

Do-Ahead Steps for a Book Launch

By Michelle Ule

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Publishing a book is an extraordinary experience and should be celebrated.

It can also be a time fraught with things to do and pressure to do them all immediately.

Here are 5 actionable categories for ways to take off the pressure *sooner* so that you are better prepared to handle the rush of activity that happens when the book launches.

You should begin these activities as soon as you have a cover, ISBN and a date for the launch.

1. Write up a fact sheet

- a. Cover
- b. Photo
- c. Links
 - a. Web page
 - b. Publisher
 - c. Amazon
 - d. Book Club Questions
 - e. Launch Questionnaire—for your launch team
 - f. Notable reviews
 - g. Freebies
 - i. Free E-book for signing up
 - ii. Resources--Graphics
 - h. All social media
 - i. Twitter
 - ii. Pinterest
 - iii. Instagram
 - iv. Facebook professional page
 - v. Newsletter sign up
- d. Project Description
- e. Author bio--short
- f. Author bio—long
- g. Suggested questions for media
- h. ISBN number

Place the fact sheet, a high resolution photo of yourself and the cover on your computer desk top for easy accessibility.

2. Set up a Launch Team—even if it's early

- a. Launch Team Questionnaire
- b. Spreadsheet with Launch Team's address, social media contacts, notes
- c. Establish a Facebook Group for the Launch Team
- d. Make social media graphics
- e. Arrange for prizes—if you'll have them
- f. Put together a calendar for what will happen when
- g. Arrange for a PDF of the book and/or with your publisher for sending copies to the launch team
- h. Emphasize the importance of the launch team members writing a review
- i. Consider asking or hiring someone to help you run the launch team

3. Update Website

- a. Prepare special banner for book sale/launch
- b. Prepare graphics for pre-sale and launch day
- c. Update books, bio, any appearances and information about launch
- d. Write up blog posts in advance about the book launch if you have a blog
- e. Set up a specific media page about your launch on the webpage.
(Here are examples: <https://www.michelleule.com/books/a-poppy-in-remembrance/>)
- f. Information on the media page should include
 - i. High resolution cover
 - ii. High resolution photo of the author
 - iii. Links to Publisher's page for the book/Amazon
 - iv. ISBN
 - v. Example: <https://www.michelleule.com/media-kit-chambers/>

The goal is to make it as easy as possible for media to write about your book

4. Look for Media Opportunities

Hopefully you've been blogging, pinning, Instagramming and talking to people about your project long before the book is published and have folks interested in your book.

- a. If you are not working with a publicist, approach bloggers/reviewers you know about possibly reviewing your book.

Provide them with:

- Cover

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- Description of the project
 - Your bio
 - Why you think they would want to review or write about your book
 - Any unique factor that might be of interest to their readership.
- b. Local media?
 - c. Media/organizations interested in your topic
 - d. Local talks
 - e. Press release?
- 5. Plan a launch party.**
See the following.

Michelle Ule is the author of two novels, a biography, an essay and five best-selling novellas. She's been an integral part of launching eight books and has used all these techniques.

She's a proponent of doing things ahead of time—which turned out to be crucial when her biography, *Mrs. Oswald Chambers: The Woman Behind the World's Bestselling Devotional*, launched in the middle of the 2017 Sonoma County fires. *Mrs. Oswald Chambers* released eight days after she had been evacuated from home in the middle of the night, five days before she returned home safe and sound.

Fortunately, she and her assistant, Alisha Ule, had prepared the launch well in advance and it went off with only a minimal hitch!

You can find her at www.michelleule.com

You can sign up for her newsletter at <http://bit.ly/UleNews>

Mrs. Oswald Chambers: The Woman Behind the World's Bestselling Devotional is available at <http://bit.ly/MrsOC>

A Poppy in Remembrance is available at <http://bit.ly/APoppy>

Ideas to consider when Hosting a Book Launch Party

1. See the book launch party as a springboard for marketing the book.
2. Link your party theme to your book theme.
 - a. What's the setting? Can you hold your launch party at a place that people would connect with your story?
 - i. Karen Barnett for *Mistaken*, set during the Prohibition era, held a party in a ballroom. She provided 1920's era drinks, flapper costumes and an instructor to teach guests how to dance the Charleston.
 - ii. Sarah Sundin held one launch at a local movie theater which served as a backdrop for the cover of her book. She made arrangements with the theater to show the WWII-era film *The Best Years of Our Lives* and had drawing to giveaway pertinent gifts.
 - iii. Sarah Sundin held another book launch at her local Barnes and Nobel and invited a dance instructor to teach guests how to swing dance!
 - iv. Lynn Vincent, author of the recent *USS Indianapolis*, held a book signing on the USS Hornet on Veteran's Day.
 - b. For my novel *Bridging Two Hearts*, I encouraged folks to come dressed as either the hero (a Navy SEAL) or the heroine (a massage therapist). My brother-in-law won the prize for wearing his SCUBA diving equipment! Several guests came in camouflage and won wore a towel bathrobe over her clothing!
 - c. Refreshments. Consider serving refreshments linked to your book setting, as Karen did with *Mistaken*.
 - i. In *Bridging Two Hearts*, I served MREs, passion fruit gelato and other spa-type snacks.
 - ii. For *Mrs. Oswald Chambers*, I hired friends to put together "High Tea," and we drank tea, ate delicate finger foods and pretended we were British.
 - iii. For *A Poppy in Remembrance*, held at the local library, we ate WWI-era candy and drank water—just like the soldiers.
 - iv. My daughter-in-law baked a cake with a Dog-trot log cabin on it for *The Dogtrot Christmas!*
3. Activities
 - a. Reading a special passage from the book—don't make it too long—pertinent to what your friends would be interested in or might find funny.
 - i. For *Bridging Two Hearts*, my husband and I read a pivotal scene which involved the heroine shoving an ice cream cone into the hero's face. Of course I held an ice cream cone in my hand as I read! And then I didn't! 😊
 - b. Games. If you have children in attendance, you might want to have something designed for them, whether it's *Lincoln Logs* (The Dogtrot Christmas), word searches, pertinent toys or posted photos.

- c. Giveaways. If your party is more than an hour long, you might consider giving away pertinent items every 20 minutes to keep your guests interested. *For Bridging Two Hearts*, I gave away MREs and spa products. Free copies of the book are good ideas. For *A Poppy in Remembrance*, all guests received a packet of poppy seeds with instructions, an Oswald Chambers quote on a card and a magnet of the cover.
- d. Speech—certainly you should thank people for coming, particularly your long suffering relatives.
- e. Presentation. *Mrs. Oswald Chambers* released in the middle of the Sonoma County fires when most of my friends were evacuated. At my launch party, I gave a talk pertinent to the book about “Biddy Chambers and Resilience.”
 - i. If you have interesting research stories, tell some of them.
For *A Poppy in Remembrance*, I talked about how I came to write the book and the extraordinary events that happened while I wrote both it and *Mrs. Oswald Chambers*.

The artist who painted the cover for *A Poppy in Remembrance* also spoke about how she designed and made the cover using examples of her early sketches.

4. Other considerations

- a. Find a neutral site if possible—where you can invite anyone.
 - i. Bookstores are wonderful, especially if they will sell copies of your book.
 - ii. Understand some churches and public libraries will not allow for commercial sales on their property. Make sure you understand what and what is not allowed before you make arrangements.
 - iii. Consider selling books at cost if that’s the only way to can hold your launch at a church.
 - iv. Consider having a private party at home with close friends and family the day the book comes out and a public party elsewhere.
- b. Publicize your event wherever friends gather.
 - i. At the location of the launch. The library allowed me to put up a poster, as did our church.
 - ii. Print out invitations to mail or hand out to your friends. I invited all my neighbors to the party at my house.
 - iii. If your party is in a public spot, use Facebook, any neighborhood listings, your newsletter and postcards mailed to friends.
 - iv. Carry invitations with you during the two weeks leading up to the launch and hand them out liberally. You never know who will come.
- c. Provide cards with your website address and information about how to contact you.
- d. Sign and sell books as appropriate to your site.

- e. Make a pitch for people to sign up for your newsletter—provide information how at the launch. (Consider using something like Mobitini for automatic sign ups via phones)
 - f. Have someone film your talk to share on YouTube.
 - g. Invite local media to cover the story.
 - h. Ask someone to take photos during the launch party.
5. Endorsers as speakers
- a. If you have a famous endorser, consider asking them to introduce you.
 - i. Elizabeth Hoagland is friends with Liz Curtis Higgs, who not only wrote the foreword to *Let's be Friends*, but spoke at Elizabeth's launch party. 200 people attended!
 - b. Or, if they don't live near you, ask them to make a short video that can be watched at your launch party.
6. Using the launch to springboard marketing opportunities.
- a. What's unusual about your book?
 - i. I snared the interest of my local paper by writing an email far in advance talking about the unusual opportunity to interview both writer and local artist who painted the cover.
 - b. Make it easy for journalists.
 - i. I wrote a blog post about how the cover was painted, which enabled the reporter to have facts at her fingertips when she wrote her article.
 - c. Write blog posts about the launch party.
 - d. Post your remarks on YouTube
 - e. Post photos and stories on Facebook and Instagram.
 - i. Consider having a Facebook launch party.
 - ii. Make graphics for social media using launch party photos.
 - f. Include photos from the launch party in your next newsletter.