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The Writing Life: Justifying Social Media and Followers
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No, I'm not starting a cult. I'm growing communities. I've got the people who read this newsletter, my [Twitter](#) followers, my [Facebook](#) followers, my [Facebook fan page](#) followers, and my [blog](#) followers. They're not all the same, these lists, but of course, they overlap.

Lately I've been asking myself what purpose these lists serve, and what is the point of growing them. I've come up with several answers:

1. As a business owner, I like the idea that **they might spend money on me**. They could buy my books, take a class, buy my coaching services, or click on an Amazon link in a blog post and send me a teeny referral fee. Sometimes they help me with marketing. A Tweeter blew my mind by RT'ing my announcement about an upcoming class to her 125,000 followers. Sweet.
2. **I get to participate**. All these communities are interactive (I'm counting this newsletter because some readers take the time to reply and tell me what they've been up to). Yes, it takes a lot of time, but I love to hear from people, offer opinions, get a little zany and answer questions.
3. **They create my platform**. I just co-taught a class on cookbooks where I defined a platform as "the people who are waiting to buy your book." For my next book proposal, I can show a publisher that communities are interested in what I write.
4. **Some are incredible research tools**. Twitter and Facebook, particularly, help me find trending topics on what interests people about food and writing. I love clicking on good links to articles and do my best to supply them as well. I've also used Twitter and Facebook to ask questions, contact high-profile people, and

gauge interest in topics.

My blog's comments have become a research tool. I learn what matters to my readers, what they struggle with, what they want to read more about. I've drawn inspiration and created blog posts based on comments.

5. I get to know people. This is especially true on Twitter, where I meet people at conferences that I've been following by their handle and I don't recognize their real names. Sometimes the people who converse with me on Twitter would never call or email me. I like having different ways to communicate.

6. It's fun. This last one is important, because sometimes it seems so overwhelming to maintain all these lists.

So if you haven't jumped into social media, or you're still getting your feet wet, make your own list of benefits and figure out whether it's worth your time. I bet you'll come up with a longer list than mine.

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Keep in Touch

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Why wait for this quarterly newsletter to get tips on food writing? My [blog](#), Will Write for Food, gives you a more immediate way to read about recipe writing, freelance writing, book proposals, and food blogging. Join my group of thoughtful and intelligent readers, who often make the comments section the best part of the post.

Let my blog come to you, by email or in an RSS feed, so you don't have to remember to visit. Go to the [blog's](#) right-hand side column to sign up.

You don't have to wait to receive many of the useful links you'll find further down. [Follow me](#) on Twitter; friend me on my Facebook fan page, [Will Write for Food](#), to find the same kind of links as they emerge; or [friend me on Facebook](#).

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Upcoming Classes and Events

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-- August 11-14, 2011

Write a Food Blog; Panelist on Food Blogging

[Travel, Food & Photography Conference](#)

Book Passage Bookstore, Corte Madera, CA

\$635

This is the second year Book Passage has incorporated food writing into its travel writing conference. If you've always wanted to write freelance travel pieces or guidebooks, this is a terrific conference to attend. It will also cover photography, cookbooks, and long-form narrative writing.

I'll be teaching a 3-hour class on food blogging Saturday morning, and I'll be part of a panel on food blogging that weekend. You can also sign up to have me evaluate a book proposal or writing sample.

-- August 26-28, 2011 in New Orleans;
-- November 11-13, 2011 in Santa Monica

Panelist

[International Food Blogger Conference.](#)

\$350

I'm excited to have been asked to attend both conferences as a speaker. I'm being bad by telling you now before they've announced it, but if I wait for my next newsletter, one of them will be over.

-- November 6, 2011

Food Blogging Workshop

Vegas Valley Book Festival's "Feasting in Words"
Las Vegas, NV

No link yet, but look for an entire day of fun food-based events with cookbook authors.

-- January 7-14, 2012

Is There a Book In You?

[Rancho La Puerta](#), Tecate, Mexico

I'm back again to teach a weeklong class on writing and books at this world-class spa.

-- January 28, 2012

Food Blogger Ethics

[Food Blog South](#)

Birmingham, AL

I'll be leading a session on ethics at this one day event, always a topic that stirs discussion. Stay tuned for more details later this year.

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News from Alumni
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-- [Anitra Kitts'](#) article in the November/December 2010 issue of *Horizons* won an award of excellence in the Personal Experience/First-Person Account, Short Format category at Associated Church Press.

-- **Ben Rhau** was a finalist for an IACP award for best blog for [You Fed a Baby Chili?](#)

-- [Glamour Health & Fitness blog](#) featured [Jennifer Strohmeier's](#) strawberry rhubarb smoothie recipe, and the [Magazine of Yoga](#) featured her acai berry tart. Jennifer has also started freelancing for [One Green Planet](#).

-- [Jun Belen's blog](#) was a finalist for Best Regional Cuisine in *Saveur* magazine's [Best Food Blog Awards](#).

-- **Kirstin Jackson's** second [piece on cheese](#) appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*.

-- **Melody Fuller** was accepted in [The Renaissance House Residency Program](#) on Martha's Vineyard.

-- **Susie Wyshak** has a deal with Chronicle Books for a book on food entrepreneurship.

-- **Tracey Cuervels-O'Grady** has launched a subscription recipe plan called [Your Weekly Dinner Plan](#).

Do you have news about an article you've sold, a blog you've begun, or a book deal? If you are a former student or client, please drop me a line at dj@diannej.com. I'd love to include your bragging rights in my next newsletter.

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What's New in Food Writing
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-- If you publish recipes online, here's a *New York Times* piece on [whether recipe searches make you a better cook](#).

-- [Which cookbooks do chefs love?](#) (Also a great idea for a freelance story.)

-- Who won [Saveur magazine's 2011 food blog awards](#)? Mostly the big bloggers.

- Gourmet Live made a list of [game-changing women in the food business](#).
- Did you know there's a three-year old quarterly magazine in Australia that covers food, called [Slow](#)?
- [Ingredient magazine](#) focuses on food for kids and pays freelancers for stories. Send an email to hello@ingredientmag.com for writers' guidelines.

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Just for Fun
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- Have you seen [Getting Real in the Whole Foods Parking Lot](#)? If not, prepare to laugh at yourself and the rapper.
- Read this: A Short, Revolting Intro to [the Finest Metaphors in British Food Criticism](#): Unspeakable Bodily Fluids and Genitalia.
- Got too many cookbooks? We're probably all guilty of that. Here's [one man's take on how to downsize](#).
- I know, I'm not alone in my love for Anthony Bourdain. Watch [this interview](#) and enjoy his brilliance and humor.
- Here's [a list of great culinary quotes](#), from writer and teacher Gary Allen.

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Resources
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- The [Ultimate Guide to Twitter Marketing](#). This is a tremendous resource guide, if you have a few thousand hours to spare.
- [Eat Your Books](#) is a database of recipes like no other. It lists recipes in cookbooks you already own, and has recently added magazines and food blogs.
- [CookBook Karma](#) tells you what's new in cookbooks, with large cover images. If you're a cookbook author, add your cookbook to this database.
- Want your cookbook reviewed? [This blogger](#) not only reviews cookbooks but has contributors reviewing them as well.
- SavorySweetLife blogger Alice Currah talks about [how to build a blog audience](#),

one reader at a time.

-- Here's another piece on [building traffic to a new blog](#), and one on [a blueprint for a perfect blog post](#).

-- [Associated Press's new guidebook](#) shows the correct style for 400 food terms.

-- Is your blog listed? [This blog](#) claims to list all food blogs.

-- See *Saveur* magazine's [Brief History of Food Blogs](#), if you have not already done so, for a condensed look at who launched what and when.

Please forward this newsletter to anyone you think might be interested. All previous issues are now archived on [my website](#). There's a place to sign up for this newsletter as well.

To change your email address or unsubscribe, please email me: dj@diannej.com

I will not rent, trade or sell your email address to anyone for any reason.

Happy summer,

Dianne