

PUBLISHING PORTAL

# BookZonePro is a Great Place to Grow

BookZone is probably the premier provider of web solutions for book publishers. The company recently gathered all their educational resources into a new portal called BookZonePro (bookzonepro.com). Under the skillful direction of Amy Phillips, BookZonePro stays current and relevant, with a host of free services publishers would be foolish not to make use of. The site offers content in 17 different categories — much more than we can cover in this short review. But we'll try to highlight some of the main features, and compare them to what we've found elsewhere on the web.

## Newsire

Visitors to BookZonePro are greeted with a scrolling newswire tailored to the interests of publishers. Click on any of the headlines and you'll get a summary paragraph or two with a link to the full story. Unlike other automated news services (such as Moreover), BookZonePro's newswire feels hand picked — and it is. Editor Amy Phillips consults the usual sources, but also gathers content from some unconventional outlets.

## Articles

Articles are offered in three main sections of the site. "ProSpectives" is a column where editor Amy Phillips comments on publishing news of the week. Amy is a terrific writer, and with her position as editor of BookZonePro, she has her finger on the pulse of the publishing community. "ProFiles" contains Q&A sessions with publishing luminaries. While it's interesting to see how different people answer the same questions, the interviews would be more useful if the questions were tailored to each guest.

The "Info & Insights" section contains contributed articles from publishing experts such as Dan Poynter, Pat Bell, Eugene Schwarz, Joe Vitale, etc. It's divided into four topical sections (The Business of Publishing, Marketing, Legal Issues, and

Writing), then into subsections for newbies and pros — but this division seems meaningless since most articles appear in both subsections. One real defect with the articles library is the lack of annotations on listings. Author names and publication dates would be extremely helpful in deciding which articles to peruse, and would give the authors a little more branding for their contributions to the site.

## Database of Book Reviewers

This is, hands down, the most valuable content on BookZonePro. Book reviewers are sorted into about 30 different subject categories, and you can also search geographically by state. The results of any search include full contact information — with e-mail addresses and phone numbers— along with descriptions of the subjects each reviewer covers. Access to the database is absolutely free. Anyone doing any sort of book promotion should make a stop at BookZonePro to consult this list. There aren't thousands of entries, but there are more than enough to make it worth the visit.

## Events Calendar

BookZonePro claims to have "The world's most comprehensive publishing events calendar" and we would not dispute this. But the usefulness of this calendar is diminished because it is clogged with author signings. That information belongs at "Authors on the Highway," not in a publishing portal, where it makes it harder to find the many great listings geared toward publishers.

## Trade Directories

The "Services and Suppliers" section has a very nice "Yellow Pages" of services for publishers, with deep content in most categories. The classified ads section, on the other hand, is skimpy and less useful. And the "Business Links" section is the

mother of all bookmark lists. It has everything from rental cars to office supplies. The list is admirable, but it doesn't seem to really belong at a publishing portal. "Web Resources" is another enormous bookmark list, and these are all devoted to the trade. It seems like BookZonePro could consolidate these databases into one large trade directory, with highlighted entries and/or premium positioning for paying advertisers and BookZone members.

## Job Bank

BookZonePro has both job postings and resumes. Perhaps reflecting the current state of the industry, there were about 20 job postings and several hundred resumes. Oddly enough, there is an elaborate advanced search mechanism to help you drill through those 20 jobs, but no search feature to help thin the number of resumes to those that match your needs.

## Miscellaneous

We're not sure why BookZonePro offers a crossword puzzle and a poll, although given the popularity of on-line games, these are probably the highest traffic sections of the site. The glossary is a nice touch but seems unnecessary. And the BZ Forum discussion groups are like discussion threads everywhere — lightly used and not worth following.

## Conclusion

BookZonePro suffers from its own success. There is simply so much content on the site it is intimidating, and the overlap between some of the sections is confusing. The site is an awe-inspiring collection of publisher resources. The reviewer database is the number one reason to visit, and the articles would be if they were described better. BookZonePro needs to streamline and start dating and rating — that is, freshness dating the content and providing some sort of Top 5 list so people can quickly separate the best from the rest.

