Safety tips for authors

Five key steps we recommend for all authors and in red, what ALLi are doing to help:

1. Be informed but not frightened: make time to read all the information given here and implement the tips given, without getting overly anxious. The more steps we all take, and the greater the collective awareness and support, the better. ALLi has put together this list and made it freely available to all authors.

2. If you are the recipient of any incidents, *Record and Tell*:
   a. Keep a record of all incidents (including things like screenshots).
   b. Tell people: your writing organisation, the admins of writing forums you are part of, your friends and family, the police, the platform being used by the person making you feel unsafe (with these last two, make sure there is a record of your complaint/report). You can always tell us at ALLi as well, whether you are a member of ours or not.

3. Protect your home address: ALLi will be including these tips in all relevant articles, podcasts, videos, etc.
   a. Buy domain privacy for your website as part of your hosting package: it is not expensive and domain registration data is one of the easiest ways to find out your address. https://www.hostpapa.co.uk/blog/web-hosting/7-reasons-why-you-need-domain-privacy-protection/
   b. Use a PO Box wherever your address is required (e.g. at the foot of your newsletter). Look for one where you only pay if you receive mail, if that's an option in your country. Ask local writers for recommendations.
   c. Be careful what you post online or elsewhere related to your location. Lots of small pieces of information can add up.
   d. PayPal was cited as being problematic (*harassers used Paypal invoices to trace authors' real identities behind business accounts*). Check what information may be visible on the payment options you choose.
   e. As an additional protection, you may wish to use a contact form rather than give out your email address on your website, as this can be easily found and used by hackers.

4. Do not disclose your earnings without anonymising them. Within the self-published community it is common for authors who are seeing success on their publishing journey to share exact figures on writing forums, in part to override the existing 'starving artist' mythology so prevalent in publishing, in part to then explain what

they did that might help their peers. It is an inspiring and honest thing to do and much valued, especially by new authors, but was clearly raised as a potential trigger for problematic responses (it may be seen as boasting or an indicator that someone is financially worth blackmailing). We recommend that you anonymise the data and, for example, ask admins on a platform to post the information for you, so that it can still be shared to benefit others. ALLi has committed to always anonymising such data in our own communications and would always be glad to post anonymised success stories on an author's behalf.

5. If your pen-name is for safety rather than a marketing choice, take steps to protect it. Use an avatar rather than your real image, check how payments will work to protect your anonymity, etc. Publishing contracts should clearly state who is and is not allowed to know your identity details: there should be a privacy clause included and restrictions over who can access the name behind an author's pen-name. Both ALLi and our literary agent Ethan Ellenberg have committed to always checking this issue when looking at contracts.

Additional Reading
- The original survey and report that highlighted author safety as an issue: http://bookangel.co.uk/news/author-safety-survey-final-results/
- Additional useful and interesting pieces on author safety:
  - https://www.johnhuntpublishing.com/publishing-guide/chapter-14-social-media/author-safety/
  - https://medium.com/@cindyotis_/online-safety-tips-for-authors-13b0af90735
  - https://writingbytheseatofmypants.com/2020/07/22/internet-safety-for-authors-part-1/
  - https://writingbytheseatofmypants.com/2020/07/19/internet-safety-for-authors-part-2/
  - https://writingbytheseatofmypants.com/2019/05/06/how-to-handle-internet-trolling-author-edition-part-2/
- Think broadly when it comes to digital safety: these are other generic online digital safety tips which are beneficial to implement. https://www.nytimes.com/guides/privacy-project/how-to-protect-your-digital-privacy