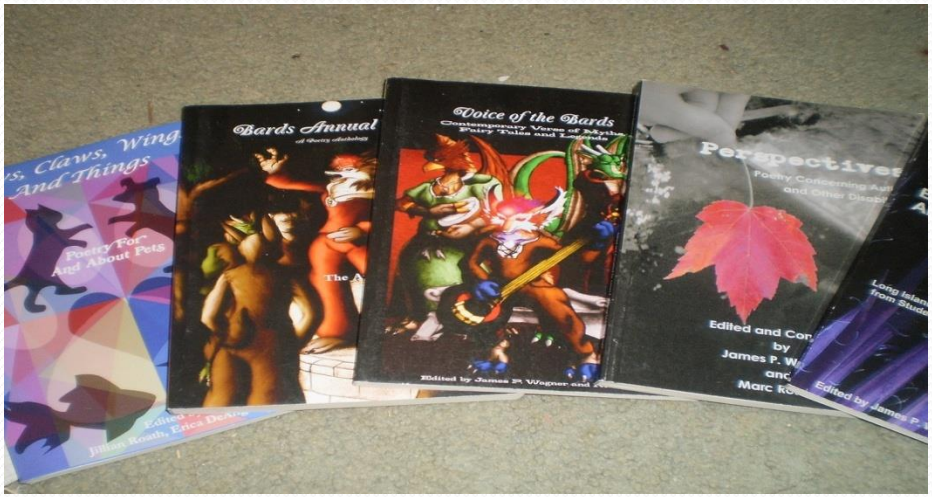
# Selling Your Poetry Book

A Poet's Guide To Marketing

Bards Annual 2016
Freedom Verse
Laurels
Poems By Long Island's Poets Laureate
NoVA Bards 2016
An Anthology of Northern Virginia Poetry
The Poets' Almanac
Prompts, Poems, Forms, & Facts
A Poetry Lover's Journal
2017 Edition
Japanese Poetry Forms
A Poet's Guide
Selling Your
Poetry Book
Marketing Tips for
Published Poets
Local Gems Press
Apprentice
Poets

# A Few Facts about Poetry Books

- Contemporary Poetry Best Sellers Numbers: 500-800 copies
- Average Contemporary Poetry Book Sales: 100 >
- 98% of Published Poetry Collections will never find their way into a traditional book store.



# Regular Distribution Has Built In Problems For Poets

Bookstore chains rely on a local distributor.

Distributors want large amounts of copies up front. (1000 on average)

Books have a shelf-life of around 6 months after which they are sent back to distributors. (Up to 70%)

Traditional marketing leaves poetry publishers using the old model to lose up to 70% of revenue spent on copies before royalties are even distributed.

- The average distribution minimum is higher than the average contemporary poetry best-seller sells.
- Publishers would be forced to invest $3000-$5000 per title up front.

# Academic Poets: Why They Have An Advantage (Sometimes)

- Over 50% of Academic Poetry Titles are Published by University Presses
- University Presses have a built in distribution to College and University libraries
- University and College Libraries usually take 2 copies of a book—2000 Academic Libraries in the US, a potential of 4000 copies sold out the door.

# What is the biggest mistake a poet makes when trying to sell their book?

# The Biggest Mistake Poets Make…

- Trying to sell their book to only other poets!

- Publishing a poetry book is not rare to poets.
- Publishing a poetry book is rare and exciting to family, friends, co-workers, etc.

# Poetry at Non-Poetry Events

- There are many events not centered around poetry where poetry is welcome.
- Poetry is normal at a poetry reading, it is unique in other settings.

# The Book Launch

- The Author's Big Day
- Gathering of family, friends, co-workers, poetry fans and more.
- It should be it's own event—separate from regular monthly readings. Advertised well in advance.
- Book launches are rare in the regular world—how many does the average person get invited to?

# Book Launch Questions

**Food or no food?**

- Other talent?
  - Invite other readers?
  - Invite musicians?
- Location:
  - VFW Hall,
  - Mini-Theater,
  - Restaurant?

- (The following two slides are pictures from book launches

# Defining Your Collection

- What is the poetry about?
- The impulse to not be pigeon-holed is the opposite of good marketing.
- Niche is king—find your niche.
- Is the poetry about breast cancer? Autism? Gardening? Landscaping? Love?
- Not all the poems have to be about the same thing—just groups of them.
- Most of the most famous poetry out there isn't defined as poetry (IE, Dr. Seuss)

# Poetry Book Topic Example: Spirituality

- Church Fairs
- Religious Book Stores
- Yoga Centers
- Spiritual Retreats
- Conventions

# Other Ideas

# Fairs, Feasts and Festivals

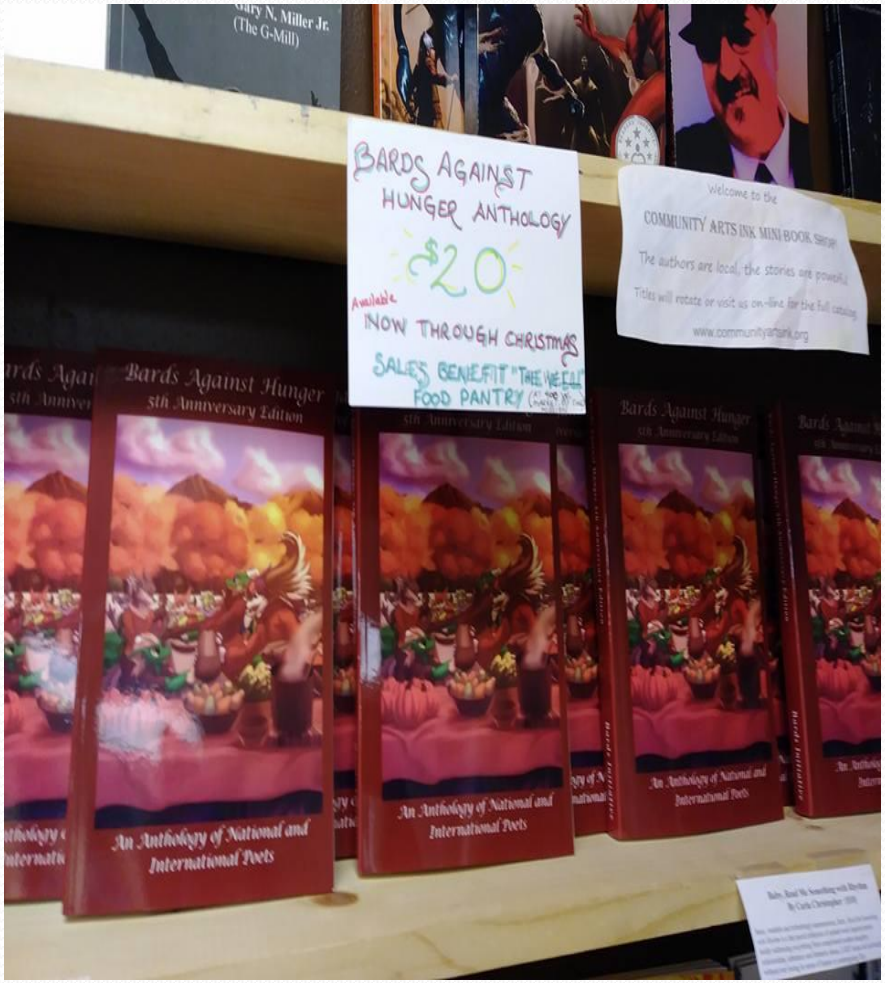
- Tables at Saturday and Sunday Events
- Church Fairs
- Flee Markets
- Festivals

How many authors do you see at these?

Tables average from $50-$75 for the day.

# Independent Book Stores, or Stores that Sell Books

- Independently owned stores are far more willing to work with people than chain stores.
- Indi-Book Stores
- Gift Shops
- Anywhere that sells books



# Online Marketing

- Amazon.com is primary, Barnes and Noble.com secondary.
- Most people don't shop online for books by people they don't know
- Think of online marketing as fan consolidation.
- Poetry is an in-person business that online marketing can improve upon but not replace.

# Author Website

- Some kind of online presence for an author to collect fans is essential.
- There are many free options, blogger, wordpress, etc.
- Having a station online where people can learn more about you and your work improves your chances of getting gigs.
- You can collect emails to make a fan list, and show sample work.

# Other Uses For Your Book

- Donations
  - To Libraries
  - To Causes
- Trading
  - Poets like to trade books
- Gifts
  - In some cultures, giving the gift of poetry is viewed to be giving someone a piece of your soul