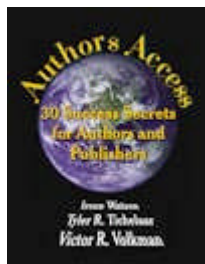


## *Interview with Irene Watson and Victor Volkman*



### **Authors Access: 30 Success Secrets for Authors and Publishers**

Edited by Irene Watson, Tyler R. Tichelaar, Victor R. Volkman

Modern History Press (2009)

ISBN 9781932690989

Reviewed by Vicki Landes for Reader Views (11/08)

Today Tyler R. Tichelaar is pleased to interview Irene Watson and Victor Volkman, his co-editors of the new book "Authors Access: 30 Success Secrets for Authors and Publishers."

*Irene Watson is an author, entrepreneur, and former therapist and educator. She currently is the owner and Managing Editor of Reader Views, Reader Views Kids, and Inside Scoop Live, and a co-host on Authors Access Internet Radio. Irene holds her Master's Degree from Regis University in Denver, CO and a Bachelor's Degree from St. Edward's University in Austin, TX. She is the president of Higher Power Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to awarding scholarships to people seeking recovery. Irene's expertise in the publishing industry comes from being an author herself as well as managing an online book review service. Reader Views offers book reviews, author publicity, and many other elements needed by authors and writers. Irene also coaches authors to write book proposals and is a literary agent. Irene lives with her husband in Austin, Texas. Her memoir "The Sitting Swing: Finding Wisdom to Know the Difference" is currently in its second edition.*

*Victor R. Volkman began his writing career in the late 1980s writing for computer programming journals such as "Windows Developer's Journal," "The C Gazette," "C/C++ Users Journal," and many other print publications that have been obsoleted since the web was born. He authored two computer programming books in the mid-1990s before finding out that writing for Fortune 500 companies was not terribly profitable. In 2003, he formed Loving Healing Press out of a community project in the Self-Expression and Leadership Program (SELP) course at Landmark Education. Since then, LHP has gone on to publish dozens of cutting-edge books that promote its mission of "redefining what is possible for healing mind and spirit." As such, he has produced a series of books on Traumatic Incident Reduction as well as empowering other authors in a wide range of helping areas including trauma recovery, self-esteem, physical disabilities, sexual abuse recovery, and much more. He produces regular podcasts for "Authors Access," "Authors Airwaves," and the "Unbreak Your Health" show. In 2007, LHP spun off*

*a new imprint Modern History Press dedicated to empowering authors to speak about surviving conflict and seeking identity in modern times. When not publishing, he enjoys spending time with his wife Marian K. Volkman, a formidable author in her own right.*



**Tyler:** Welcome, Victor and Irene. I'm very excited to interview both of you today, and of course, I was honored to work with both of you since we are the three editors of "Authors Access: 30 Success Secrets for Authors and Publishers." However, both the Internet Radio Show and the book based on the program were the brain-child of the two of you, so it's fitting I sit back and listen to the two of you discuss what you initially envisioned for the program and why you chose to turn the radio interviews into a book on publishing and writing. So let's get started. To begin, will you give us a little history of how the radio show Authors Access began and what were its initial goals?



**Irene:** Victor and I met nearly 3 years ago through Reader Views. He, being a publisher, submitted books to us for review. Through this connection we came up with the idea of interviewing experts in the field of publishing. Because of Reader Views, I already knew many experts and how to contact them. Victor's expertise in mixing and publishing podcasts made us a great team.

Our initial goal was to give an opportunity for experts to share their information with writers who wanted to self-publish their books. Over the past two years, Authors Access just kept evolving. As to where it goes from here, we don't know. However, I do know we are picking up new listeners every week. We get about 1000 global listeners on a weekly basis.

**Tyler:** What led to the decision to produce a book based on the podcast interviews. How did the book develop and how did you choose which people would contribute?



**Victor:** Irene and I were approaching our 2nd anniversary of the Authors Access podcast show and we kind of sat back and brainstormed ideas on how to bring all this knowledge to more writers in an easy-to-digest package. Although our podcast catalog of shows has more than 1,000 listeners per week, we knew that potentially a much bigger audience was out there. At first, we thought about simply getting transcripts but what passes for interesting conversation isn't the same as good reading. And so Irene, who manages all our contact with the guests, put out the call in Summer 2008 for papers from all our prior guests.

“Authors Access: 30 Success Secrets for Authors and Publishers” is actually the fourth anthology I’ve edited. Every anthology is a unique experience: you put out the call for papers and you never know who is going to answer the call. I count us extremely fortunate that we were able to attract 24 different contributors for this volume. These are all very busy and very successful people so it’s quite an honor for them to have written for us. The great majority of them have 20 to 30 years of experience in writing, marketing, and publishing AND they’re willing to share their lessons-learned and best practices. So I’m really in awe of our contributors. I’m happy to say that we accepted 100% of the submissions and some people, like our frequent co-host Tyler Tichelaar, went above-and-beyond the call of duty by turning in multiple papers. That’s how we got “30” success secrets from 24 guests!

Editing an anthology is a lot like casting a play. The framework of a play is its script and in the case of this anthology the framework was the lifecycle of a book. A play might have three acts, but we knew we wanted it to progress in the orderly fashion of the ideal book schedule. So I weighted the genre-specific writing tips in the beginning, editing articles toward the middle, and marketing/branding/promotion at the back end along with ways to leverage your book into new media.

**Tyler:** What does “Authors Access” offer that many of the popular books on writing and publishing don't?

**Victor:** Critic Francine Silverman (Book Promotion Newsletter) said it best: “Each of the 30 articles is a workshop in itself.” In a conventional book about writing, marketing, or publishing, you’re getting the viewpoint and expertise of one (maybe two) people who have a very narrow focus of expertise. It just isn’t possible for one person to experience everything there is to know about writing AND marketing AND publishing. So in a nutshell, we have strength in numbers. Sure, if you’re writing a book you can research your subject but our contributors have LIVED their subject matter. Because we have subject experts, they can go really deep into material you would only expect to find at a writer’s conference. To be concrete, Janet Lane Walters’ article “Don’t Murder Your Mystery” actually works like having her sit over your shoulder pointing out areas for improvement in your plot, dialog, backstory usage, and word choice. She also provides an amazing consistency and quality checklist called “Ten Irregularities of Doom.” These rules and guideposts actually apply to all fiction, not just mysteries!

**Tyler:** Successful marketing seems to be more and more technology-driven every month. How does your book provide solutions for authors promoting their work?

**Victor:** It’s true that successful marketing on a budget is all about connecting people with your ideas. Books are an exceedingly complex product to describe in comparison with, say, a computer mouse or pair of shoes. It’s not just about brand recognition, although that is a helpful component. How many books have you bought based on advertisements you saw in a magazine or newspaper? Probably none unless they were by favorite authors you already knew and trusted. How many books have you read based on a friend’s recommendation? Probably lots! So the key is getting the word out using the existing infrastructures of the day, which at this point in history, is social networking sites.

Getting down to brass tacks, Brad Grochowski, web developer extraordinaire and proprietor of AuthorsBookShop.com provides a lot of detail on search engine optimization issues for authors and how to list your book effectively. Additionally, his list of 10 Almost Free Things You Should Be Doing to Promote Your Book is the kind of litmus test you can apply weekly to see if you’ve done everything you can do. Web 2.0 gurus Deltina Hay and Neil Kahn define specific mechanisms for exploiting collaboration, sharing, and interactivity in creating a social media newsroom for your work.

**Tyler:** If an author has already published his or her book, what are some ways they can leverage the work they've done to expand their footprint in the marketplace?

**Victor:** As little as a decade ago, the options for most authors were extremely limited. Today, the sky is the limit on moving your content into new dimensions. Toby Heidel of Red Planet Audiobooks lays out the new landscape for audio books and explains why this market is poised for exponential growth. Barriers to producing, distributing, and selling audiobooks now put you on a level playing field with the Fortune 500 publishers. Similarly, in 12 months the stagnating eBook industry is suddenly on fire with the new Amazon Kindle platform. As I talk to you now, there are more than 200,000 titles available for purchase and immediate gratification via Amazon’s Whispernet nationwide free delivery system. Amazon has also leveled the playing field, giving the same authoring and production tools to the one-book author as it does to a multinational corporation. One of my own articles tells

you how to produce your material for Amazon Kindle in a step-by-step fashion with my list of best practices to use and traps to avoid.

**Tyler:** Irene and I both wrote portions of the book covering book reviews. As an author, what is necessary to know about the book review process? Doesn't it just happen?

**Irene:** It sure doesn't "just happen." In some cases publishers do send out the galleys or ARCs for review; however, as I said, this is only in some cases. In most cases, authors are responsible for getting their own reviews. One of the pitfalls many authors make is not getting reviews before the book is published. Many reviewers, including Reader Views (Kids,) will review a manuscript, galley, or ARC. It's important to get reviews before publication so that the author will have endorsements/blurbs to put on the back of the book. As well, some reviewers will allude the author to further editing needs, e.g. character development, confusing plot, or editing issues.

Many authors seek reviews after the book is published and that's okay. However, keeping in mind it may take as long as 3 months to get a review back, this is time wasted waiting for reviews for marketing purposes.

**Tyler:** What information does "Authors Access" provide about getting started in freelance or ghost writing?

**Irene:** Yvonne Perry, a freelance writer, contributed a section to the book. She gives pointers to anyone wanting to start. As with any "start-up" the importance is to get yourself known in the industry. Today it's much easier than it used to be because of the Internet. Yvonne suggests a blog or website be the first priority with a good platform to showcase the writer's strengths and what the services are.

**Tyler:** I know there is a great deal more information in the "Authors Access" book we haven't talked about. Could you briefly let us know what are some of the other subjects covered?

**Victor:** Sure, even the Table of Contents itself is too long to include in this interview but we can sketch out the basic areas of interest: book proposals, book design and self-publishing basics, freelancing and ghostwriting, and the nuts-and-bolts of galleys and Advance Reading Copies (ARC). There is a lot of information that as a novice author, the industry just expects you to know. For example, there are specific requirements to ARC preparation such as what information to include and how to do it. Failure to follow these guidelines means a quick trip for your beloved manuscript to the shredder. Similarly, there are many gaffes you can make in terms of book design that equally fatal. I've seen countless authors torpedo their own work by hastily throwing together a backcover filled with tiny type but actually has none of the essential design requirements in it. Follow the advice in our book and you are guaranteed to have a marketable product.

In terms of freelancing and ghostwriting, I think many authors should consider taking on these smaller projects first both to hone their craft and to build up a war chest for book development costs. You'll both increase your credentials and build an audience for yourself at the same time. Our veteran contributors Ami Hendrickson (Muse Ink) and Yvonne Perry (Writers in the Sky) lay down the roadmap for this type of work in an easy to understand, step-by-step format.

**Tyler:** For people who want to listen to the podcasts of the show, will you tell us how they can access them and how frequently the program airs?

**Irene:** At this point, we're taping twice monthly. Our earliest shows were "live", but we found that our listeners prefer a fully-edited broadcast so we take the time to edit each show extensively before the airdate. You can always find the newest show by going directly to [www.AuthorsAccess.com](http://www.AuthorsAccess.com) and older shows by clicking on Podcast Archive on the menu. The best way to catch our shows as soon as they come out is to search us out on iTunes and make it an automatic download. Most web browsers can automatically "subscribe" to our RSS feed by visiting the magic URL <http://www.authorsaccess.com/feed>

**Tyler:** What's next for "Authors Access"? Since you continually have new guests, do you foresee another book down the road?

**Victor:** Editing an anthology is one of the most challenging projects a publisher can take on. Our mission of providing the best resources to authors and publishers will continue for the foreseeable future. I'm pretty certain we'll see a significant revision in 2011 as our relationship with our industry expert guests evolves. It's too early to commit to what it's going to look like but we promise to incorporate as much feedback from readers and contributors as humanly possible. A more dynamic product is the Authors Access Podcast CD-ROM which we will update quarterly with the latest podcast MP3 files. The CD-ROM is a great travel companion; you can load up your iPod, laptop, or other device for long commutes where Internet access is dicey. The CD-ROM edition is available only from the publisher direct at [www.ModernHistoryPress.com/success-secrets](http://www.ModernHistoryPress.com/success-secrets)

**Tyler:** Thank you, Victor and Irene, for joining me today. Before we go, will you tell us where readers can go online to find out more about "Authors Access: 30 Success Secrets for Authors and Publishers" or to purchase a copy?

**Irene:** Thank you, Tyler, not only for initiating this interview but for being a co-author with us. Your contribution to the book is very valuable and comes from your experience being an author as well as being self-published. It's the hands-on experience shared in "Authors Access" that is the most valuable asset an inspiring author can have.

"Authors Access: 30 Success Secrets for Authors and Publishers" can be purchased on our Authors Access website: <http://authorsaccess.com/success-secrets> or through any online bookseller. But...there is a perk if purchased from our site—we will add a CD of 72 episodes of our podcasts. Yes, that's interviews from 72 experts in the field of publishing. The best part of this book and the CD is some of the information you can't find elsewhere because it comes directly from the personal experience of the expert.

**Tyler:** Thank you, Irene and Victor, for talking with me today. I have to say that in helping to write and edit this book I was delightfully overwhelmed with all the information in it and wish such a book had existed when I first started publishing and marketing my own books. I'll be looking forward to working with you on more episodes of Authors Access, and especially, in continuing to bring the knowledge of experts in the publishing industry to our readers and listeners.

[Read Review of Authors Access: 30 Success Secrets for Authors and Publishers](#)