



A BA Guide to Running Virtual Events

Sharing the experience of the
bookselling community

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This Guide

When the Covid pandemic hit the UK and Ireland in spring 2020, lockdown forced BA booksellers to find innovative ways of keeping in contact with their customers. Our members met the challenge impressively and now have many different forms of digital presence up and running.

Some bookshops concentrated on developing transactional websites and click-and-collect, while others began to produce virtual events – everything from one-off events to regular weekly storytimes, from hand-selling to lunchtime book talks, using a variety of platforms. As the year progressed, an increasing number of bookshops offered a programme of online events, supported by publishers who provided the authors for this new method of working and themselves produced events in which bookshops have been able to share.

It is clear that, even as we hope to emerge from the worst of the limitations enforced by COVID-19, this new digital presence is here to stay – probably in the form of a hybrid of in-person and online events. There are many members who may yet want to expand their customer offering into this area or increase the type of events they present.

So early in 2021, we talked to a variety of booksellers and to two publishers to explore their experience of developing online events during this difficult twelve months.

In this guide, we share their tips for running virtual events, explore the advantages and disadvantages, the different platforms and members' ideas for events now and in the future.

The guide introduces the contributors and then gives their experience of handling key aspects of virtual events. Our thanks to all those who generously shared ideas and gave their time to be interviewed.



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2020-21 for bookshops



**Sheryl Shurville,
Chorleywood
Bookshop,
Hertfordshire**

"You've got to have a positive attitude! If it's difficult, someone else will know, ask for help."



"I was reticent about going online, but I realised we had to, events are such a big part of our business. We taught ourselves Zoom, though I'm not brilliant with

the technology and was very scared at first. Whenever we run events, I have our bookshop assistant Lara alongside me, who is very good at the techy side of things.

"At first we ran things from our homes, but we are allowed to meet in the shop and it provides a better backdrop of books. And it's a different mindset for us – we're at work."



"We are learning all the time but try to be as professional as possible. It can be challenging. For example, the debut author S.J. Bennett wanted to include a

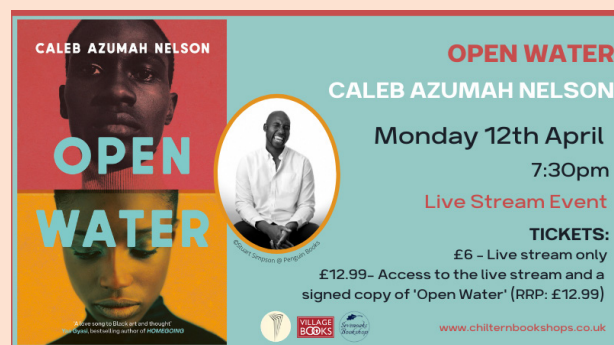
poll that viewers could vote on and poet Kate Clanchy broke people up into 'rooms' so they could discuss an exercise she set – we had to learn to set those up.



"We began when Pan Macmillan offered various bookshops the chance to join in with a Quiz Night the publisher was running. A member of our book group

helped us set up the tech, plus the publishers provided technical help on standby. It went really well, with many people sitting in their gardens enjoying joining in. Our first solo author event was with Rachel Joyce – Alison Barrow from Transworld encouraged us and helped to arrange it. We had about 30 people 'attend'.

"The events I choose are those I know our clientele would like, as I know what works here. I do a lot of pitching for authors, but publishers are increasingly coming to me because they know I've developed a good reputation for online events."



"We've done on average two events a week, which is a big commitment but it's really working to keep our bookshop in the forefront of people's minds. We're also selling books which we wouldn't normally stock, by having an event about them."



**Olivia Kekewich,
The Edinburgh
Bookshop
(part of Wee Three Indies)**

"In April 2020, when we were first furloughed, I saw an opportunity. We all used to run regular events, but now it wasn't possible – and I missed events so much. I'd been following what the 'At Home with 4 Indies' group of bookshops were doing and thought we might have time while we were closed to set something up here."

"I joined up with Millie McCosh from Atkinson-Pryce Bookshop in Biggar, and Sally Pattle of Far from the Madding Crowd in Linlithgow. Towards the end of the first 2020 lockdown, we launched online events under the banner of Wee Three Indies."

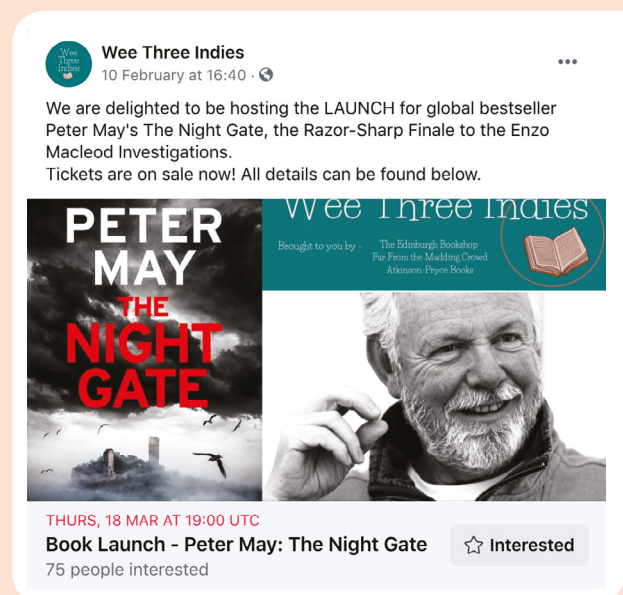
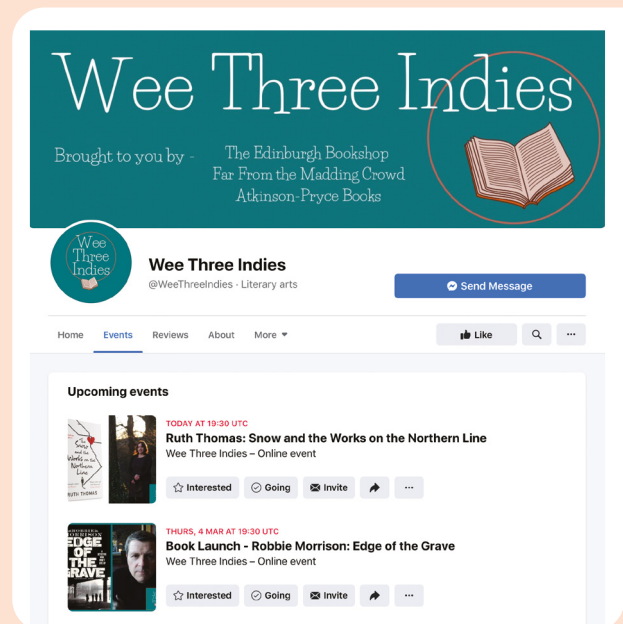
"This was early days for online events, so I contacted Meryl Halls and Emma Bradshaw at the BA, as well as publishers' reps, to ask how they could provide support. We were very nervous at first but we have developed our technical expertise as we've gone along."



"It was an experiment to see if it could help us muddle through. It worked well, so we kept going. We had about 20 events during 2020."

The first events included Anne Cleeves and Patrick Barkham – we chose authors with close connections to us initially, and then went for others who had a Scottish connection. Interviewees have included everyone from local authors to big names such as Joanna Trollope.

"We didn't hold events in December but kept the profile up through Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with a post each 'Book Advent Day'. This included short videos from authors such as Maggie O'Farrell and illustrator Chris Wormall."



**We're also selling
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event about them.**



Emma Milne-White, Hungerford Bookshop, Berkshire



"The bookshop is so much part of my identity, I found it very difficult when we had to shut so suddenly in the first lockdown. At first all our efforts went into click-and-collect and we didn't have the energy to learn how to run online events. But we felt guilty as events are so much part of the shop's USP."



Hungerford Bookshop

28 May at 16:03 · 🌐

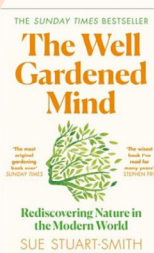
Hear about our ✨free✨ season of talks and workshops on well-being including how fitness affects our mental state, benefits of writing, and how to get a better night's sleep. Book at <https://hungerfordhub.com>



Penny Post

28 May at 10:02 · 🌐

A great programme of talks and workshops for mental health and wellbeing, The Well Read Mind, starts this week and [Penny Locke](#) caught up with the organisers Andrea from [Hungerford Hub & Library](#) and Emma from [Hungerford Bookshop](#) to hear all about. Kindly fund... [See more](#)



Hungerford Hub x Hungerford Bookshop Present **The Well Gardened Mind:** Rediscovering Nature in the Modern World

an on-line live event
with author Sue Stuart-Smith

Thursday May 27th
7:30pm on Zoom

FREE
EVENT
(REGISTRATION
REQUIRED)



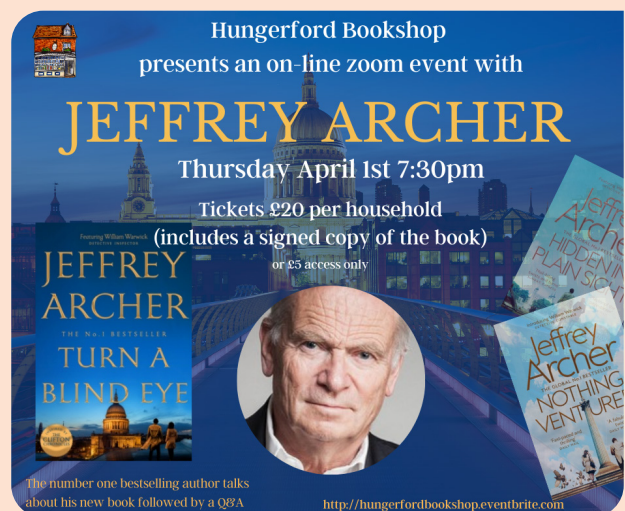
Part of a season of events on mental health & wellbeing organised by Hungerford Bookshop & Hungerford Hub

#TheWellReadMind

EVENTBRITE.CO.UK

The Well Gardened Mind: Sue Stuart-Smith (part of the Well Read Mind Season)

"I needed another way to sell and came up with personal selling online. I have really enjoyed doing it. I was missing conversations in the bookshop, and this was a way of me talking about books, in my bookshop, and an easy method of getting across more information than just a picture on a website. People know us in the bookshop, so this is a nice way they can see a familiar face. It has worked really well; after I post a video, I get orders the next day."



"We have also done online author events. Once I'd got over my phobia of technology, I realised the advantages of virtual events: you don't have to pay for a venue or predict the numbers. So we asked for advice

from Emma at Book-ish, part of the At Home with 4 Indies group, and then started small."

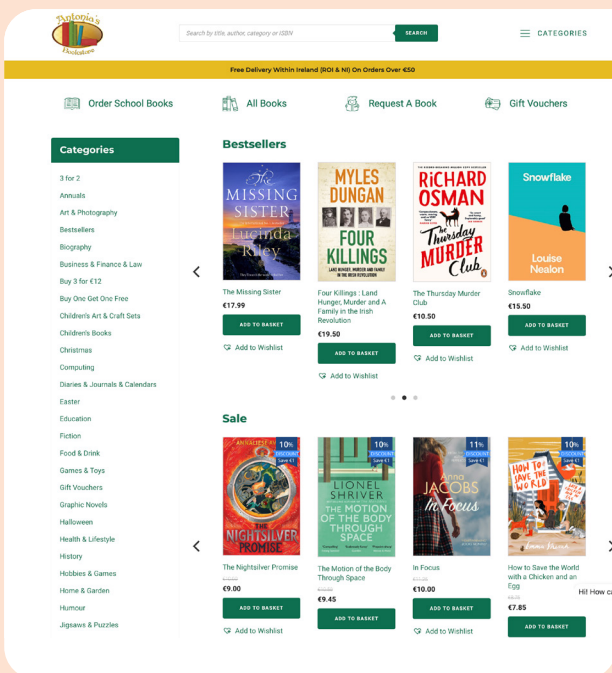
**I realised the advantages
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for a venue or predict the**



Antonia Daly, Antonia's Bookstore, Trim, Republic of Ireland

(part of A Tale of Three Indies)

"Since I started Antonia's Bookstore in 2005, we have been through the onset of e-books, the recession and now the pandemic, I do wonder how much more we can take... but we have survived!"

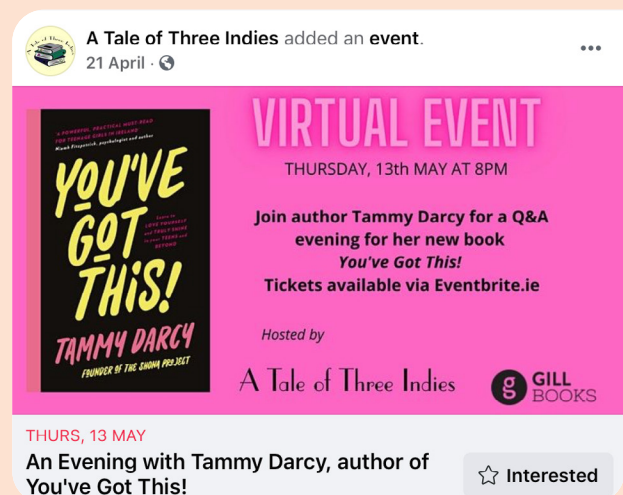


"In the first lockdown we focused on developing a transactional website and the upkeep of that can feel like nearly a full-time job. But under normal circumstances,

we do a lot of children's book clubs in the shop and parents began ringing us to say that their kids were missing these events and could we do them online? I sat in on a BA Zoom about running digital events and wondered whether we could start doing some, then two days later Dawn from Woodbine Books rang and said that she had been talking to Cian at The Maynooth Bookshop – and so A Tale of Three Indies was born.

"I'd say to booksellers: 'Go for it!'"

"Going online is one of those things I probably waited too long to do. There's no setting up of chairs, putting out refreshments and worrying what it will be like for the author if nobody turns up. As long as you have done your publicity on social media and in the local press, you should be ok. But if hardly anybody shows up, it doesn't matter as much."



don't have to pay
numbers.



Sarah Dennis, Mostly Books, Abingdon, Oxfordshire

"Before the pandemic, Mostly Books enjoyed a good reputation for running events, but I felt we could probably do things better, so in January 2020 we brainstormed our strategy for the year. We wanted to do a good mix of events, including some big names and also working with debut or lesser-known authors.

"We ran a couple of successful events early in the year, introducing some new formats that people seemed to enjoy, but then everything had to stop. Towards the beginning of lockdown, we held a couple of online author events, which were a mixture of live conversation and some pre-recorded content. But there was a lot of buffering with the pre-recordings and technical problems throughout. I felt we were not producing a professional product. We took the decision to step back from virtual events, focusing instead on some new opportunities.



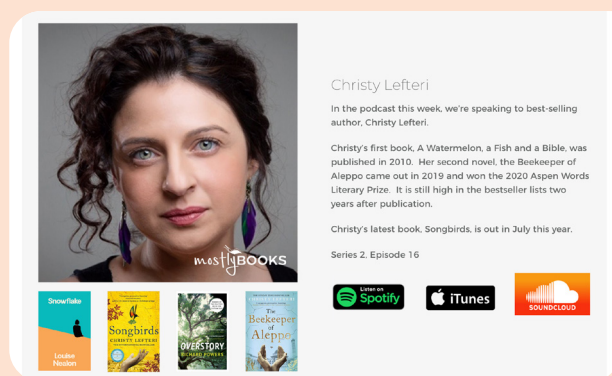
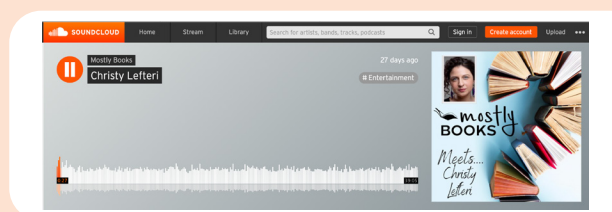
"Before lockdown, we had come up with the idea of our 'Cosy Club' book club. We felt that people are sometimes intimidated by speaking up in book groups and that clubs can often feel inaccessible, so designed the club to address that. We were due to meet in person but had to change our approach. We were determined to continue and with two weeks' notice, we pivoted to running the club online.

"We made our book group more accessible with a mixture of titles to choose from, described in a monthly video and email. Members send us their reviews which we collate and circulate to everyone in the club. They can join in a monthly Zoom discussion if they want to. We now have over 80 members who they feel part of something and it's helping us build that feeling of community.



"I also wanted to get round the problem that a lot of people who had been staring at Zoom all day while working at home probably didn't want more screen time in

the evening. I came up with the idea of a podcast, because people can listen to them at any time and don't have to look at a screen to enjoy the content. I'm quite impulsive so, once the decision was made, our first podcast was ready within a month and came out in September 2020."



"It was a vertical learning curve – we had to find out about the technology, create a brand, do some marketing and, of course, find some guests!"

"The first challenge was how to find authors. I sent some email pitches, called in a few favours with publicists and authors I knew from previous events and started recording. Now, we are regularly approached with guest suggestions and could create many more episodes with the number of authors we've been offered. But if there's an author I particularly want, I will still send a pitch to the publisher.

"Besides sales, there are other benefits to having a podcast: it provides publicity for our bookshop and in the long term it will help publicise our in-person events. It also keeps us in touch with publishers – and it's a lovely thing to do. It's been a real privilege to meet these guests and the conversations with them feel very intimate. The more that you do it, the more you develop a basic framework so you become more efficient and confident."

2020-21 for publishers



Alison Barrow, PR Director, Transworld Publishers

"I feel passionately that we, as publishers, need to support bookshops - we all need each other. I love hearing how creative and resourceful the indies have been to keep everything going.

"I would say to any bookshop now thinking of starting digital events – do it if you can! But first speak to another bookseller who is experienced at running virtual events. Ours is a community which is very supportive of each other and will share their wisdom.



"In spring 2020 we were looking at how we could keep up our profile and support bookshops when their doors were closed. There was a lot of hesitation and concern. At first we were very reactive to what the booksellers wanted. The initiative for producing virtual author events came from the booksellers themselves including, early on, Mr B's Emporium and At Home with 4 Indies. When At Home with 4 Indies brought together four shops, it meant they pooled their time, their energy and their databases to provide a geographical spread. For us, it was a potent offer. Booksellers' local databases have been really important for us in promoting virtual events to book-buying customers. We don't have access to this kind of localised data."

"Over the autumn more shops got into their stride. We have tended to partner with shops where we know the events are successful and we will now offer an author direct to them. However, I'm very happy to take a punt on someone who is new to virtual events, even if we have to be cautious at first, and we don't mind if there are smaller audiences. If we get 10 people then we will call it a book club but if we get 20 or 30 people that is great. I wish there were more book shops who would come to us and pitch for authors."

"When these first digital events were proposed, at Transworld we were about to publish Ruth Jones' second novel *Us Three* and had to drop a whole programme of live events and move publication back to September. After many tentative discussions and reassurances to Ruth about this new virtual platform opportunity, we were able to programme six online events partnering with indies. We saw a really strong audience base and conversion to sales. Rachel Joyce's new novel *Miss Benson's Beetle* was published in hardcover in July. Rachel and I contacted bookshops about the possibility for virtual events. We were happy to make Rachel's virtual events experimental and if there were only 20 people, we were comfortable with that, and had no alternative of a direct engagement with readers. We wanted to make the best effort with what we had available.



"The vast majority of our writers have been quite happy to undertake online events even if the audience numbers are sometimes smaller than in real space. They don't have to leave home so it's totally different from having to travel for three hours on a train to talk with a smaller number of people. Virtual events have also meant we could access our overseas writers for virtual events. For example, Lee Child and Tess Gerritsen did online events from the US in 2020."



Andy Belshaw, Kate Bullows and Grace Harrison, Macmillan

Regional Account Managers Andy and Kate have been talking to bookshops around the land since the idea of virtual events first emerged, while Grace has been setting up and supporting events as Communications and Events Manager.

Andy says, “As reps, we act as a conduit between the book shop and the Macmillan marketing team. I’ve been dealing with At Home with 4 Indies since the start, and it has been a complete rollercoaster of a learning curve for those booksellers. Sensibly, they started small and then built up their events in scale. When the first lockdown hit, virtual events were more about community care than selling books, and they did a lot of free events on Facebook.”

AUTHOR



“There are several groups of bookshops among my clients who are now working together, which has meant that those who are unsure about the tech have been able to support each other. Now that some bookshops have established a track record of online events, publicists will often go directly to them to offer an author.”

“Griffin Books in Penarth were another pioneer,” Kate reports. “They began doing events straight away on Zoom. We offered them authors for events such as, ‘An Evening With...’. At first they capped the numbers to 50 attendees as they really didn’t know how many people would take part. In fact, they had a huge response, but mostly kept the price at £5 per household. For Jeffrey Archer, the shop found they had people attending from all over the world for such a popular author. Book sales have been really strong for them.”



Grace started her role as events organiser in February 2020; “It was a challenging moment! But interesting opportunities emerged to do things we couldn’t do before. We tried a few different platforms for events including Facebook and Instagram but settled on Crowdcast. As well as many similar functions to Zoom, Crowdcast also offers a virtual green room which is useful for panel events. We can measure audience reach and capture the data to build promotional lists. We may develop our own platform in time.”

“We have hosted some events where we provided a platform and managed the technology and the bookshop hosted and did the PR. The feedback is that managing virtual events can be a lot of work for bookshops, so sometimes our publicists manage the event and encourage bookshops to join in.”

Virtual vs in-person events

Access to overseas authors



Grace: Digital events mean that big names from overseas can be involved and consumers have really liked this. In future, publishers will be bringing fewer authors over

because of the environmental impact of air travel. And through virtual events we'll also be able to involve authors we'd never have had the budget to fly over. Virtual events can be even better than in-person ones in terms of reach.

Sheryl: In online events, we've had David Balducci and Barbara Kingsolver from the US and Heather Morris from Australia, and our crime panel had one author in Canada. This kind of access is brilliant.

Paperback launches and more



Alison: Transworld traditionally focuses major PR activity around the hardback publication date, but doing online events gives us a chance to coincide with paperback

publication – and even for the author to appear outside these parameters. Paperbacks can be a great entry point for customers and perhaps this will be the model in future. We might do a live launch for the hardback publication and then follow up with more online events for the paperback launch.

Sheryl: We've been holding quite a few events to promote paperbacks. In normal circumstances, authors wouldn't come out for a paperback, but many missed their hardback launch because of Covid.

Kate: Macmillan has also done events for the paperback launch. It feels mutually beneficial for us and the bookseller, and the content will work for multiple booksellers. We can also set up events to pre-sell a title in advance of publication.

Andy: For a debut author, using digital events is a brilliant way to launch a book, where a big book tour would be too expensive for a debut title.

Reaching new audiences

Online events are of course accessible to viewers anywhere, even overseas, and also open events to those who might not be able to travel to a face-to-face event.



Olivia: Online, there is no geographical barrier to reach far-flung audiences, whether they are at opposite end of the UK or overseas.

Emma: A lot of our customers won't travel more than a few miles to an event, some don't like to come out in the dark, but they can now join an event online instead. We have been penalised in the past by the size of venues available to us – for example, I'd pitched for Jeremy Paxman but was turned down because we couldn't seat more than 250. But now we could live stream from an event and add numbers through a virtual audience.



Grace: The really positive feedback is how accessible digital events are for disabled people and those unable to travel. Macmillan is introducing closed-captioning to

our own events which will widen access further and could build a new audience. The hybrid model of streaming or recording in-person events makes sense – and it could be very important in the future for those without access to a local bookshop.



Sheryl: Because some of our audience are not local, allowing time for posting the books is an added level of complication.

We've had problems when book plates and books don't arrive in time to be sent out in time for, or immediately after, an event. Postage also has to be paid for.

A lot of our customers
A lot of our customers
won't travel more than
a few miles to an event...
a few miles to an event...

Flexible audience numbers and no venue problems



Olivia: Wee Three Indies' events are not recorded, and live participation fluctuates from about ten viewers to 90. But if numbers stay low, we don't panic. It doesn't matter

because we aren't faced with an author in an empty room.

Emma: Our bookshop is too narrow to fit many people and so in normal times we have to choose one of three local venues, depending on the predicted size of event. That means predicting the audience numbers which can be hit and miss, whereas with virtual events, it doesn't matter how many people join in.

Last minute ticket sales and flexible viewing



Event ticket sales can continue up to the last minute (as long as you have someone ready to send out last-minute Zoom links if you are using that platform). With

Facebook or Instagram, access can be instant and people can join during an event.



Grace: Because events can be automatically recorded, people can watch them at a later time if they can't watch the live event.

We did this for a Picador 'New Voices' event in 2020. It is a more flexible offer for audience members and will continue to be when people are not at home so much. We share a link to the video recording to paid-up customers.

Antonia: Hold your nerve when it comes to ticket sales for an online event – in a small town, sometimes sales can be very last minute.

Intimate feel

Having an author talking on your computer screen can sometimes feel more personal than sitting with them in a crowded bookshop or large hall. Using Zoom, if audience members are allowed to unmute themselves and turn on their

videos, usually at the end of the presentation or interview, it can also give a sense of intimacy even though in reality they may be miles away.



Alison: Something is definitely lost in not having authors present at live events – they love meeting their readers and having their jokes laughed at and receiving emotional

feedback and applause from an audience. It takes a lot of energy to speak to an almost blank screen and audience interaction is difficult. But Transworld did one event with Griffin Books where the audience were invited to unmute themselves at the end of the talk and say 'hi'. It's really nice for the author who gets a big boost to get a live round of applause.

Teaming up

Whether you are nervous about the technology of virtual events or simply want to expand your reach, teaming up with one or more other booksellers has proved a good model.



Sheryl: On some events, we've worked with Hazel at Village Books in Dulwich and Fleur at Sevenoaks Bookshop. This really helps with events which are likely

to get smaller numbers – even if we only get 20 customers each, that's still 60 which is a nice number. We run the event from one bookshop, but each bookseller publicises through their own email lists and social media, sells tickets and does its own book sales. The Zoom link will be sent out from each of us to our particular customers.

Olivia: I and my colleagues Millie and Sally feel we couldn't have done this on our own. Wee Three Indies has been a brilliant way to enable us to work together.

By being three shops together, we also expand our promotional reach. Plus, in the past, it's been really difficult to convince publishers that they could send an author to all our shops in one day. Now our events have shown them that we can be a route to customers across the area when we return to live events.

Antonia: It makes more sense to join together as three shops. We are a good 30 minute drive from each other which is close enough to share signed copies if we need to but far enough away to pull in a different local audience. Pooling our three audiences together works well. In our event publicity, we post links to all three of our shops so that our regular customers can come to their chosen shop specifically, but we are also getting newcomers who will randomly choose a bookshop link.

Use two hosts



Having two people to host events is recommended by all. Co-hosts can help the event run smoothly, with one focusing on the author and the other on the audience plus provide a back-up if there are technical problems and answer customers' tech queries.

Antonia: Because we are three bookshops, having the other two online means someone can write down and select the questions to ask the author while the talk or interview is happening, while the other can provide cover if there are any technical issues; they can notice if someone's sound comes on and so on – you don't see these things if you are busy interviewing.

My Wi-Fi crashed out in the middle of one event but luckily, I had made my colleagues in the shops co-admins. This was a good lesson to learn: none of the audience knew anything was wrong but Zoom immediately took the administration over to the other two. Authors can also be made co-admins so they can share their screen if they want to.

Sheryl: Provide a contact number for customers who have technical problems. We're trying to encourage people to take part, it's part of our community ethos, so we do need to help them. The number of calls we get is reducing now as people learn how to use Zoom.

Overlap of exposure



Emma: Be careful that an author is not doing too many events close together – check the author and publisher's social media. Because there is no geographical limit to access events, we booked one big name expecting 50 to 150 tickets to sell as we normally would, but he had done so many other virtual events that we'd only sold 10 tickets after two weeks! We had to ask the publisher and author to push the event on Twitter, but it was a lot of hard work.

Alison: We set up more than ten virtual events for the Transworld author Rachel Joyce during summer 2020, but as we got nearer the end of the series, we found audiences got smaller. This was different from what you would expect from live events because more people were accessing the online events outside the local bookshop area and had already seen Rachel at an earlier event. One needs to plan carefully.

Hard work



Kate: Talking to my Macmillan clients over the last year, it's clear that running digital events can be very hard work. It's not as easy as just sticking something online. They can involve a lot of customer service to provide support with technical issues; there are broadband problems and books have to be posted out.

Before you begin, it is definitely a good idea to talk to someone else who has experience of holding virtual events. But once you have built up experience, you will reap the rewards. Perhaps start small with a local author. If things go wrong, your local customers will have more sympathy. Also, less well-known authors will tend to invite their friends and family to the event, as well as publicise it themselves, which bumps up the numbers and helps to sell books!

Provide a contact number for customers who have technical problems. We're trying to encourage people to take part, it's part of our community ethos, so we do need to help them.

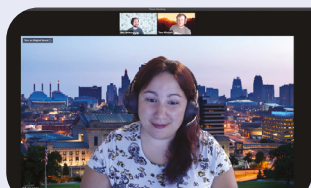
Using different platforms

Rehana Nurmahi and Kara Rennie of the Booksellers Association discuss different online platforms to use for hosting events.



Zoom is good for **interaction** with the viewers (using the Meeting function not the Webinar where viewers' sound and video are automatically switched off).

The BA has held regular tutorials for members using Zoom and we've found that booksellers enjoy meeting on this platform. If the host allows, participants can all be visible and BA members have enjoyed the informality of the Chat function which allows them to interact, say hello, make jokes. This creates an amiable and intimate sense of being in the room together. This does depend on smaller participant numbers, as only a maximum of people can usefully be visible on a screen at one time.



However, in Speaker View, only the person speaking is visible, as one would normally have for an author event. In this case, or

if the speaker is screen-sharing a Powerpoint, for example, then Chat messages popping up can feel rather invasive.

Generally, booksellers hosting an event as a Zoom Meeting would ask participants to keep their sound and video off, so that the screen shows just speakers and interviewer if there is one, but perhaps invite them to switch on at the end for more interaction. Using the Webinar function means that only chosen speakers are visible, and this also has a Q&A button useful for participants to submit questions as the talk goes along.

You can control access in Zoom by only sending the link to those who have paid for or signed-up to the event, and by using a Waiting Room so that you can see who is trying to 'enter' the event. So it works well for paid-for events.

Basic, free-to-access Zoom does not allow any longer than a 40 minute meeting, and therefore

booksellers will need to buy the annual or monthly membership which covers up to 100 people joining a meeting. There are then tiers to pay for increased numbers of participants.



YouTube is better used for **live streaming** of events or posting recordings after the event. Live streaming on YouTube is not especially difficult to set up, and there's a functionality to livestream a Zoom call across to YouTube, thus expanding your reach. Facebook events, however, can't be live streamed to YouTube.

The good thing about live streaming to YouTube is no-one can accidentally (or purposely) turn on their sound and interrupt the event – this happens more often than you might expect! It is similar to the Webinar format on Zoom.

The BA and various booksellers have recorded Zoom events and uploaded them across to YouTube. The recording is only accessible to people with a specific link, so it can be exclusively available to members or ticket-holders. You can cancel or un-list the recording when you want to, so that it is not permanently available.

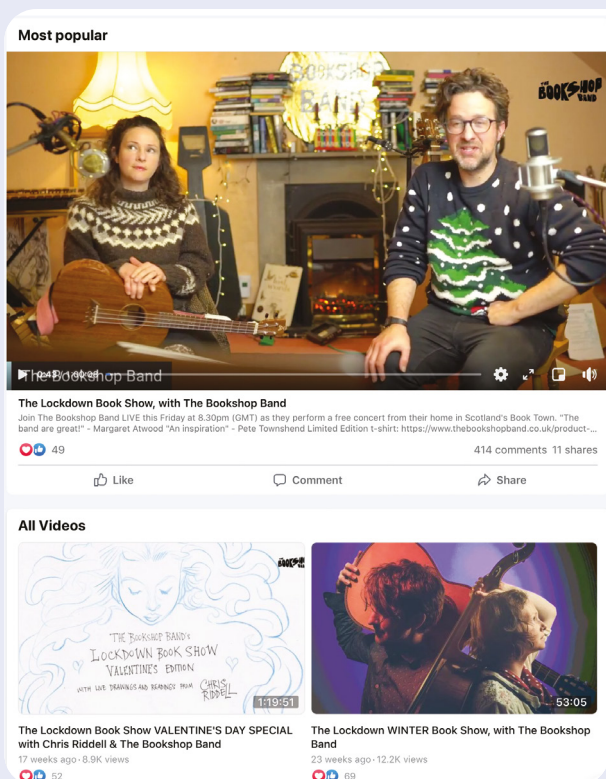


An advantage of using **Facebook Lives** is that the platform will automatically record events, so people can continue to access them after their live broadcast for as long as you like. It can

give you wide customer access as the event can be shared onto other's pages during and after the broadcast time.

For example, when the Bookshop Band gave live concerts on Sunday nights during lockdown, they cross-hosted their event onto the Facebook pages of the BA, BAMB and lots of bookshops, so that it reached many people at once via twelve different pages.

Facebook is not **monetised**, so it is useful for free events. But it costs nothing to set up an event.



Participants are not visible or heard on Facebook, except the host and anyone they choose to be visible (ie the author or another interviewer). While viewing events on Facebook, people can post comments without worrying that their faces may accidentally appear or their sound be turned on, which feels more anonymous so some people may prefer it compared with Zoom.

The downside of Facebook or Instagram events is that viewers have to be users of the platform, whereas with Zoom, they can view the event online without even downloading the Zoom App.

Privacy may be important for some authors and some publishers may prefer to keep close control of who sees the event or when it is seen. Because Zoom requires a specific link to be viewed, it feels more of a closed event and some authors may be more comfortable with this. Conversely, with a Facebook Live event run from a bookshop's public-facing page, anyone can stumble across it and viewers can share it to their own page – which of course has the advantage of widening **publicity** and the potential audience but can

mean the event is 'out there' for longer than an author or publisher may wish.



Instagram Lives are fairly similar to Facebook Lives, with the bookshop setting up an event from their Instagram account section. When the event goes live, the author/speaker is added in, showing a split screen of author and bookshop interviewer. Viewers can post comments as the event goes along, which is fun but can be hard to manage for the interviewer and can be quite distracting – whereas in Zoom, one can avoid looking at the comments until one opens the Chat box.



Working on any platform, a **second host**, usually another member of bookshop staff working on a second device, is almost essential, to help support the interviewer with tech issues and keep monitoring comments, chats or the raised-hand feature on Zoom.

It is particularly helpful to have two people running a Zoom event if **screen sharing** is involved (for example, to show a Powerpoint presentation), so that on one device, someone is concentrating on the screen sharing but they won't be able to see the Chat comments pop up. On another device, someone is monitoring the Chat and questions and muting anyone who accidentally turns on their sound.

Sheryl: We use Zoom and bought the basic package initially. If we go over 100 ticket sales – and a lot of our online events now fall into the 100–500 viewers category – we ask the publisher to pay for the higher Zoom package. After all, we are showcasing their authors, and they are grateful for that. When we had Jon Sopel, interviewed by James Naughtie, we had 800 people! We have also had children’s events with Andy Griffiths and Rob Biddulph, which were big numbers. Then we had to go into the 500–1,000 zoom category. That extra payment lasts for a month, but one is still paying for the basic package alongside it.

We set up the Zoom meeting as a Webinar. This means the viewers can’t see each other, only the author, me in the bookshop and the interviewer. We then have questions afterwards using the Q&A function, and we then choose the questions to put to the author. We don’t use the Chat function.

We record events now and mention this on the ticket. After the event we upload it onto YouTube. For the majority of events, we just put it there for free, it’s good publicity, but for Jon Sopel we continue to charge through our payment system.

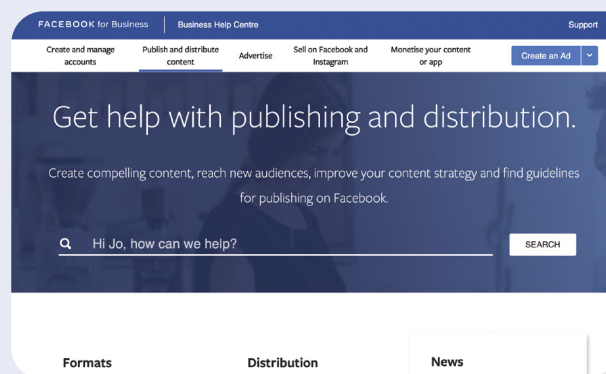
Antonia: Zoom has really worked for us. We bought a licence for 100 participants, but if we need to, we can choose to upgrade month by month. We have found it easy to manage and easy to send the links out to our customers.

Olivia: Most of our events take place on Zoom, but some children’s events have worked well as a Facebook Live because they are automatically recorded and the video stays up on Facebook for a while, which caters to busy family life.

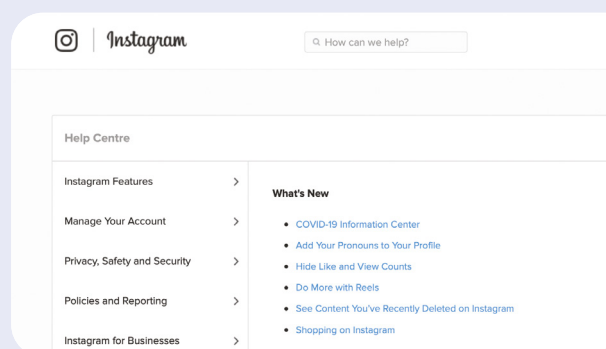
Grace: At Macmillan, we are cautious about posting events on YouTube as there can be an intellectual property issue with the author. Some authors don’t want to give consent to be recorded – it is important to check with them before you make recordings available after an event.

Tutorials

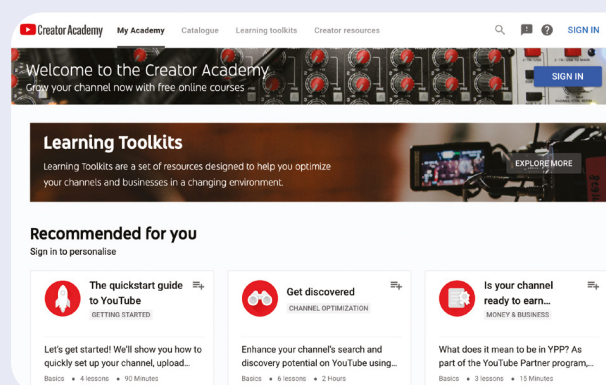
Tutorials are widely available for all platforms. You’ll find instructions at the following locations, but there are many alternatives online:



www.facebook.com/business/help/2094583417443686



help.instagram.com



creatoracademy.youtube.com/page/home

The BA’s quick guides to using Facebook Lives and Zoom are shown in Appendix 1 and 2.

Formats for events

Know your audience



Olivia: Find a format that works for you and your customer base. There is no right way of hosting virtual events and no-one knows better what will work for a bookshop than the bookshop itself. Keep your programme engaging and diverse. We have events for adults, for the whole family and purely for children.

Emma: The in-person events you are good at won't necessarily be the ones which work for you online. Look at your customer demographic and how online events will work for them.

Antonia: Timing is important. We learned the hard way by holding an event for ten-to-teen readers at 10am on a Saturday when we would normally hold children's events in the shop. Though this time is fine for younger children, the fact is that teenagers are still in bed then! We are a commuter town and we usually time evening events so adults can get back from Dublin and eat something and this still works even when they are working from home. You don't want to organise something at 6pm.

Author talks and interviews



Antonia: We ask the author whether they would prefer to be interviewed or just introduced to then talk on their own. Sometimes, one of wee three booksellers do the interviewing but for most events we have shared the interviewing between the three of us. We worked out in advance who would ask what, with our questions grouped into subject areas. We have also mixed in live questions from the audience: one of us monitors the questions coming in on the Q&A function and jumps in to say there's a question about that particular topic, so we broke up the interview with audience questions which worked very well. We felt we were in the room with the audience.

We have recorded the main author talk in advance for one writer and then held a live Zoom, on which she was present but not visible. While we played the 30-minute recording, she

could see the questions coming in from the audience without being distracted and could prepare herself to answer them. Then we went live for the questions. Dawn bought a camera and microphone and recorded one author at her shop and one at Cian's shop, then did a basic editing job – it worked well except for one moment where the sound went funny because the microphone moved. For another author, I am lucky that my brother works in TV and could come to the shop and do a professional standard recording.

We have held live events at Halloween and Christmas with a children's author and their illustrator. The author read from the book and the illustrator showed the children how to draw something. Then we asked the children to turn their video on if they wanted to, so they could show what they had drawn and ask questions. With children's events, we put in the email that an adult must be present.

Generally, we mute everyone centrally, but it is up to participants whether they want to have their video on or not. With the viewers' screens on, the authors find it really interactive and as if they are in the room with the audience. One author commented to us that with all the screens off, she felt as if she were talking to herself and it didn't feel natural. We don't seem to have had an issue with broadband bandwidth even when people's screens were switched on.

Olivia: Wee Three Indies' events are held on Zoom and the format is usually one hour's conversation with the author led by a chair or interviewer who can be one of the booksellers. Sometimes, an author's publicist acts as a moderator, as with our Cressida Cowell event. Guest chairs are great too, as you get a good conversation going between the two authors. If the main author is not from Scotland, we can

sometimes choose a chair who is, to keep the local feel. The discussion is followed by questions from the audience using the Q&A function. While the event is running, one of the booksellers also hosts live Q&A on Twitter.

We have occasionally paid the author, but we try not to pay for the chair. We've also asked the publisher to pay for both chair and author, after all they're not having to cover any travel costs – and the chair also gets the promotion, so it's 2-for-1 for the publisher.

Emma: We started with a book club-style small event, so there was no pressure to get huge audience numbers, and we knew the author Naomi Wood would show. In normal circumstances, publishers and authors might be reluctant to travel for a group of 16 people, but instead our group discussed the book online, and then the author joined us for the last 30 minutes to take questions – Macmillan suggested the format.

We also developed a literary quiz which was great fun. We got quite a diverse group of people joining in and they wanted us to do it again. But it was a lot of prep, and these things always take longer than you think.

Sheryl: I or my colleague will introduce the author and interview them, and thank at the end. Sometimes we try to get the publisher to provide an interviewer, while for some events the author will just choose to speak without an interviewer. If you can, try and get the publisher to pay for an interviewer – I don't necessarily have the time to read the book they are promoting in advance, or I'm not qualified to talk on some subjects. A journalist or specialist can make a better interviewer.

We ask members to give their chosen title a star rating and encourage them to email us a review of the book, even if it's just one line.

Publisher-run events

Publishers have put on virtual events on varying scales. Check with your reps what's available.



Alison: At Penguin we enjoy a successful partnership and larger online events through the Penguin Live team and linking up with several bookshops to fulfil sales.

As Transworld, we've organised pre-publicity events for booksellers to promote our emerging authors, with a free online panel. We hope then that the booksellers might invite one of the authors for a customer event either online or in person as that is allowed.

Emma: We joined with three other indies to offer a Penguin Live event with Robert Harris. It sold well and we loved it because it was organised by the publisher and all the tech was off our hands. I wish they'd do more!

Book clubs



Sarah: We set up a virtual book club, the Cosy Club. It has a selection of books to choose from each month. My colleague, Lindsey, records a video about the titles (eight books per month) which is shared with the club members at the beginning of each month. Members order the title they've chosen using specific links on our website. These links are not public and you can't find them if you search the website, because we offer price promotions for the club.

We ask members to give their chosen title a star rating and encourage them to email us a review of the book, even if it's just one line – others write a lot more. Lindsay collates the reviews and ratings and produces a summary document for each book. That gets sent out just before a monthly Zoom meeting. We don't make the Zoom compulsory and generally 25 to 30 members will take part, while we have over 80 people in the club. The Zoom is chaired by Lindsey and I attend as co-host. The call is quite relaxed. Lindsey will address people directly and encourage them to discuss their feedback. Most of the time we don't

have a guest, but authors sometimes join in. We contact them directly through their social media or via their publicists to see if they would like to take part.

We want to make our Cosy Clubbers feel special, so we have a quarterly sale for them when the club books covered are available at a discount. We also gave them a £5 book voucher at Christmas to encourage sales, which was very popular.

Some people will inevitably drop out, but we always have new people joining. We do a lot of social media about the Cosy Club and cover it in our newsletter. It is very efficient at selling – the meeting can generate sales of titles which members didn't choose but hear about during the Zoom, while others will buy several titles that Lindsay mentions in her video. We've sold around 300 books more than usual through running the club.

Emma: I host a book club which is organised by the town. We have paid for the pro Zoom, so it makes sense for us to do it. It needs just one of us from the shop to host the tech, then the book club organiser facilitates the discussion, the participants having read the book in advance. Because it is based on the town community, rather than our customer list, it reaches far beyond my usual bookshop customers.



Hand-selling videos

Emma: I record video pieces to promote particular books twice a month. I record on my phone and then post the video to Instagram, which is very straightforward to do.

I decide what books I'm going to talk about – perhaps they are just in, or I'm reading and enjoying a book – and then I set up the phone and just talk. I sometimes do it two or three times to get it right. Each video is three to four minutes long, one minute per book.

I always round off with how to get hold of the books. A 'call to action' is important in each hand-selling video. Make sure the viewers know exactly how to buy the books covered.

I learned a lot as part of some paid-for Instagram training. The trainer pointed out that I mustn't feel embarrassed about selling, the point of this is to try and sell books! I found the trainer on Instagram – she is local but is followed by a lot of shops and is part of a network of local businesses. It cost £150 for two hours – it was money well-spent and I went back for a further session.

It's important to keep our Instagram page up to date, with a diversity of content showing in the nine picture squares – a video, a personal post, advertising for an event, a quote. Keep it new and various.

I also do an occasional five-minute Instagram Live to promote the work of local, self-published authors. It helps them and it relieves my guilt at not stocking their books.

Even though these little videos are relatively easy to produce, it is important to look professional. I always make sure I'm not standing by empty boxes and there are books behind me. I spend a long time arranging my phone to get the right shot. I will carry on doing this after lockdown, so I am going to invest in a tripod. You can also get a circular light which helps improve the picture.

However, people do enjoy the authentic feel. They like the behind-the-scenes angle and I feel if you get too professional, you begin to look far too corporate. They need to see their friendly bookseller who is part of the community.

Even though these little videos are relatively easy to produce, it is important to look professional.

Podcasts



Sarah: Our 'Mostly Books Meets...' Podcast launched in September 2020 and is available on SoundCloud, Spotify and iTunes.

For the first season, it was quite stressful doing the interview, editing the recording and releasing the content to post a podcast each week. It can take a lot of time: research on the author, the interview and then quite a few hours editing. After Christmas, we took a season break and recorded the majority of episodes for the new spring series in advance. This was a lot less stressful and we've got much better at the production process.

The format of the podcast was inspired by Desert Island Discs where they use songs to navigate the guest through the story of their life. We do the same, but with books. My interviewee chooses four books to talk about: the first book they read, the last they read, the books that changed their life and a book that everyone should read. The latter is usually the book that they want to promote – they are fully entitled to a plug! Besides writers, I have also interviewed other people in the trade such as a magazine editor and the BA's Meryl Halls.

At the start of each podcast I give the interviewee's name and a brief biography. I have now developed some generic questions as a starting point for any interview. This skeleton structure means much less preparation time and I send a PDF of the questions to the author in advance. I've also set up a standard email template to send to confirmed authors providing information about how the recording will work.

I ask for their book choices in advance as well as a biography (which the publicist will usually provide). It is important to carve out time to research the author beyond the basic biography as it really helps with interviewing them, but it's essential to use credible sources.

It is not difficult to do the interviews as long as you are reasonably confident chatting to people.

I just let the conversation flow because it is not broadcast live, it can be edited afterwards – it is much less stressful than doing something live.

It is important for your brand to have music during the podcast but you can run into issues with copyright and royalties. I'm lucky that I know a professional composer who created some theme music for us.

My colleague knew some people who had created podcasts and asked them which software to use. I chose Zencastr, which is based in the USA and is live-supported 24/7. They are really responsive and offer a free live tutorial when you first sign up, with 8 or 10 other people, providing a comfortable environment to ask questions. There are loads of different platforms available, but I find that this one works well.



With Zencastr, you send an invitation link to your interviewee which they click on to enter the call. After the recording has finished, the audio file from the interviewee is automatically uploaded to the Zencastr server, which you can then access directly and save onto your computer for editing.

We
to

We do not usually use the video function as it takes up too much bandwidth.

Editing is the hardest bit. I use a free audio editing programme called Audacity. You just have to put the hours in to learn it. Initially I spent far too long and was working on editing in the early morning before work; being a perfectionist I was editing things that most listeners probably wouldn't have noticed. I've got a lot faster, but currently have a publishing student on work experience who is doing the editing for me. I credit him on every episode because he is hoping to move into audio publishing, so it's great for him to have a portfolio of work to demonstrate his skills.

The edited audio file is then uploaded onto the SoundCloud host platform. They ask if you want to include an image. We created some simple visuals using a stock image and the title of the podcast. Each time, we change the interviewee's name and photo to create a new image. We include a small amount of information about the episode, which is usually the same as we use in our introduction. A link to the books is included so that people can buy them from our website. We add tags on SoundCloud to help people find the podcast.

The podcast is transferred to Spotify and iTunes automatically using an RSS feed within about half-an-hour of being uploaded to SoundCloud. This required a small amount of set-up, but all hosting sites will have instructions on how to do it. SoundCloud creates a link which we post on our website, together with Spotify and iTunes links for each episode. We offer price promotions on our website for the four books discussed and any others we talk about at length.

Soundcloud, Spotify and iTunes all have their own analytics tools which tell us the number of podcast downloads.

Schools



Andy: There is huge potential to take authors into schools virtually. The At Home with 4 Indies bookshops held an event with Floella Benjamin and 7,000 pupils watched it. Using this method, authors could reach every school in the country. Schools are now willing to have a recorded event to show at a time which suits them. The commercial element comes in with book sales that result from the schools event.

Sheryl:

We hold children's events, which our schools co-ordinator organises. Some of these have been streamed into the children's homes via their school, but it's easier if they are in school, you get more attention and more book sales.

Olivia: Wee Three Indies hopes to expand its online provision for schools during 2021. We've received Live Literature Funding from the Scottish Book Trust to allow us to pay authors providing schools events for us, especially where they are from a small publisher who wouldn't be able to pay an author very much.

Antonia: We did a couple of schools virtual events but even though they were watched by 300 children, the conversion rate to book sales was terrible. The teachers had promised to send out an email to parents about how to buy the related book, but we don't know if they actually sent it. Also, we don't like treading on the toes of authors who make their money from holding schools events for which they get paid.

We've received Live Literature Funding from the Scottish Book Trust to allow us to pay authors providing schools events for us...

Finding authors



Olivia: Working closely with publicists, reps and authors is key. Keep in constant contact with them. They are now pushing events towards us, but you can also ask

what they can do for you – can they provide discounted books, for example?

Antonia: Recently, publishers have got to know A Tale of Three Indies and are coming to us. Some publishers also gave us an extra discount on the relevant titles, and the purchaser received a coupon code with their ticket. It wasn't a huge conversion rate, but it's something extra to offer.

Pricing and tickets



Sheryl: We have developed a pricing structure, charging £6 a ticket or £10 if it's a big name such as Max Hastings. We have a book + tickets option. We never

discount the book price element because we feel it undervalues the product. If it's a paperback launch rather than a hardback, this is reflected in the price.

Emma: We use Eventbrite for ticketing. Eventbrite can easily connect to Zoom as you create the tickets. It allows you to keep track of ticket sales easily, plus you can create 'add-ons' (which will be the book the event is about – after all, selling the book is the whole point of it!). We have three different types of ticket: 'access only' to the event is just £3 or £5; event + book (local pick-up) for perhaps £15 and, event + book + postage for £18. Using Eventbrite is also useful as a way to be able to email all attendees with a message if you need to (I always include the zoom link, though Eventbrite will automatically send reminders).

For one event, we teamed up with our local wine shop who suggested wines that would complement the book, and there was an option to include the price of the wine as part of the ticket.

Olivia: Some events we do are free, others have a small charge, particularly with big names where the publisher wants to be sure of sales – there is less of a drop-out rate with paid-for events. If someone pre-orders the title when they book, they get the event for free. It boosts books sales.

Antonia: A Tale of Three Indies uses Eventbrite for tickets and not our individual websites. Through Eventbrite, you can set a maximum for ticket sales and then if sales are taking you towards the 100 attendees level, you can consider upgrading your Zoom licence to accommodate more people.

Our events before Christmas 2020 were all free but now we charge for tickets and include the option of buying the book with the ticket. The downside of charging for an event is that Eventbrite will start taking a percentage, which they don't for free events.

Promoting events



Andy: It is vital that the author, particularly if they are a big name, can help to sell the event through their social media channels. For example, the poet Brian Bilston publicised his At Home with 4 Indies event on Twitter and they had more than 500 people on the night. It was their biggest success. But we have also had to cancel a few events because the authors have not got behind marketing them.

Alison: A co-operative relationship between booksellers and authors has been helpful. Bookshops have found that it was very important to get the engagement of the author in publicising the event to reach out beyond the usual local customers. Then the event will pick up the author's uber-fans, wherever they are located, and the audience numbers will rise.

someone pre-orders the title when they book,
they get the event for free. It boosts books sales.

Sheryl: On publicity, it is much better if the publisher and better still the author themselves actually tweet about the event – it really makes a difference. Then we don't have to rely totally on our own social media and emails.

Olivia: We all promote the events through our own bookshop websites as well as jointly as Wee Three Indies on social media. We send the Zoom link the day before, to jog participants' memories that it's happening.

Antonia: Don't promote too early on through social media. If an event continually shows up on someone's feed, they will start ignoring it. The date needs to be close and the publicity fresh in their minds.

We publicise the events across all our social media channels, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Eventbrite also do their own advertising and their analytics show what's come in from their ads and what from ours. We find Twitter is not so useful for us, though I know it is the go-to for some bookshops, but we have a larger following on Facebook, so publicity there gets more tickets sold.

Emma: Remember to promote events, online or live, beyond social media. Build up good relationships with your local newspaper reporters, especially the arts editor. They are desperate for copy. And even if people are just coming in for click-and-collect, they can still take a leaflet away with their book and see a poster in the window.

Keep your customers and authors in touch



You will need let your author how the event will work technically, and ideally hold a short rehearsal. Make sure that they are online well in advance of the start time.

Grace: You can't overcommunicate when it comes to publicising virtual events and explaining what will happen. In the joining instructions, spell out how to join and also send them reminders about the event.

It feels more stressful when something goes wrong during a virtual event. If your audience is present, they can see what is happening, but if they are on their own at home, they can be more upset because they can't see why their feed is not working properly. If you offer access to a recording of the event, you can emphasise that if they have technical problems, they can watch it afterwards so they needn't worry. It helps to downplay the severity of the impact of any technical issues.

We've also learned that it is key to have a contingency plan in place with clear communication in the event that something does go wrong. Talking in advance about possible tech issues does not mean that they're more likely to happen, but you will be more prepared and calm if they do.

Antonia: We don't send attendees the Zoom link until 2 hours before the event. This reduces the chance that people will share the link with others who haven't signed up for a ticket. It also reminds them that the event is happening. We give all three shops' phone numbers in the email, so that they can ring if there are technical issues. I always make sure there is an extra member of staff in the shop with me so that they can answer the phone. In the early days while people were still getting used to Zoom, my colleague Helen used to feel she was working in a help centre!

Funding



Grants to support digital events, that promote reading, particularly for schools, may be available from charities, just as they would usually be for live events.

Remember to promote events beyond social media.
Build up good relationships with your local newspaper.

What about the future?



Alison: It is difficult to predict what will happen in the future. We'll have to gauge customers' attitudes and perhaps booksellers will dip their toes back into the live water

by running events with a smaller audience to allow for social distancing. These could be recorded and made available to a wider audience afterwards.

Hybrid is the word. Having both a live audience in situ and another one who can watch the event at home may be the way forward. But it will require more resources from booksellers in arranging for the event to be filmed and recorded.



Sheryl: We are carrying on online after lockdown and then will have a break in July and August. It's an unknown yet just how popular virtual events will continue to be,

but the big advantage in the autumn will be continuing to access overseas authors – they're still not going to be travelling much this year.

We are looking into live streaming so that we have hybrid events both live and streamed, but to get a professional camera person and sound can be very expensive, and you also need very good internet at the venue, which is not always the case in some of our regular venues.

We'll have to see what people want, but certainly online events have been a very positive thing for disabled people and the elderly who worry about coming out in the evening or car parking. We may do a mixture of live events and some online.



Antonia: I think we'll have a mix of live and online events. We have reached a wider audience by holding virtual events as some people prefer not to attend at night but will join in from home. Not everyone's going to travel as far to see an author in a bookshop.

We now have access to some big-name UK and US authors whom we wouldn't be able to get to visit Ireland. With the three shops joined together, they get a reasonable audience, but it's not the end of the world if the audience is small because the author hasn't had to travel anywhere.



Grace: Virtual events give us the opportunity to explore new online ideas for Macmillan authors. For example, we might hold virtual meet-and-greet signings after an event.

Customers' names will be entered into a competition draw to incentivise buying a book. The names picked can 'meet' the author for a two-minute individual chat and will be sent a video of this. Big names don't always like the delay of hanging round after an event for signing and chatting, but they are more likely to take part when they are doing it from home and under controlled conditions.

We'll be putting money behind hybrid events, with high quality recordings of the live event available and password-protected for ticket holders. We can use short promotional sections of the recording to post free online to encourage attendance of other events.





Sarah: We will be making a new Podcast series which will be recorded in July and August, with episodes released in the autumn. I'm already booking authors for their September and October book launches. I don't think in-person events will be full scale for a long time, the whole thing is so complicated with Covid, but we are likely to do something at some point – possibly as a hybrid with a virtual element.

Our Cosy Club will also continue. We assumed we'd go back to an in-person book club, but our reach is countryside now and we don't want people to feel excluded.

We are planning to keep it online for the moment and do exclusive in-person events for the club throughout the year. We have also started to do a small number of virtual events since the shop reopened, which are going well.



Andy: Hybrid events may be the way forward, but the future for virtual events is a question. Even those who have done well using virtual formats during lockdown tell me that they'd give it up in a heartbeat if they could go back to live events.

You are community bookshops for a reason and live events are a part of your community presence. It is about shared experience.



Emma: In future a mixture of events can only be a good thing. I have already had concerned customers on the phone as we are starting to programme 'in-person' events.

They are worried that this means we'll discontinue the virtual events that they have been enjoying from home. I now need to research the best streaming options. I think hybrid events will be the way forward – I'm looking forward to it!



Quick Guide to Creating a Facebook Live Event

Rehana Nurmahi of the Booksellers Association



On the **Help Centre** on Facebook, there is a basic guide to setting up and running FB events, accessible by clicking on 'Events' on the menu at the left hand side of the screen.

To **set up an event**, from your bookshop's business page go into your account and find the section entitled 'Events' where you can set up an event on an Event Page. You can then promote the event through this page.

Any Facebook user who has 'liked' your page will automatically receive a **notification** about the event, plus you can also send invitations to specific individuals (although there is a limit to the number you can personally invite). You can also set a notification to appear an hour before the event to remind potential attendees. You can limit access so that only those who have said they are going can 'attend' the event live but they can still share it to their page when it's going out live.

People can post on the Event Page which can build up hype in advance. This function can be disabled if you don't want comments to appear in advance.

There is an option to schedule when you will stream, who can view, and you can turn on captions if you want to. The BA Booksellers Network is a closed Facebook group, but when we run events, anyone of our closed group could stream the event to their own page.

When you live stream an event via FB, you should share the live stream to the Event Page, so that people who have expressed an interest can see it as well as it appearing on your main bookshop page.

To launch a live event, go to your main business page where you'd normally write a post.

A red button for **Live Video** appears there – click on it. The function lets you put in a description and check that your camera (on your phone or laptop) is the right way up and well-positioned before you go live.

You will be offered the option to **post the page after the event** – you would usually click that you do want this, so that the recording of the event can be watched any time afterwards.

Then when you are ready, click the 'Go Live' button.

The author/speaker needs to be ready on Facebook watching your page. They should post a comment straight away when your video goes live –you then click on their name, invite them to go live with you, and then the screen will split to show you and the author.

If you tag other Facebook pages, they need to accept and then the event can go out live on their page as well as yours. This would be useful for several bookshops sharing the running of the event.

Even if you are presenting your event on another platform, it is possible to add Facebook in so that the event is shown there too.

As the event happens, viewers can make **comments** as they would for any normal FB post. These will come up in real time (and will also appear in the recording as they happened). Everyone can see these comments, which creates a sense of involvement, but constant comments appearing on the screen can be distracting for the speakers. It is possible to switch comments off so you don't see them – but it is helpful to have a second host who is monitoring them (in case someone needs help or there is something that needs to be deleted).

Because the comments will scroll past as they happen, any questions may not still be visible once you reach the end of the session. So it can be helpful for the second host to note questions/names down as they appear and then repost the good ones for the author and interviewer to see once you reach the time for Q&As.

Top tips

- ♦ For Facebook Lives, run a practice event among friends, just three or four people. It is simple once you get the hang of it, but you need to understand how it works before you attempt a public event.
- ♦ Send instructions to your author well beforehand, and make sure you've had a chat with them so they know what to expect.
- ♦ Check that the speaker (and possibly the publisher) is happy with the level of privacy you have established.
- ♦ It isn't possible for a viewer to purchase a book directly from a Facebook page, but you can post a link to where to buy at the end of the session: 'Thanks for joining in. If you'd like to buy the book, here's the link....'
- ♦ Facebook events can be shared live to other chosen pages. To get an event to reach all chosen Facebook pages in real time as it goes out, all those pages must be set up as co-hosts.

Quick Guide to Creating a Zoom Event

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Before getting started

Before using Zoom for your virtual events, it's important to check what kind of Zoom account you have. You can look at and adapt your settings and plans at zoom.us

For the kinds of digital events you'll be running, you'll need a paid account, probably the 'Pro' plan, which allows for group meetings with unlimited minutes, and up to 100 participants. If you would like to hold events for more than 100, you can use the 'Large Meetings' add-on to increase the capacity to 500.

If you would like to run Webinar sessions (where only the speakers are visible, and the audience have limited interaction), this also needs to be added to your account separately.

Setting up a Zoom meeting

Once you have checked your settings and downloaded the Zoom App, you are ready to schedule your event.

You can do this by clicking the '**Schedule**' button on the homepage when you log in to the app.

Top tips

- Remember to have the **Waiting Room** turned on: this means that people will only be let into the meeting as and when you are ready, and you can choose who is let in.
- If you are required to have a Passcode on your meeting, change it to an easy word that is relevant to the meeting.
- If your event is not an informal, interactive one, in the 'Advanced Options' dropdown at the bottom, select '**Mute Participants Upon Entry**'. This will save any awkward intros from people you don't want to be talking/making a noise.
- You can also set it to '**Automatically Record the Meeting**' for ease of recording.
- Be sure to share the link (as well as Meeting ID and Passcode) with your attendees, with some basic instructions.
- If you would like to use polling or break-out rooms in your meeting, you will need to enable these features before-hand via the Advanced Meeting settings panel in Zoom in your web browser.

If you want to set up an event that has pre-registration, you will need to do this through your internet browser rather than the desktop app.

Starting the meeting

In the 'Meetings' Tab on the Zoom App, you will be able to see all the information for your upcoming meetings.

Here is where you can start your meeting.

Once you've started your meeting, click the participants list at the bottom of the screen to bring up who else is in the meeting, and who is in the waiting room.

You can hover over names in the waiting room to admit them into the meeting individually, or click the 'Admit all' button in the top right corner.

Be sure you have your opening speaker spotlighted before you let people in, this will just make the meeting introduction flow more smoothly.

If someone than yourself will be sharing any slides, make sure that your screen share settings allow for other participants on the call to do so. This can be changed by clicking the little arrow to the right of the 'Share Screen' button in the features panel at the bottom of the screen. On the drop down menu, click the 'Advanced Sharing Settings', to change who in the meeting has the ability to share. Do, however, be aware, that if you have your screen share settings set for anyone to share, there is a risk of 'zoom-bombing'.

During the meeting

One of the most helpful features you can use for your events, is the **Spotlighting** feature. This feature allows you to keep a participant (or multiple participants), pinned for everyone in the call to see, so that if somebody accidentally comes off mute, speaker view won't suddenly switch to their camera.

There are two ways you can spotlight someone: the first is using the Participants list on the bottom panel of the screen. Once you have the list up, find the participant's name, and if you click the 'more' button to the right of their name, there will be an option in the drop down menu called 'Spotlight for everyone'; the second is to find the participant's speaker tile on the call, and clicking on the 3 dots in the top right corner, you will be able to see the same drop down menu.

If your speaker has slides to share, you can use Screen Sharing. **Screen sharing** allows you to share what's running on your screen outside the Zoom app (such as Powerpoint or Word), with other members on the call.

To share your screen, click the green button in the centre of the features panel. When you click

this, a box will come up asking you which open tab you would like to share. This is where you would select your slides, or an internet window you have open: whatever you want to share with others on the call. Before you click the 'start sharing' button in the bottom right corner, if you have videos or sound effects included in what you're sharing, be sure to tick the 'share computer sound' box in the bottom left corner.

The **Chat** feature is another great one to make the most of. This feature allows participants to interact with others on the call without interrupting the flow of the meeting, as well as pose any questions they may have for the speaker. To access Chat, click the button in the features panel. Here you can send a message to everyone on the call, or using the arrow above the text box, change it so your message only goes to a specific participant. It can be slightly distracting, however, when a speaker is talking if messages keep popping up.

If you want to have a **question and answer** section at the end of your session, you can either remove the spotlight off the speaker, or you can 'add spotlight' to whoever is asking the question, so that they also appear on screen. Another way you can do it, is to have one of the hosts monitor the questions in the Chat, and to act as the spokesperson for the whole call. The specific 'Q&A' feature, with a Q&A button visible to participants, is only available in the Webinar setting (see below).

Depending on the type of session you are running, you could use some of the additional features, such as polling or breakout rooms.

Polling allows you to ask questions of your participants in a poll. If this feature is enabled, the host will be able to access it from the Features Panel. You can either write your questions before the meeting, and have them ready to launch, or write them and launch them during the meeting. To write the question, click the 'Polls' button at the bottom of the screen, to which a pop-up will appear to set up the poll. When you are happy with it and want your participants to be able to see it, click the 'Launch Poll' button in the bottom right corner.

Once you have closed the poll, you can see the results as host, and can choose if and when to share those results with the other participants of the call.

Breakout Rooms enable you to split the call into smaller groups, or rooms. Once this function is enabled in your settings, it will appear on the righthand side of the features panel. If you click it, the pop-up box that comes up will ask you two main questions: how many rooms would you like to create, and would you like to automatically or randomly assign people to them? Breakouts are a great way to facilitate discussion on a smaller scale, and allow participants to chat more informally with groups the way they would at a physical event. Once you have launched the Breakout Rooms, you can broadcast messages to the rooms, and once you click 'Close Breakout Rooms', they will receive a pop-up telling them that the room will close in 60 seconds and inviting them to re-join the main room.

Top tips

- ♦ If there will be screen sharing in your meeting, do this from a separate device from the one on which you're handling the Zoom tech (letting people in, muting people, spotlighting). Otherwise, you may struggle to keep an eye on everything at once.
- ♦ Bear in mind that if you are recording the meeting from your device, the recording will show the call in the 'view' you've set it on, so unless you want everyone on the call to appear in the recording, make sure you have it on 'Speaker view' (which you can change in the top right corner).
- ♦ Do make the most of the Chat function; it's what makes it feel like a real live event!
- ♦ Don't get stressed, once you have the hang of it all, it should be fairly simple.
- ♦ Have fun!

Setting up and running a webinar

You may find that your event is better suited to using the Zoom 'Webinar' format. To do so, you will need to pay for this specific function. (See the 'Before Getting Started' section for how to change your settings).

The Webinar function allows you to run a session in which only those who are speaking in the event will be seen by the whole call. This takes away the interactive element of seeing everyone in the call, but is perfect for more formal talks and similar style events.

For a Webinar, there are two **separate links** to distribute: one for 'panellists' (those who need the full functionality of the meeting/those speaking), and one for the 'audience' (inactive viewers of the session). Be sure that you send the correct link to your attendees.

Those in the audience will still be able to use the Chat function, but they will not otherwise be seen.

For those panellists who no longer are speaking or don't need to be seen by the attendees, it's as simple as them turning off their camera and microphone. As host, you will still see their speaker tiles on screen, but to the attendees, they will disappear.

In the Webinar setting, you can add a **Q&A feature**. This button will appear in the features panel, next to the Chat, but allows for the participants to pose specific questions, and the host to answer them, either using the text box in the Q&A window, or to click that they will be answering the question verbally. These answered questions will then appear in a separate panel. This just makes it easier to keep track of what is being asked. Either the author/interviewee can choose and answer, or you as host can select from the questions and present them verbally to the author.

In Webinar mode, you can disable the **Chat** function.

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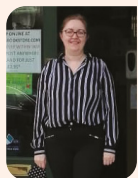
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