

EPISODE 135: INDIE AUTHOR TOOLKIT 2018 – WITH MARK DAWSON

Narrator: Two writers, one just starting out, the other a bestseller. Join James Blatch and Mark Dawson and their amazing guests as they discuss how you can make a living telling stories. There's never been a better time to be a writer.

James Blatch: Hello and welcome to the Self Publishing Formula podcast with Mark and James from the UK and this is the third in the three we'll be recording in this particular batch.

We're always very honest about our batching. In fact, batching is something that people should be aware of when they have busy lives, particularly if you're juggling a 9:00 to 5:00 job and writing. Batching is a very good way of approaching your workload.

Mark Dawson: James Batch.

James Blatch: James Batch. That's what they call me.

This episode is all about making your life easier but also more effective by using the tools that are available.

Mark, there's never been a better time to be a writer, right? In terms of what's available.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, there's tons of things. I remember when I started writing, half these things didn't exist. So, yeah, it's gonna be a fun one.

A bit of background context, we wanted to do the indie author toolkit. So software, really, for the kind of software that we use to make our lives easier and originally, it was going to be things that I picked.

So I picked 10 things that I couldn't do without. But then because I'm a lazy bugger and because I thought it would be more interesting to crowd source this, I posted a question into the SPF Facebook community and asked people to first of all, to tell me the three things that they use that they couldn't live without.

Then I compiled a compilation of the, say, 40 or 50 top ones that were represented and then asked people to vote for three of them. So what we've done is created a top 10 with some honorable mentions of the things that people relying on and using to make their jobs more efficient and get their books out quicker.

James Blatch: Okay, so you got a top 10 and honorable mentions.

Out of interest, when you looked at the crowd sourced list, how closely did it match your own top 10?

Mark Dawson: Looking at the top 10 now, the top three would probably be the same for me.

There's a few in there, one in particular in that top 10 that I hadn't used before and I'm now interested in enough to look at that in a bit more detail because it looks like fun.

I'd say even the top five or the top six, I mean, the top 10 are pretty much would be ones that I would say were important for me as well.

James Blatch: Okay, so we're gonna do the honorable mentions first and then in traditional countdown style. We'll 10 down to one.

Mark Dawson: Yes, the traditional countdown. It makes me think of poor, dear departed Richard Whiteley.

Anyway, yes, so honorable mentions. I just realized that reference would go completely over the heads of everyone outside these shores. But anyway, we'll move on from there.

We start off with **K-Lytics**, which is ... James is frowning. He doesn't know what that is.

James Blatch: I don't know.

Mark Dawson: K-Lytics is a service whereby kind of reports are generated looking at niches and genres that may be underserved, so high demand, low competition niches that it would be good if you're looking to market and you can also pay them.

I think there's a guy called Alex who was on the Science Fiction and Fantasy Marketing podcast not too long ago. You can actually pay them to produce specific reports on something you'll be particularly interested in. So it's a data service that will enable you to make decisions about your writing.

James Blatch: Just before we do the next one, because people will be writing down details now or if they're jogging or driving finding it difficult to do that, we will, of course, produce a PDF with all of these listed in them and you can download that PDF at selfpublishingformula.com/toolkit.

That PDF will be a good, handy resource for all authors at whatever stage of your career you're in.

Mark Dawson: Full disclosure, some of those links will be affiliate links, though not all of them. I think that maybe three or four we get a little cut back if people go to sign up for them.

James Blatch: But on the same token, we only recommend stuff genuinely that we think is going to be worthy of being in this. Absolutely, no questions whatsoever as to putting a link in there simply because it's an affiliate link for us.

Mark Dawson: If I say something, you can be absolutely sure that I stand behind it.

The next one is **Story Shop**. That is a story planning software suite. I suppose that was initially created by the Sterling and Stone guys. Then they've sold that to somebody else. So I think it's still being developed. But I know we had a fair few people were using that.

Next is **Twitter**. So, not making it into the top 10, but coming in the top 20. As a service, people are using it to maybe find readers.

Next is **Evernote**, a cloud based note taking application that enables you to write. I think you can kind of write full articles or stories on there as well, but also specifically to take notes and then have them link around your various devices.

Do you know what **Callibre** is?

James Blatch: A sort of alcohol-free beer.

Mark Dawson: It's a piece of formatting software, also enables you to do clever things like take MOBI files and e-pub files and then punch them out as doc files.

So something I've done, I've used Callibre before, is to download old books from Amazon, so from KDP, have them downloaded as MOBI files and then if I don't have that version on my laptop because I've lost it for some reason, you can then save it and you can also turn it into a word

document so you can actually then amend it, then turn it back into a MOBI file with Vellum or something like that and upload it again.

So very useful piece of software. That's completely free.

Instagram comes in in that top 20.

Google Docs, another some people will write on Google Docs. It's writing into the cloud, not gonna be too worried about losing stuff, redundancy.

Dropbox is the same, so another useful piece of software that enables you to make sure you're backed up.

Excel coming in quite low. That would be in my top 10 just because I like spreadsheets. I know you like spreadsheets.

James Blatch: I love spreadsheets.

Mark Dawson: But not all authors do. So I think it's important, but not hitting the top 10.

Dragon Dictate is one of the other honorable mentions, so the market leading dictation software, which I'm using at the moment and enjoying quite a lot.

Grammarly is a piece of web-based software. You upload your document and then you'll get grammatical suggestions, picks up texts that supposed to improve your writing.

James Blatch: Do you use Grammarly?

Mark Dawson: No, because I'm a really good writer and I don't need to. But also, I'm being flip about it. No, I am a little bit, we'll get to another one in the top 10 actually that beat Grammarly.

I am slightly wary of those kinds of pieces of software because sometimes I deliberately will write an ungrammatical sentence for another reason. So I know you can choose to accept or reject changes. But sometimes, I don't necessarily want to be told that something is not grammatically correct because I may have written something that way for rhythm, for effect.

It could be a number of reasons why I've written something that way and computer says no. It might not always be the answer I want to hear. We'll go into that a bit more in a minute when we get to ProWritingAid.

And then finally in the honorable mentions, **Photoshop**, so people who do book covers or ads. Photoshop is good. It's very expensive. With the kind of cloud version now, the monthly creative license they do. But there are alternatives and we'll see one of those alternatives in the top 10.

James Blatch: Okay.

Mark Dawson: Those are the honorable mentions. Any comments on those?

James Blatch: I would throw in something I found really useful. It was just called Novel Factor. It was a service created by a UK guy. It is a paid service, but not very much and it just helps you do a lot of the stuff you need to get down before you start the writing process, so structuring character and plot and locations and it's a really good way.

I know you're going to talk about Scrivener, obviously. I'm sure it's going to be in the top 10 and people who are expert Scrivener users will find a way of doing all of this in Scrivener.

But Novel Factory it's a very nice interface. Make sure that you keep in touch with the consistency that you need across the characters and times and dates and weather, etc that you create. So I really like Novel Factory.

That's the also rounds and now we're into the top 10. We need top 10 music.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, there's possibly issues there.

Anyway, so yes, number 10, speaking of Grammarly, number 10 is **ProWritingAid**. I've looked into this a little bit. I'd heard of it, but I hadn't done much digging into it. I had a little look this morning and I have to say, I am quite intrigued by what it offers.

You basically upload your manuscript to ProWritingAid and it then comes out with a series of reports. It could be things like, "You're using the passive voice too much."

One thing I think I would benefit from is kind of, this is picked up by Jenny, my editor, but overuse of words. Now it could be in the same paragraph. So occasionally, you'll have the same paragraph and you only really notice that when you hear it read back to you.

You go, "Oh, I used that word three sentences ago. I should have chosen something else," or using unusual words. I will occasionally show off with weird words that I like, not as much as I used to because it's pretty daft.

But he used words like, oh I don't know, like ...

James Blatch: Gunned the engine.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, gunned or a good one I used to use quite a lot, chiaroscuro, which means kind of ... I've butchered that pronunciation, but it means kind of a glow around something.

So if you use an unusual word more than once in the same 80,000 word book, ProWritingAid will notice you've done that and it's quite hard to see

that. But this will pick that kind of repetition and give you a chance to change it.

Also, it's got things like an in-built thesaurus. If you're using the same word more than once, then it will say, "You've used this word 10 times. How about one of these alternatives?" Then you pick a synonym and off you go. I don't know how much it costs. I know very little about it.

James Blatch: I can tell you exactly how much it costs because I have it up on the screen in front of me. It's 50 buck a year, 75 for two years, 100 for three years or a lifetime access for \$175.

Now there's an add in, interestingly, here called **Plagiarism**, which I guess is going to spot whether you've inadvertently plagiarized somebody else and that's a premium plus option. Let's see how much that costs. So that means you'll be paying \$60 a year or 95 for two years or 130 for three years or 285 for lifetime.

Mark Dawson: There's not really enough hours in the day for everything I want to do. But I would be quite interested to test that out. Maybe at some point I'll mess around with that and report back.

It was picked by a lot of people who came back in the survey, so definitely wanted to look at it and scored better than Grammarly, which is the one that is better known. They advertise quite regularly on YouTube and things like that. So I thought that was quite interesting.

James Blatch: Well, that's good and that came recommended by quite a lot of people in the community and it was interesting that you hadn't touched it yourself so far.

You described yourself as lazy at the beginning. But there was a rhyme and a reason to go to our community and ask them what they're using at the moment and that sort of thing comes up for them.

Mark Dawson: No, no. Yeah, I'm not lazy. It was useful to get some alternative opinions. So that was number 10.

Number nine, counting down, is **KDP Rocket**. So that is a piece of software produced by Dave Chesson, who is a very nice guy. He's been on the podcast before I think. Has he been on the podcast?

James Blatch: He has. Yeah, Dave has been on talking about KDP Rocket.

Mark Dawson: I've been on his podcast. He has a coffee with authors, 50 minute podcast. I've done that with him. He has a big community. He's very good on YouTube. Today, he's got 10,000 followers on his YouTube channel.

What Rocket does is a number of things. But the thing that most people use it for is to generate lots of keywords for Amazon Marketing campaigns.

So if you're doing sponsored product campaigns, you're gonna need lots of keywords that people are searching for and I haven't got information today about exactly how Rocket does this. But I imagine it's pulling lots of keywords.

Say you wanted a cold water bottle. I'm looking at one behind you. You would then be able to find a list of other terms that people search for to get that same result.

James Blatch: I remember from the interview there was a significant investment in coding at the beginning. This is not a little bit of scraping software. This is an engine to this, which is very proprietorial that Dave's created and the price for KDP Rocket is \$97. Unusually, I think a fixed price, a little bit like Scrivener, rather than a subscription. So \$97 buys you that for life and-

James Blatch: Note that some dollars buys you that for life. And I should say that, if you're listening and you are enrolled in Mark Dawson's Ads for Authors course, there's a discount for KDP Rocket buried in the session.

The excellent session that Dave's done on how to find the right keywords anyway. And he talks about KDP Rocket, and aside, in there is a discount code there.

Mark Dawson: So. That's KDP Rocket. I used that, it's very nice. It's nicely put together. It looks good. It's quite easy to use. I would say that probably would've been in my top 10.

The next one (number eight), which would be definitely in my top 10. It would be higher probably, is **Book Report**.

Book Report is, again a piece of software written by a guy called Liam and ... I don't know his second name actually. But he has pulled this piece of software together.

And what it does is it basically takes your KDP sales data, including sales and paid reads, and produces that in a format which is visually appealing.

Before Amazon changed the Dashboard for KDP, Book Report was like, I would say it was indispensable, because Dashboard used to be dreadful. And they've made some changes that have improved Dashboard about 95%.

But even with those changes, I would say Book Report is still worth having, because it will take last month's page reads. The amount you get per page read. And we'll on the fly, give you an idea of how much you could expect to have made from your sales and your KU Reads the day before. And in real time as well.

You can ask it to go back for lifetime, last year, last month, last seven days, custom, whatever you want. Do it by book. Do it by geography. It's really useful software.

And it's free up until you hit a certain level. So, I think once you start making a \$1000 a month, then you have to start paying for it. And when you hit the 1000, it comes in at 19 a month, which I think is pretty good value. He doubled the price from \$10 to \$19, about three months ago.

I still use it every single day, multiple times, on my phone. So, sadly, it's one of the faces I look at in the morning, is how much money I made the last, the day before. I think it's good value for that convenience. So, yes, I definitely recommend it. And it came in number 8 out of our Top 10.

James Blatch: Good. Excellent. It does get a very good wrap from the community, that one. Okay. Number 7.

Mark Dawson: Number seven is **Canva**.

We talked about Photoshop. Canva is a free alternative to Photoshop, whereby you can, if you want you can do a cover. Or you could do ads or you could do graphics for blog posts, graphics for Facebook posts. Anything you wanted to, Canva has a number of presets of templates that enable you to put those images together.

And Stewart Bache our Cover Design course. Stewart obviously is a very talented designer and needs the power of things like Photoshop, but Stew has also produced for us a course that would enable him to use Canva, if they don't want to pay Photoshop, to put their book covers together.

It's powerful enough to do almost everything that you want to do until you get to a certain level and you start looking at gradient maps and all this kinds of funky things that make your covers look really super professional. But Canva is free and pretty easy to use.

James Blatch: It's free, so you get a fairly comprehensive service for free, who has lots of stock imagery. Not stock images in that sense, but design images that you can use.

I use it for things like the cricket club. I'll help out and do the newsletters and stuff, though I find it really useful.

I've also created Facebook ads for SPF in there. And there are paid options within it, and that you can pay for slightly better, well designed and rarer images to work with.

And I think there is now an upgraded service that gives you all of that as part of your monthly fee. It's 12.95 a month for that. But you don't ... or 9.95 a month if you pay yearly, a 119 bucks a year.

But you don't necessarily need it, and I certainly wouldn't advise jumping straight in on that with Canva. You'll find a lot of Canva is very useful for free. And even if you do end up paying for that. That's actually a pretty good value.

Mark Dawson: Indeed. Okay, so number six is this social network called **Facebook**. Never really heard of it before.

James Blatch: It won't catch on.

Mark Dawson: We're not gonna say too much about that, but we had some people in the community going, "Yeah, I don't use Facebook. You can't sell books on social media."

Well, okay, fair enough. I'm not sure how I managed it over the last four years, but I think I've sold a few with social media.

It doesn't necessarily mean ads. Facebook is fantastic for advertising. The paid ads are great, but at the moment I'm doing a number of teasers. I finished the new Milton book. I've been telling people I've finished. And running a pre-order campaign with no ads or minimal ads anyway. But most of that with, mainly the signups and front facial organic posts. Videos as well, I'll be doing soon.

And I've got 3 and a half thousand pre-orders on that book so far. So, people who say that you can't sell books with social media, I've got 3.5 reasons why that's not true.

I think it's the biggest of the social media platforms. The others are valuable, but it's coming in at number 6.

James Blatch: I just want to add to that, because I think one of the reasons some people are resistant to it, is they don't like the, "Look at me," culture of social media, which Facebook perhaps exemplifies. I can't have a meal without photographing it all. I can't have the plumber around without moaning.

But there are plenty of authors who will use Facebook without pushing themselves forward. And I see this all the time actually in this business. Particularly people I've interviewed. I go to their Facebook page, there's maybe a little funky illustration from their books or a caricature graphic of one of their characters.

And they do not put themselves front and forward, but it's a very effective author page for them and a platform for them to market their books. So, you don't have to be part of that millennial generation who photograph every aspect of their life to be on Facebook.

Mark Dawson: Okay, so number five is **Vellum**. Vellum is the best formatting software out there. It is really easy to use. It's nice to look at. It is drag and drop.

It would otherwise be quite difficult, taking your Word document or whatever it is you're working from, and then creating an ePub, a PDF, a MOBI file. Makes it really easy to do.

We've had the two Brads on the podcast before, I think in the first twenty episodes. They used to work for Pixar, at least one of them did. And that aesthetic is very obvious in their software.

Pricing, you're probably looking at now, but I think it's \$299? Something like that.

James Blatch: It's \$249.99 for the full one, which includes paperbacks, or \$199.99 for the eBooks version only of it, and it's a single fee, and it lasts for life.

Mark Dawson: I love that app, it's just a really really lovely piece of software.

James Blatch: It really is.

Mark Dawson: So strongly recommend it if you're looking to format. There are other alternatives for format if you don't want to spend that much.

Draft2Digital have one, Reedsy has one, we'll pop those in the show notes as well. But the best option if you want to do it yourself, of course you can pay people to do it to, but the best option if you want to do it yourself is Vellum, by miles.

James Blatch: It's really really nice piece of software.

Mark Dawson: Number four, speaking of, I think it wouldn't be a stretch to say this is a really nice piece of software. Certainly not loved, but it is **Microsoft Word**.

I used to write in Word, the first three Milton novels and everything before that I wrote on Word.

We all know what it is, we all know what it can do. It is powerful, it is robust, it doesn't crash too often. It crashes now and again on the Mac, but not too often.

The problem with Word, that it isn't designed for one hundred thousand word documents, I don't think. There are alternatives that make writing those longer texts a little easier to swallow.

Track changes is great. It's still, in my opinion the best for track changes. What I'll do is I'll take my Scrivener file, I'll convert it into a Word document, I'll send that to my editors and my betas, and at that point I will work in Word rather than Scrivener.

And then I'll take the Word document when it's finalized and upload that, convert it in Vellum to the format that I need. It's an important part of my process and would have been in my top 5.

James Blatch: We should say that quite a few editors ask for it in Word. So whatever your personal preference for writing is, at some point you may need Word, because I found out the editors have said, "I like it in Word" because they can use the track changes, as you say.

In terms of pricing, I mean, I'm old enough to remember Word being in its early stages. And there was one point I think it was like three hundred and fifty pounds, or like 4 hundred and fifty dollars to buy it.

They've played with price over the years, they've got it down now to a subscription service, which is the best way to buy it I think, called Office 365. And in the UK that's priced at eighty pounds per year, so about a hundred dollars, or 8 pounds per month. And for that, you get the entire

Microsoft Office Suite, you get 1 terabyte of cloud storage, and you get 5 users, so that's the family version.

There's a cheaper one, I think it's about 6 pounds a month, but it's a really good value, the 7.99. And you can share that.

My dad has one of my licenses, and everyone in the family has. So it's a very affordable thing now.

And if, like us, you like spreadsheets, of course you get Excel with that as well as all the other Office Suite of programs. So yeah, good value it is now. Having played with the price over the years a little bit.

Mark Dawson: Yes, yes. Okay so that's number 4, number 3, the top 3 now. Very pleased to see **BookFunnel**.

BookFunnel's Damon Courtney has been on the podcast, James interviewed him in Florida I think last year.

Damon had a problem and he fixed it. The problem he saw was that it's very difficult, because Amazon is a walled garden, and the other eReaders are similar. It's very difficult to take a file and email it to someone and then get someone to side load it onto their device.

It's possible, when you factor in the fact that there's 4 or 5 different kinds of Kindles, there's Kindle Fires, there's the Kindle app on an iPhone. There are other eReaders, I know Damon told me he once had every single eReader that you can purchase, including weird ones like Sony's, and all that kind of stuff.

He has built a piece of software, or kind of a service, enables writers to provide files and then BookFunnel will get them onto the devices regardless of what that device is, of readers. And I think, I'm gonna guess

they've been going for about 3 years now. And maybe a but less, 2 or 3 years. And I immediately saw this was valuable.

We were one of the first people to support him I think. We had a bonus with one of the early courses, and so people have got into BookFunnel, a few of us in some ways.

And as soon as I adopted it, I immediately cut out tons and tons of customer service emails that were not a good use of my time. Teaching people how to side load. Even if it was just sending an email to them, with a video or instructions. Having BookFunnel take care of that is a massive saving.

It's great to see a real Indie company, with 5 or 6 employees now, to come out of nowhere, fix a problem, and then I don't know how many users he's got now, but it must be thousands now. I'm really pleased for him, because it's very well-deserved.

James Blatch: It's superb. As you say, there was a problem, everyday a time suck, and that stuff costs money for authors. You can't write when you're looking after email, and there's always going to be some people find it really difficult to do some of the technical things, and the platform is excellent.

And the other thing that's excellent about it is it's customer service, I think BookFunnel have really good customer service, and Damon's always very happy for us to punt people his way when somebody can't download.

We use BookFunnel professionally, we have our SPF books on there, it's our way of distributing them as well.

In terms of the price, it's about a hundred bucks a year, for an author with a few books out. There is first time author, so you can dip your toe in, twenty dollars a year, really cheap, almost nothing. You get one pen name, you get

five hundred downloads a month, and up to 5 books with that. But you're probably looking at the hundred dollars a year option, or 10 dollars a month option to get going with your career.

There are a couple of programs above that, so if you've got multiple pen names, et cetera, or you are a small publisher, and it's just that Damon also offers an option now for publishers themselves to use BookFunnel.

I hope he's gonna be at NINC this year because he kills it at karaoke and it's quite a sight to see a full blown Damon-Courtney karaoke session as well.

Mark Dawson: I haven't seen that. So, looking forward to that. Okay so it's up to you, now. This is a vague one so there was not much point in me breaking this down individually but the number two is an **email service provider**. Basically, it's whatever you use to host your mailing lists comes in at number two.

Again, there's been a few comments in the group over the last week or so with people saying they don't see the point of a mailing list or they've given up. Email lists don't work.

Honestly, I can only say it so many times and be polite even though I've dealt with these kinds of questions a lot over the years.

It's as simple as this. An email list is going to be your most valuable asset as a creative professional writing in the twenty-first century, bar none. Doesn't matter if you're writing novels or non-fiction, or if you're a musician, or if you're in a gallery and you're selling art.

You need to be able to reach your customers. There are lots of ways to do that. A mailing list is the only one that you own. You can from MailChimp download a spreadsheet of all of your subscribers.

I've got a hundred thousand or so on MailChimp now which cost me a lot of money, 350 quid a month to host that. It's expensive. I have no problem paying that because I know whenever I've got a book to go out, the early sales, there could be five or six thousand sales, will be generated just by people on my mailing list.

It's critically important. And that is even without considering the things you can do with it beyond emailing. It could be generating a custom list of Facebook ads, or using that to generate a look alike audience for Facebook ads, or recruiting advance readers, or recruiting beta readers.

Getting reviews, motivation, putting people into Facebook groups.

I think for 99 percent of people this will be preaching to the choir. But for those one percent of people who doubt me or disagree with me, I would say very strongly, think about that carefully. You could not get me to dispense with my mailing list.

Actually, that counts to the SPF side of things as well. We have a mailing list. That's how we tell people about the podcast and our courses. It is crucially important. I think people will be doing themselves a significant disservice if they don't take that seriously.

James Blatch: In terms of actual providers that we recommend or that we would point people towards, have you- We can talk about the entry level MailChimp, and the mid list and the high list.

Is there a path you want to go down then giving some names out?

Mark Dawson: I'd say almost everyone should start with MailChimp. It is the simplest. It's very robust. They're adding features that you can do things like tagging people now. That used to be kind of ConvertKit level thing.

MailChimp would be my recommendation. It's also free up to two thousand subscribers, so it doesn't even cost you anything.

There's no reason at all not to use that. It's quite simple to use. We've obviously covered in a lot of depth in the 101 course.

Above that ConvertKit I'd say is about as far as anyone would need to think about going. We use it for SPF. We question ourselves now and again as to whether we need to do that. But ConvertKit is powerful enough, I'd say for anybody writing.

James Blatch: I'd like to give a mention to MailerLite as well because I'm starting to look more seriously at MailerLite. I get a lot of people in our Facebook groups saying that they prefer it as a mid-list one because of the functionality-

Mark Dawson: It's cheaper.

James Blatch: And it's cheaper in the price.

Mark Dawson: It's a good option. Though they've had problems recently. They've had a spammer basically got in, blacklisted some of their servers. Which meant that authors, some of whom are in our community, who had launches, found that their emails were going into spam.

Their service is pretty good; they kind of fess up to things. They've made a few mistakes recently. One with regards to automated features and then this one, which wasn't really their fault.

But they do respond quite quickly. But that's the downside with it. A small company like MailerLite, smaller than MailChimp, it will be more bumpy.

I don't think it's likely that MailChimp is gonna get blacklisted any time soon. You pay your money, you take your choice when it comes to that kind of-

James Blatch: And ConvertKit, we do call ConvertKit. There was a brief time when it was going to be called Seva.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, they realized that was a terrible idea.

James Blatch: They rolled back on that.

Mark Dawson: They did.

James Blatch: Okay. We should mention it, because we did mention the name change at the time it was announced and then subsequently there was a rolling back. So it is now back to ConvertKit.

Good. Okay, that is number two in the essential list.

Mark Dawson: Yeah, and number one is-

James Blatch: Does it rhyme with 'Rivener'?

Mark Dawson: Yeah it does. It rhymes with 'Rivener'. **Scrivener** is number one.

It was number one by a distance. Again, this is another case of a small company based in the southwest of England. Not many people know that, from Literature and Latte.

They realized, I don't know all their history, but it's been around for a while. I believe it's a programmer who's also a writer, wrote a piece of software that made it easier and more convenient to write those big documents that Word wasn't really built for.

He has now produced the piece of software that is bar-none the most recommended when it comes to what you should use when you're writing. Everyone uses it.

I use it for other things as well. I use it for when I do presentations. First draft I'll do is in Scrivener cause it's just so easy to drag and drop the cards around and change the order.

It's fantastic for writing. It's very powerful. There's a bit of a learning curve. I wasn't sure, initially, that I'd like it so much, but once you get used to it and you realize what it can do and how much time it can save you, I can't imagine using anything else now.

Obviously, I would say it was in the top three for most people. Not everyone, but it was number one by a ways. So yes. We're delighted to announce Scrivener as the number one item in the indie toolkit for 2018.

James Blatch: Well done, Scrivener. Literature and Latte. It is one of those bits of software that when you start writing, within minutes of using it, you realize you're always going to be using this now.

I wrote my first novel in Word, and it was 100,000 words. It was the most- I would double-click it to open it and then sit there watching the pages load. You couldn't start working for the first two minutes.

It was unwieldy, and as for revising it and going back and finding stuff, Scrivener takes all of that hassle away, to the point where you can drag and drop scenes around the place if you want to start moving things around.

Again, it's a problem that was there that was onset by somebody, and price-wise, I think incredibly reasonable.

Mark Dawson: It's very cheap.

James Blatch: Yeah. Forty-five dollars on Windows and Mac, and there's iOS versions that are cheaper than that, and you can buy a bundle of all of the versions for 75 dollars.

From a commercial point of view, I've always been surprised they haven't gone down the subscription route cause I think if they charged everybody five dollars a month-

Mark Dawson: Me too.

James Blatch: I think everyone would pay it, and they'd probably make more money, but maybe that's not what they want to do. He wants the software to be out there and be accessible.

We haven't had the author on. I think we've asked him-

Mark Dawson: I think it's Uncle Keith actually. I spoke to someone in Literature and Latte and we were thinking about getting them on, but we never really followed through, but that would be something that we should do. Yeah. It would be good to get them on.

James Blatch: Yeah.

Mark Dawson: Their software is loved in the creative sphere. It would be great to get them on.

James Blatch: Yeah, definitely. Good. So there we are. That is the top ten indie toolkits.

You can get the PDF with all of those links and there's marks, one or two of them may be affiliate links, but they're on their own merits, of course.

You can get that at selfpublishingformula.com/toolkit. A really good one. That's actually a URL and a PDF that we should keep up to date over time if things change on that front.

That's nice, but one thing to say is, you've just mentioned 15, 16 separate applications there. You don't necessarily need to go out and get all of those tomorrow to get going, but there are one or two key ones, and there are one or two areas that will have your labor halved by investing in them.

Then there's a bit of passive, to begin with, a bit of BookFunnel, again you've got to understand how it works, you got to understand how to upload stuff, but once you've done that, it's a massive time saver. All of this really is about being effective as a business and as a writer.

Mark Dawson: I'd say buy these things when you need them. If you're just writing your first book, you don't need BookFunnel, cause it's only going to be useful when you've got the book ready to go and distribute to readers.

Same goes for KDP Rocket or BookReport. If you're not selling any books, there's not much point in buying BookReport. You get them as you need them.

Most of these are pretty easy to use. There's, as you said, a bit of a learning curve for some of them. If you've got the 101 course that we do, coming out in September, a month from the time that this will go out. The tech library has details on almost all of these. Certainly, things like BookFunnel, Scrivener, we do compiling and all that kind of stuff.

Most of these things will be covered in the tech library. That's something that we update all the time, and if we find that there's a couple there that we don't cover, we'll add those in so it's always updated.

James Blatch: Excellent. You might have your opinions on any that we've missed, and if you want to give them an honorable mention, you can drop

into our Facebook community, just search for SPF Community on Facebook.

Mark, thank you very much indeed. This is going out on the 31st of August, which means that we are very close to flying out to Florida in mid September and we are delighted to host an SPF drinks reception at NINC.

You don't have to be enrolled in the conference, you can literally come along to the bar, the Sharktooth Tavern at the TradeWinds Resort in St. Pete Beach. We will buy you a beer on Wednesday, the 26th of September, is that right? I haven't got the date in front of me. It's Wednesday the 26th of September, yeah, that's correct.

You may even get a pin. You may even get a selfie with Mark Dawson.

Mark Dawson: I wouldn't recommend it, but you can if you want.

James Blatch: And second prize is two selfies with Mark Dawson.

Mark: A-ha!

James Blatch: And John Dyer will be there as well, we should say, if you should wish to have your photograph taken with him.

Mark: He's very cuddly.

James Blatch: He is very cuddly.

Thank you very much dear Mark for putting in the work into this episode, and thank you to everyone who contributed to it via our Facebook group.

We are going to be back next week, so in the meantime, we're going to say to you with that toolkit, you can't go wrong. Have a good week writing and a great week selling your books. Bye bye.

Narrator: You've been listening to the Self Publishing Formula podcast. Visit us at selfpublishingformula.com for more information, show notes, and links on today's topics. You can also sign up for our free video series on using Facebook ads to grow your mailing list. If you've enjoyed the show, please consider leaving us a review on iTunes. We'll see you next time.