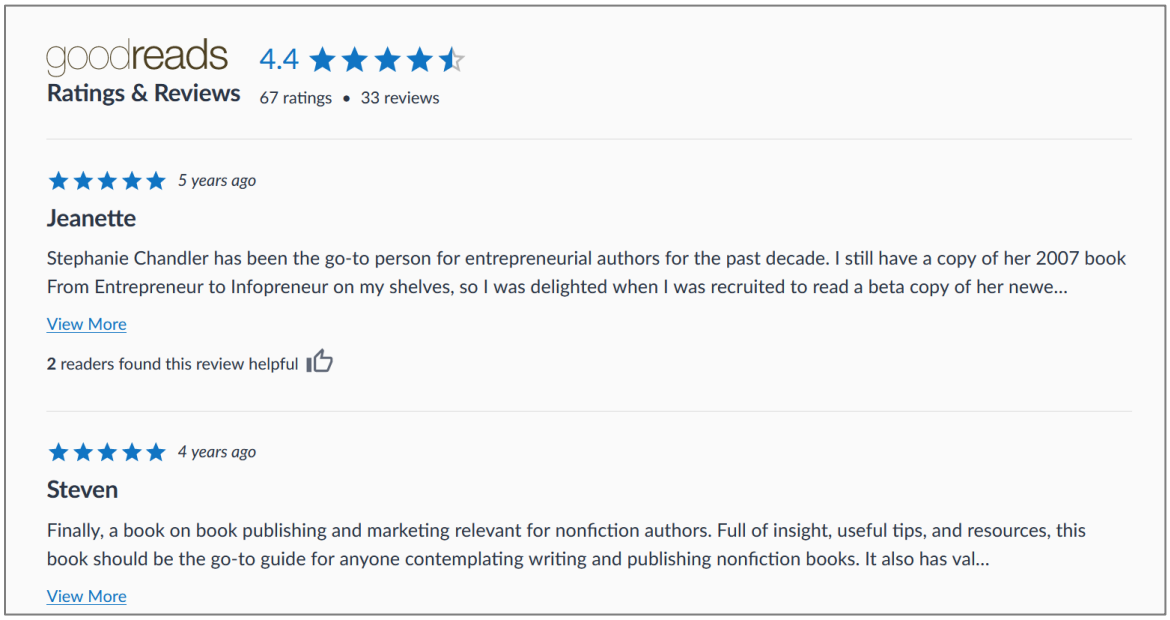


Notice it shows two editions in 96 libraries. I can then scroll down to see all libraries where the book is carried.



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Further down the page I can see that World Cat features reviews of my book from Goodreads:



Why is this information useful?

It's not always easy to know for sure how well your library marketing campaigns are performing, so checking this free database provides an easy way for you to monitor results.

You can also leverage this information in your marketing campaigns. For example, if you have a new book coming out and your previous book is available in libraries, contact those libraries and remind them know they are already carrying your previous book and let them know your new book is available. Another strategy is to let other libraries know your book is currently being carried in 50, 100 or 1,000 libraries, which makes an excellent selling point!

Hang on to the World Cat link and check it periodically, especially after you've done any kind of library marketing to see if your efforts are producing results.

Side Note: World Cat also offers search tools for genealogists.

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Editorial Review Sources

Librarians commonly acquire books based on editorial reviews seen in industry publications. Following are the publications they follow most.



Kirkus is a reputable editorial review service that is also indie author friendly. For $450, you can submit your book for review. Select reviews are featured in its print publication as well. Traditionally published books are eligible to submit for editorial review at no charge.

Booklist is a magazine is published by the American Library Association and is widely read by librarians. They review adult and children's books in a wide variety of genres, but only pre-publication. Books must be submitted for review at least 15 weeks prior to publication. They do consider high-quality self-published books. There is no fee for review, but they receive tens of thousands of reviews each year so only about 8,000 books are reviewed.

BlueInk Review is a paid book review service that works in partnership with Booklist. Each month, BlueInk compiles its favorite reviews and shares them with Booklist for publication in the magazine that is widely read by librarians. Select BlueInk reviews are also shared with Shelf Unbound magazine, Goodreads, No Shelf Required (a website dedicated to ebooks), and several other outlets. ALL BlueInk reviews are shared with Ingram (wholesale book distributor). Both traditionally published and self-published books are welcome. Review fee starts at $395.

Choice is a division of ALA focused exclusively on the academic library market, publishing around 7,000 reviews per year in print and online. No charge for reviews.

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Clarion reviews is a service of Foreword magazine, offering comprehensive reviews for $325. You can choose to have your review published on the site, which is also shared with distributors like Ingram, Baker and Taylor, and other distributors that reach librarians and bookstore buyers.

Paid Advertising Opportunities

The American Library Association (ALA) is the primary association for librarians in the U.S. and beyond. ALA provides a variety of marketing programs including mailing list rental and paid advertising in their print publications, digital newsletters, and websites. They also feature specialty publications for prison libraries, academic libraries, college and research libraries, and many more niche specialties. See a full list of ALA print and digital periodicals here.

ALA Membership List Rental offers mailing lists for rent (physical addresses, NOT email addresses), compiled of members of the ALA. Lists are available by zip code and can currently be purchased at a rate of $150 per 1,000 addresses. You must submit an order application and share a copy of your mailing piece prior to approval. You may only rent the list for use one time, though discounts are available on additional rentals. Learn more about the

Advertise in ALA's Booklist, which publishes 26 magazines for librarians throughout the year, with the primary intention of helping librarians discover new books. Print advertising starts at $2,100 for 1/6th page and $1,500 for a website ad.

American Libraries Magazine reaches over 54,000 readers, including 20,000 in public libraries, 12,000 in academic libraries, and the remaining subscribers are students, school libraries, and library schools. Print ad rates start at $1,700 for 1/6th page. They also offer promotional email blasts starting at $1,250, podcast ads, webinar sponsorships, and more.

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ALA Annual Conference invites publishers and other providers of library products and services to purchase display space at the annual event.

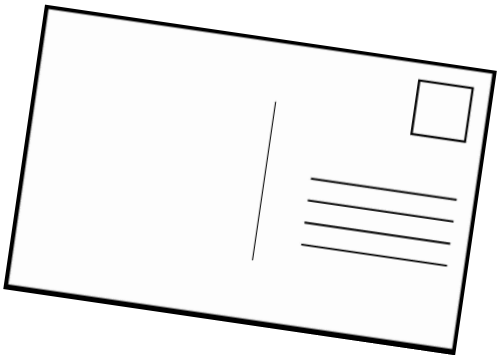
American Association of School Librarians (AASL) is a division of ALA, offering resources for school librarians. You can advertise in the Knowledge Quest magazine, website, or in several newsletters. Print publication ads start at $250 for 1/6 page in black and white.

American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) offers several advertising options in its publications, at the annual meeting, and mailing list rental.

American Library Directory is an online resource that allows you to look up libraries. They offer a 14-day free trial and then a paid subscription.

Postal and Email Mailing Lists

Sending promotional postcards can be an effective way to get the attention of librarians. While I'm not personally a fan of purchasing or renting *email addresses*, some of the following organizations offer this as a service in addition to postal mail addresses. If you're wanting to promote to email addresses, it would be best for the organization to send the email on your behalf. There are all kinds of rules around the CAN Spam Compliance Act and sending unsolicited emails can get you in trouble, so please keep this in mind.



ALA Membership List Rental offers mailing lists for rent (physical addresses, NOT email addresses), compiled of members of the ALA. Lists are available by zip code and can currently be purchased at a rate of $150 per 1,000 addresses. You must submit an order

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application and share a copy of your mailing piece prior to approval. You may only rent the list for use one time, though discounts are available on additional rentals.

American Association of Law Libraries has postal and email lists available to rent starting at $240 per 1,000 contacts.
American Historical Association (AHA) has mailing lists available for historical libraries, history department chairs, and its membership base of 11k people.

Art Libraries Society of North America (ALSNA) rents its member email list for a flat fee of $200.

Blue Mail Media sells email and postal mailing lists for librarians, including specialties like college librarians, high school librarians, and law librarians.

Free Resources

Do the research yourself by looking up libraries across the country. You can also view a member directory for ALA. This won't be the easiest way to get a list, but can be done!

- **World Cat** doesn't sell lists, but you can search their massive database of libraries and build your own lists by capturing information here.
- **International Directory of Libraries** provides a list of libraries by country.
- **Public Libraries by State** is a free resource that provides details about libraries across the US.
- **UK Libraries by Location** is a free resource for locating libraries.
- **College and University Libraries** is a free resource for locating college libraries by state.
- **Public Libraries in the US** is another free resource you can browse by state.
- **UK Society of College, National, and University Libraries** offers a free directory.
- **Urban Libraries Counsel** features member libraries in the US and Canada.

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- **Academic Law Libraries in the US** is a free directory.
- **Association of Research Libraries** shows a list of organizations.

Many local libraries have mailing lists and database services available. Visit the website for your local library or stop by to inquire.

Talk to your librarians locally and introduce them to your book. Offer to host an event there.



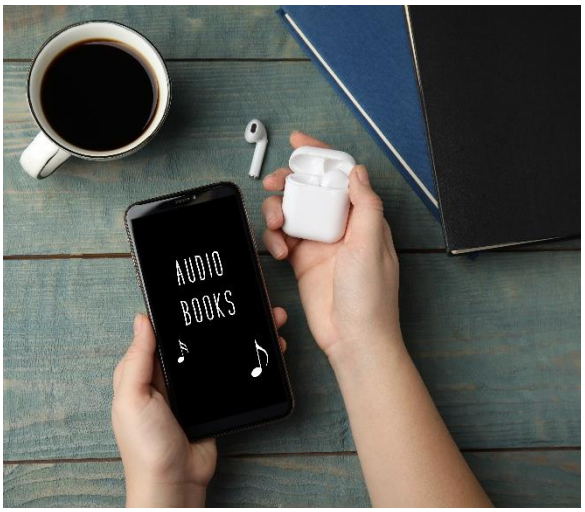
Ask friends and family to request your book in their local library (and bookstores too!). This is an easy way to bring the book to the attention of librarians and potentially have it end up on the library's purchase list.

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Ebook Distribution

Libraries also purchase and lend ebooks. The majority of libraries purchase and deliver ebooks through Overdrive/Libby, the largest supplier of ebooks to libraries. If your ebook is distributed through IngramSpark, Draft2Digital, Smashwords, or PublishDrive, it is available through Overdrive and therefore to libraries.

Audiobook Distribution



Audiobook sales are projected to grow 26% each year through 2030, growing faster than any other segment in publishing. In 2020, audiobook sales accounted for 1/6th of all books sold.

ACX is the audiobook self-publishing platform owned by Amazon, which distributes directly to Audible and Apple Books (iTunes). While Audible owns around 40% of the audiobook market, there are several other outlets that make up the remaining 60%: Kobo/Walmart, Apple Books (iTunes), BN.com, Scribd, Google Play, and libraries.

When you publish your audiobook through ACX, you are asked to enroll in the exclusive rights program that *prohibits you from distributing your audiobook elsewhere.* In return, ACX will pay you 40% of the list price on your audiobook. But if you decline to grant exclusivity, that royalty rate drops to 25% of list price. Even worse, ACX requires you to sign an exclusivity agreement for SEVEN YEARS.

With the anticipated growth in the audiobook space, granting Audible/Amazon exclusivity seems like a risky proposition, especially given the exceptionally long 7-year commitment required.

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To ensure your audiobook is distributed to the other top outlets, you can produce and distribute through a non-ACX audiobook service like Findaway Voices, Author's Republic, Audivita or PublishDrive. Services like these will ensure your audiobook is available to all the major library distributors of audiobooks including Overdrive, Ingram, Baker and Taylor, and EBSCO.

And keep in mind that just because your audiobook is available through these distributors, it doesn't mean libraries will find or acquire it. You still need to do the work to promote your book in all its available formats to the library market using many of the strategies listed above.



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- **Get featured on NonfictionBookClub.com** for added visibility and reach with potential readers.
- Popular members-only **Facebook group** to connect with authors and industry pros.
- **Meet-the-Members program** where you can share your book announcement with our email list, blog, and social media community.
- **Discounts** off our **year-round** Nonfiction Book Awards program, author toolkits, and other items in our author store.
- **Discounts of our exclusive courses,** including the Book Publishing Master Course and Book Marketing Master Course, both with **optional professional certification**.
- **Discounts off the** Nonfiction Writers Conference, held entirely online since 2010.
- **Discounts** with **NFAA partners** including Lulu, IngramSpark, The EFA, Office Depot, Findaway Voices, and more.
- **Special benefits for VIP and Thought Leader members,** including FREE admission to the Nonfiction Writers Conference and all downloadable Author Toolkits.
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