

# Designing a responsive website for fiction crime thriller author

**CLIENT:** Wheelhouse Publishers

## PROJECT SUMMARY

Led process from research through launch of a WordPress author website to promote crime thriller author and his book series for my independent publishing company.



## MY ROLES

- UX Discovery
- UX/UI Design
- UX Strategy
- WordPress Web Creation

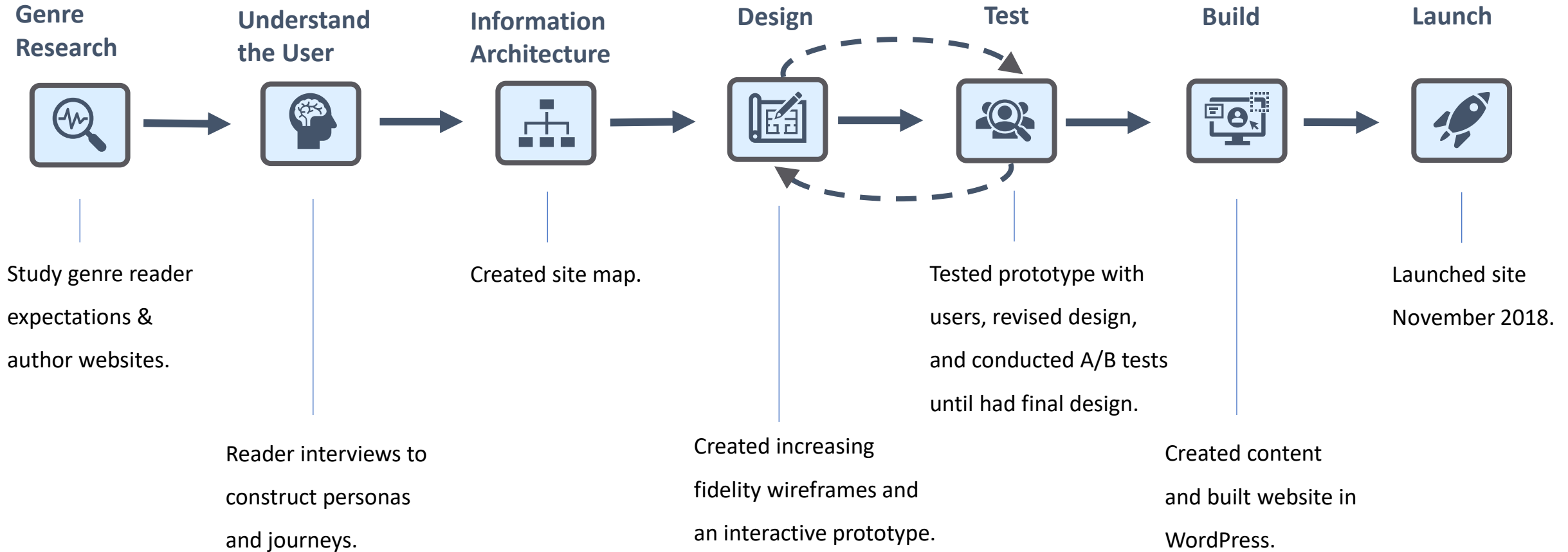
There are **millions of books** and **thousands of authors**, so when Wheelhouse Publishers (my publishing company) was ready to **launch** new **thriller author** Jason Richards and his **book series**, I knew **we needed a website** to **promote** his **brand** and **books** to readers across the **digital devices** they use daily.

### Outcome

**Designed and built a responsive website** so readers get to know Jason, learn about the book series, join Jason's mailing list, and have links to purchase his books. In just two years the site has **delivered over 50,000 readers to the book series** and **driven a 27% increase in pages read** through **Kindle Unlimited**.



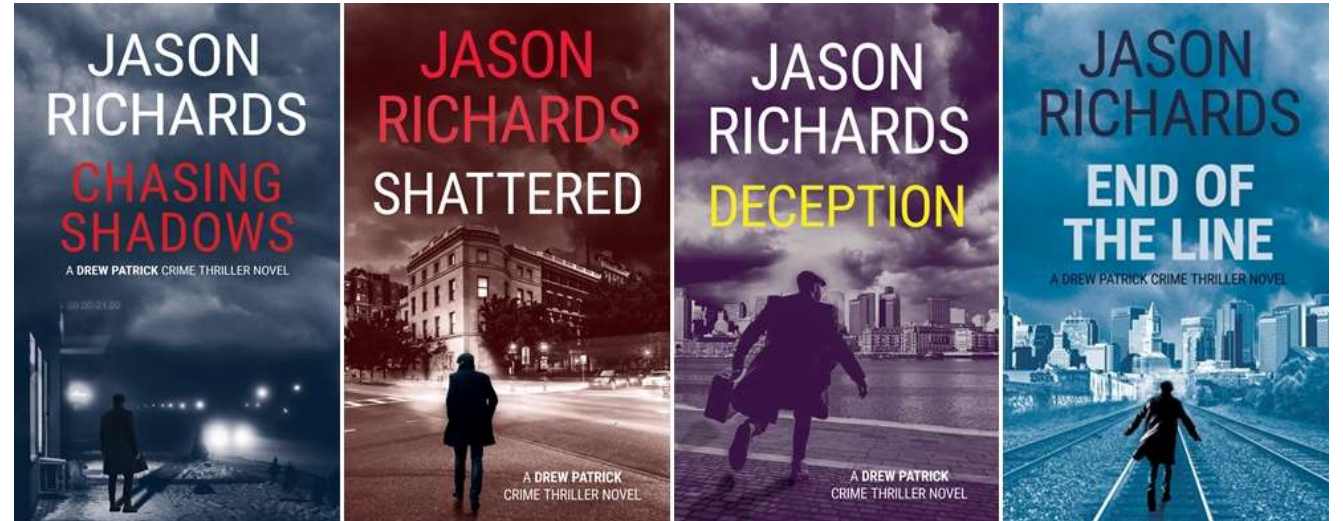
My process took me from **research through** to the **launch of the website**, where I was the **sole researcher** and **designer**.



Book publishing is genre-specific, so I began by **analyzing titles on the Amazon Thriller Bestseller list to understand reader expectations through cover designs** (yes, readers do first judge a book by its cover).

**Crime Thriller Design Insights:**

- Colors blue, yellow, red, purple, orange, and black feature prominently across the genre. There is a hint of foreboding danger or “surveying the landscape.”
- Figure facing, or running, away.
- Roboto and similar typography.
- Use of light and shadow to provide sense of danger and suspense.



I did a **competitive analysis of 3 bestselling independent thriller author websites** to get **design inspiration** and look for **points of similarity** and **difference** in thinking about designing Jason's website.



### Key Insights From Author Websites

- Clearly associate with the thriller genre.
- CTA to join reading list for free story included on the home page.
- Intuitive navigation with simple site structure to get readers to site content quickly.
- Hero image often covers visible top part of home page.

After analyzing **market research** and **gathering reader insights** from **over 100** book **marketing campaigns**, I created the **personas** of **Sofia, Barbara, and Frank** to represent the **3 primary types** of **readers** Jason can expect for his website.

### Meet Sofia



70 | San Antonio, TX  
Retired School Teacher  
Married. 3 kids. 4 grandkids.

Sofia responds to Facebook ad and is interested in **purchasing the first book in the series.**

*“I love finding an author similar to my favorite authors.”*

### Meet Barbara



55 | New York, NY  
Attorney  
Single.

Barbara is a **returning reader**, looking to **purchase next book in the series.**

*“I enjoy the characters and fast-paced stories of this series.”*

### Meet Frank



65 | Chicago, IL  
Retired Army Officer  
Married. 2 kids. 2 grandkids.

Frank comes to Jason’s site from a story giveaway promotion, **looking for a free story to sample Jason’s writing.**

*“I like to get a free story so I can sample an author’s writing.”*

To ensure readers like **Sofia, Barbara, and Frank** can **efficiently navigate the site**, I developed **reader journeys** to **identify the paths** each of the **primary readers would take in completing their goals**.



Sofia responds to a Facebook ad and visits Jason's website to learn more and decide about purchasing the first book in the series.



Visits Homepage.



Learns Jason was inspired by one of her favorite authors.



Gets an idea about books in the series.



Reads blurb, reviews, and decides to purchase the book.



Offsite book retailer website.

Navigates to About page.

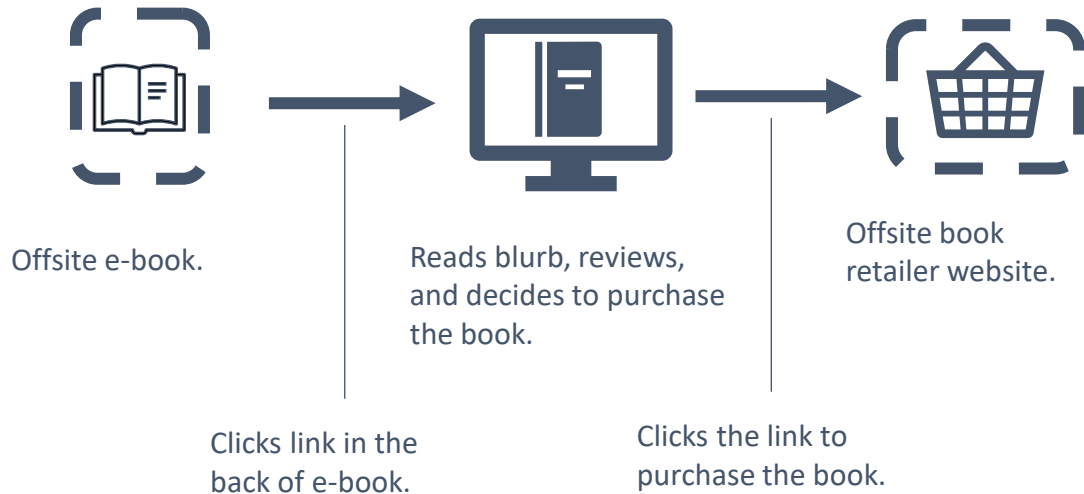
Navigates to Book Series page.

Navigates to Book Detail page.

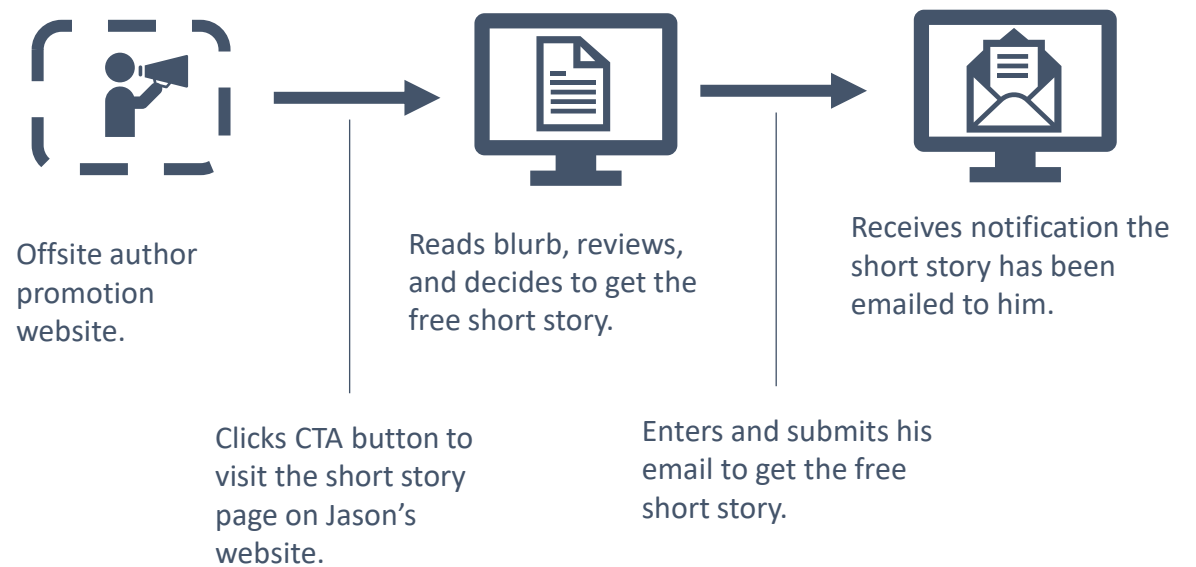
Clicks the link to purchase the book.



Barbara follows a link in the e-book she just finished to purchase the next book in the series.

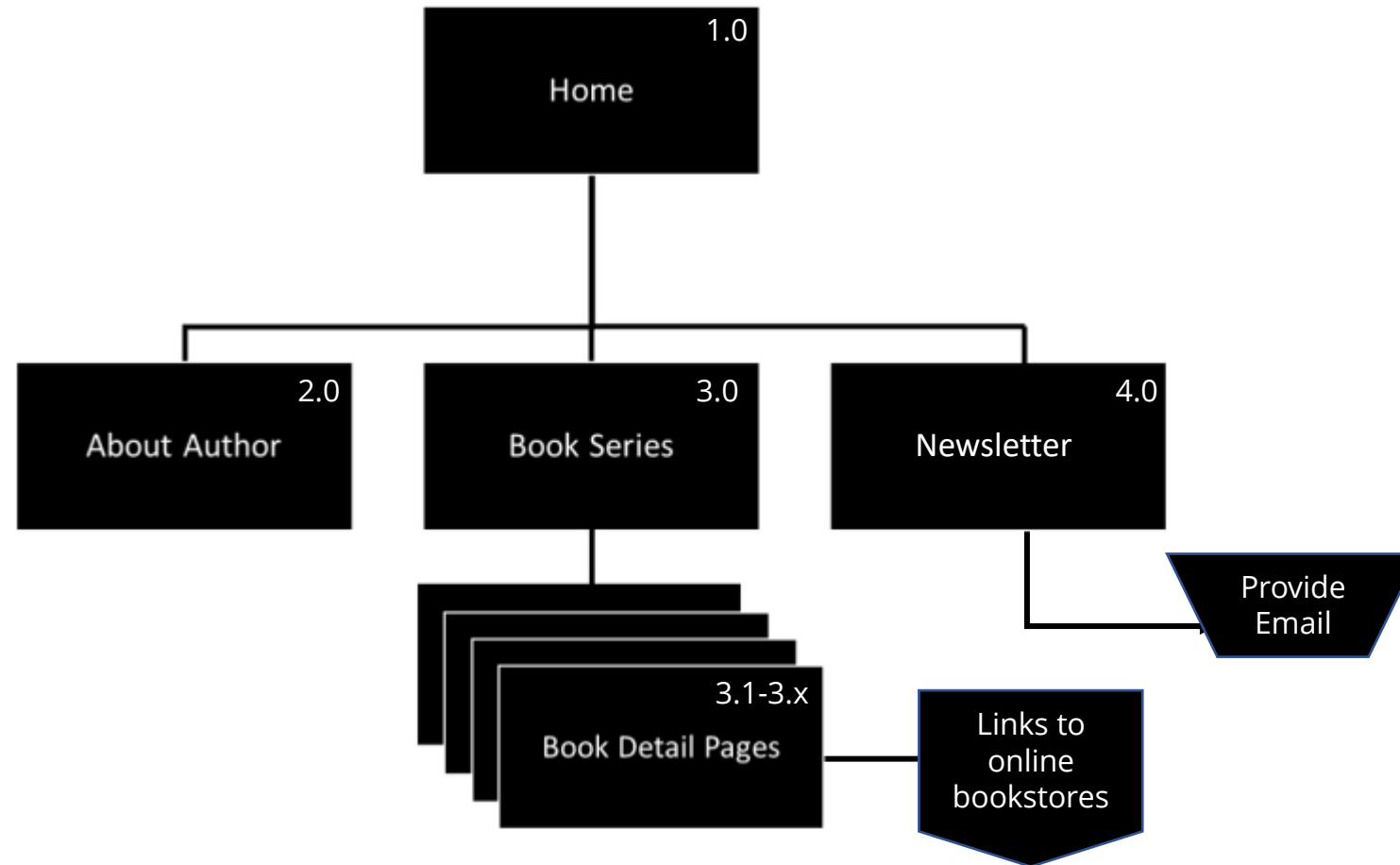


Frank arrives from an author giveaway promotion and provides his email to get the free short story.

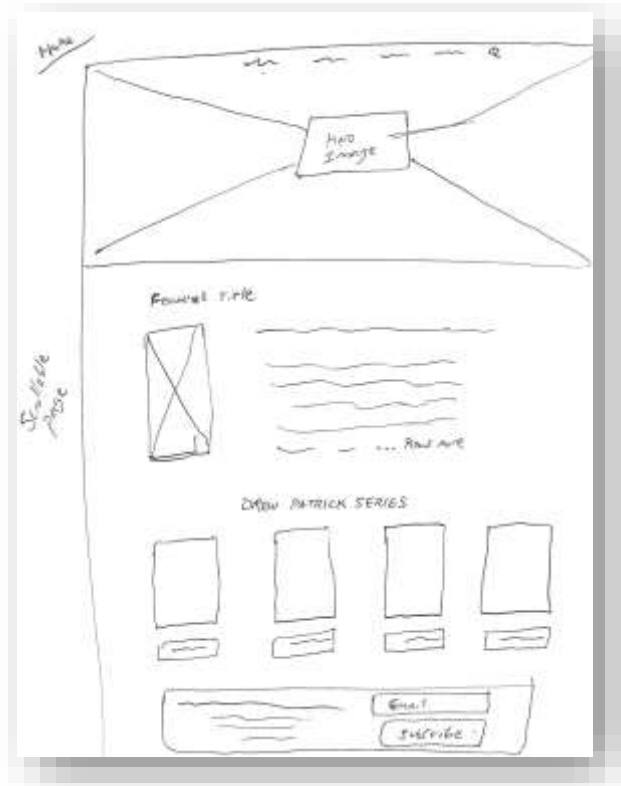




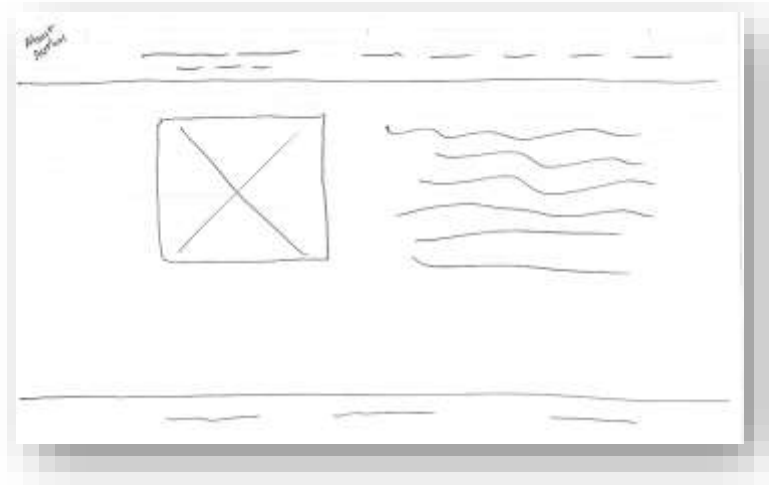
I developed a **site map** to **identify** the **structure** of the **website** for **Sofia, Barbara, and Frank** to **complete** their **tasks**.



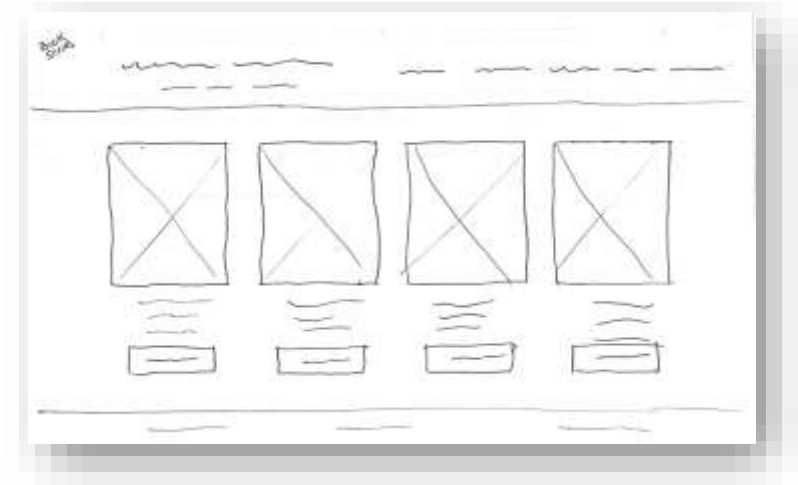
I sketched low-fidelity wireframes to begin thinking about the **design** for the **pages** so **Sofia, Barbara, and Frank** can **accomplish** their **goals** on the website.



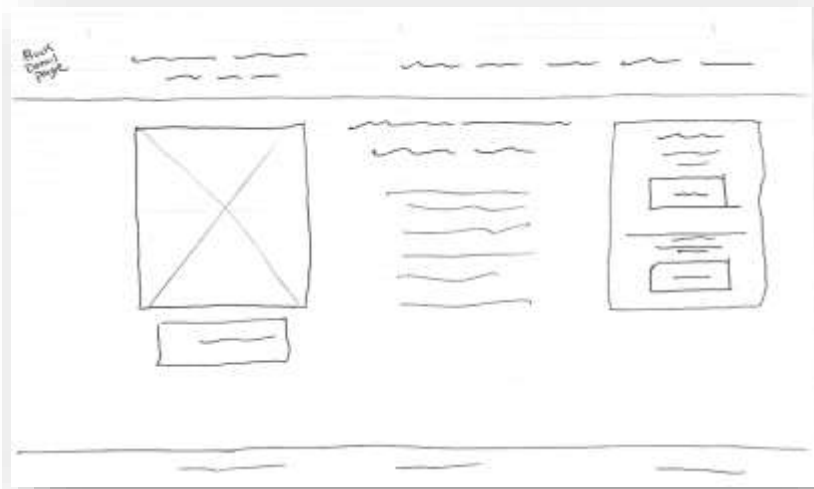
**Home** establishes genre, brand, and access to site content.



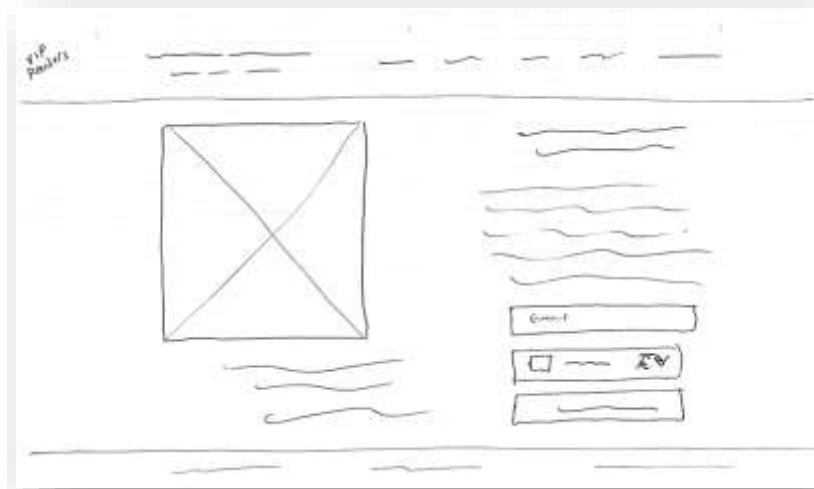
**About the Author** provides author information helpful to readers.



**Books** showcases books in the series.



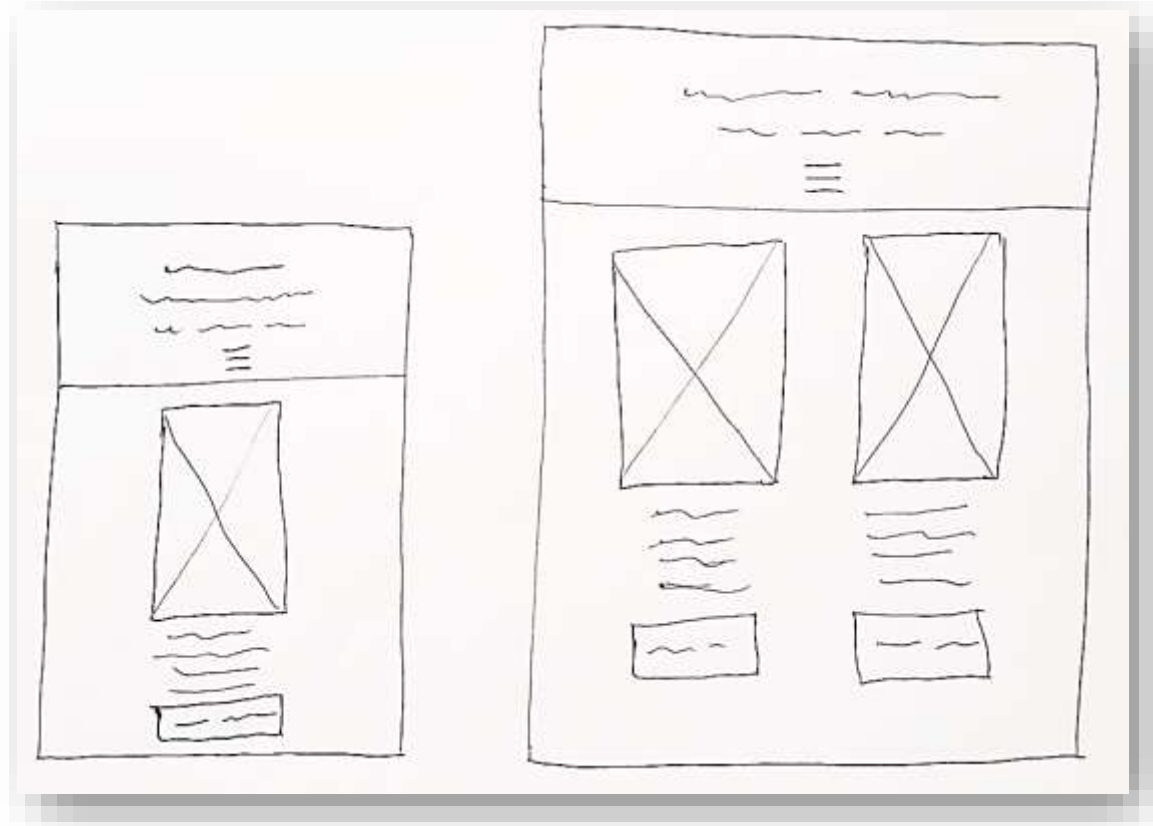
**Book detail** pages provide synopsis and purchase links.



**Newsletter** page provides details about short story and email sign up.

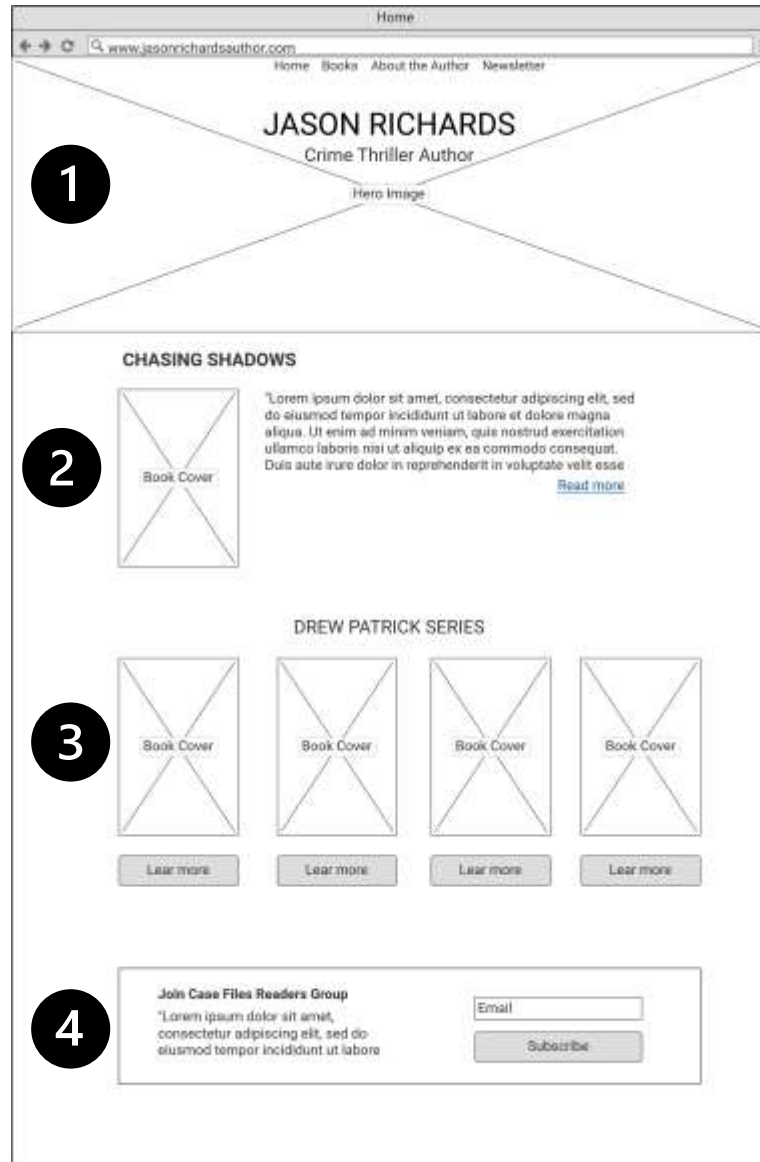
Thinking **responsively**, I **sketched wireframes** for how the pages might look on **different screen sizes** to **provide Sofia, Barbara, and Frank** with the **optimal user experience across devices**.

Low-fidelity sketch  
of Book Series page  
on a mobile phone.



Low-fidelity sketch  
of Book Series  
page on a tablet.

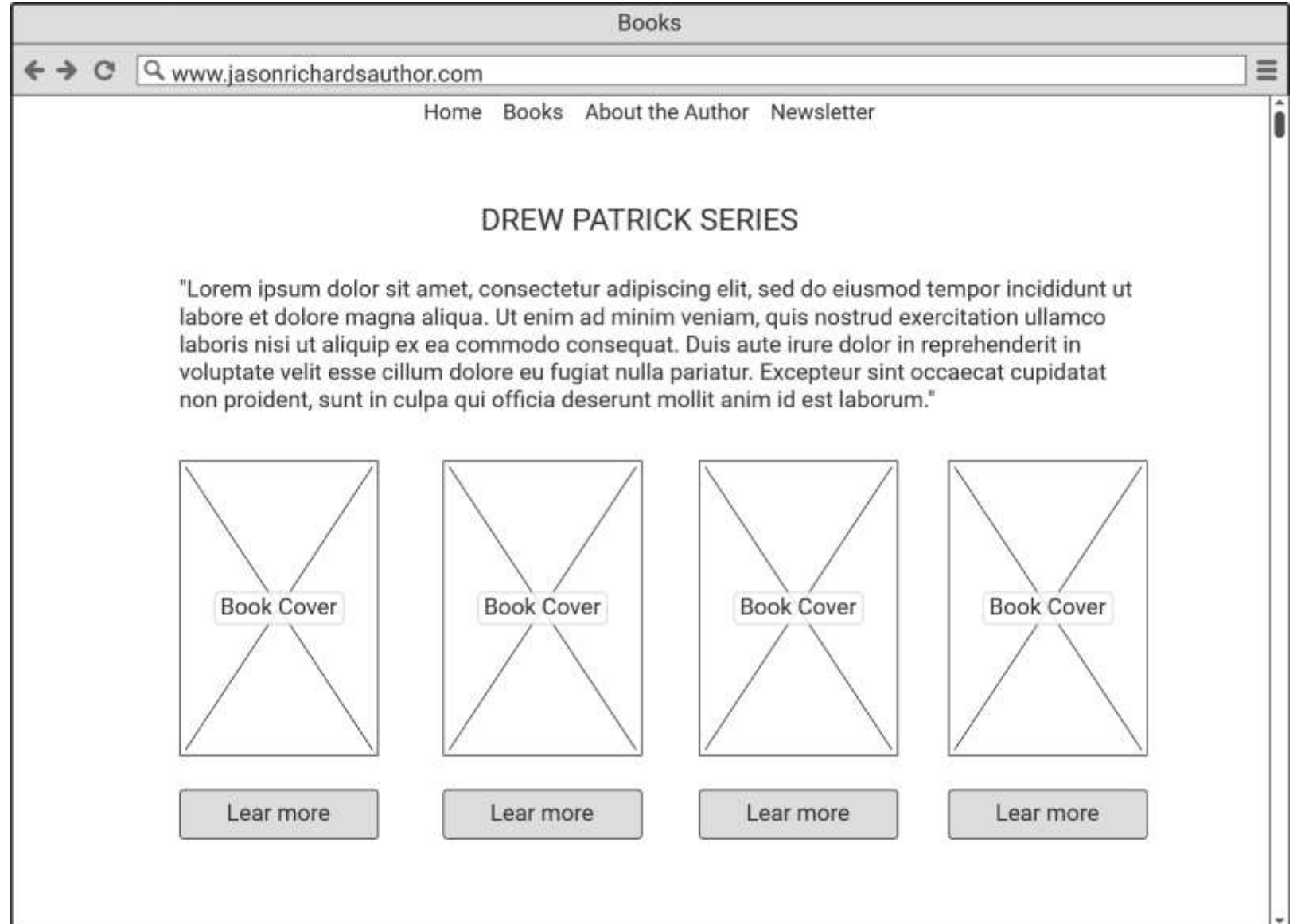
Moving into digital tools, I created **mid-fidelity wireframes** to bring **more life** to the **page designs** and **focus details** on **Sofia, Barbara,** and **Frank interacting** with the **website to accomplish their goals.**



- 1 Sofia, Barbara, and Frank immediately notice they are on the website of Jason Richards crime thriller author by the site title and image.
- 2 A featured title promotes the first book in the series (or latest release).
- 3 Sofia and Barbara can quickly see books in the series.
- 4 Frank can subscribe to the newsletter.

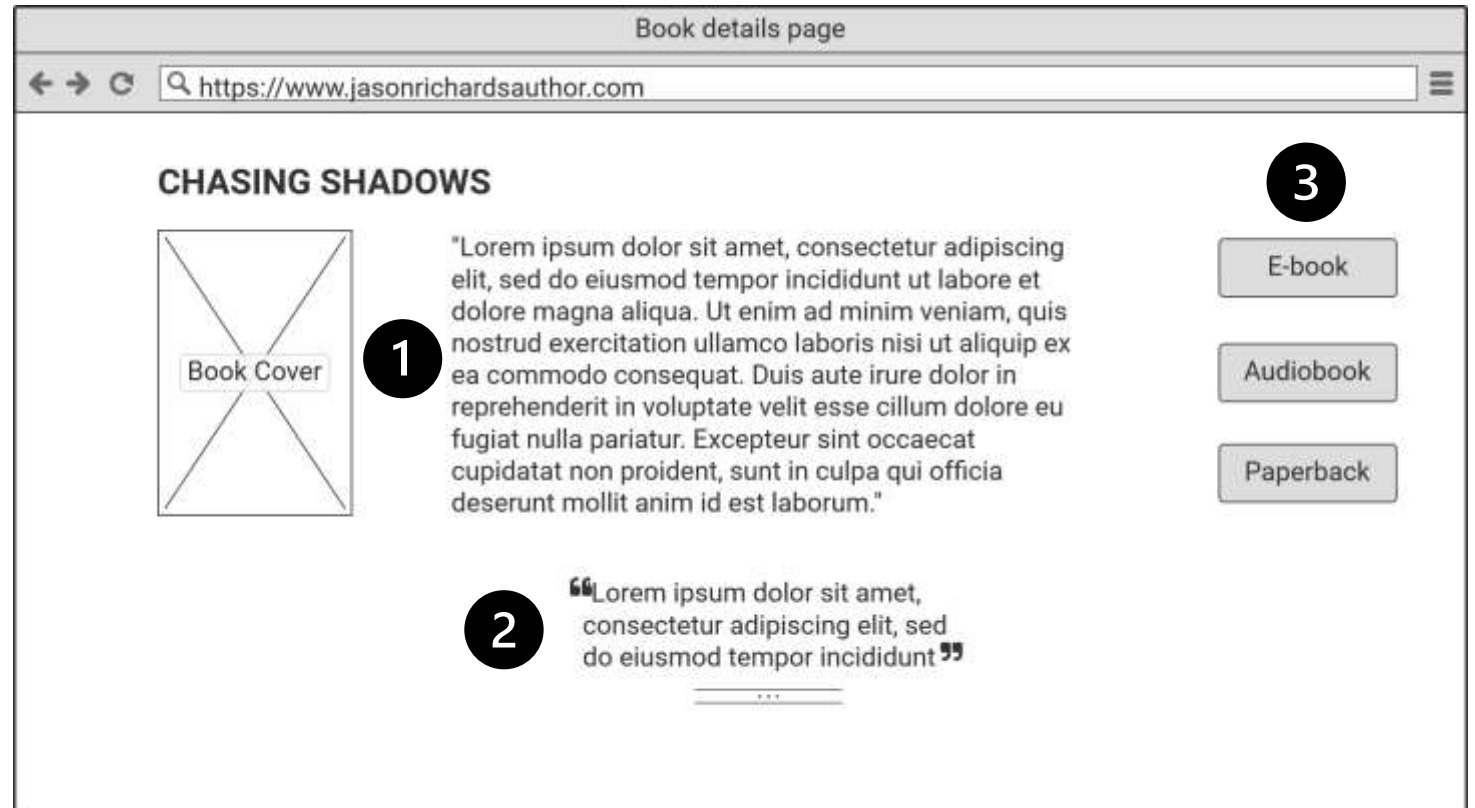
## Books

Sofia can learn about the series and get details on each title.

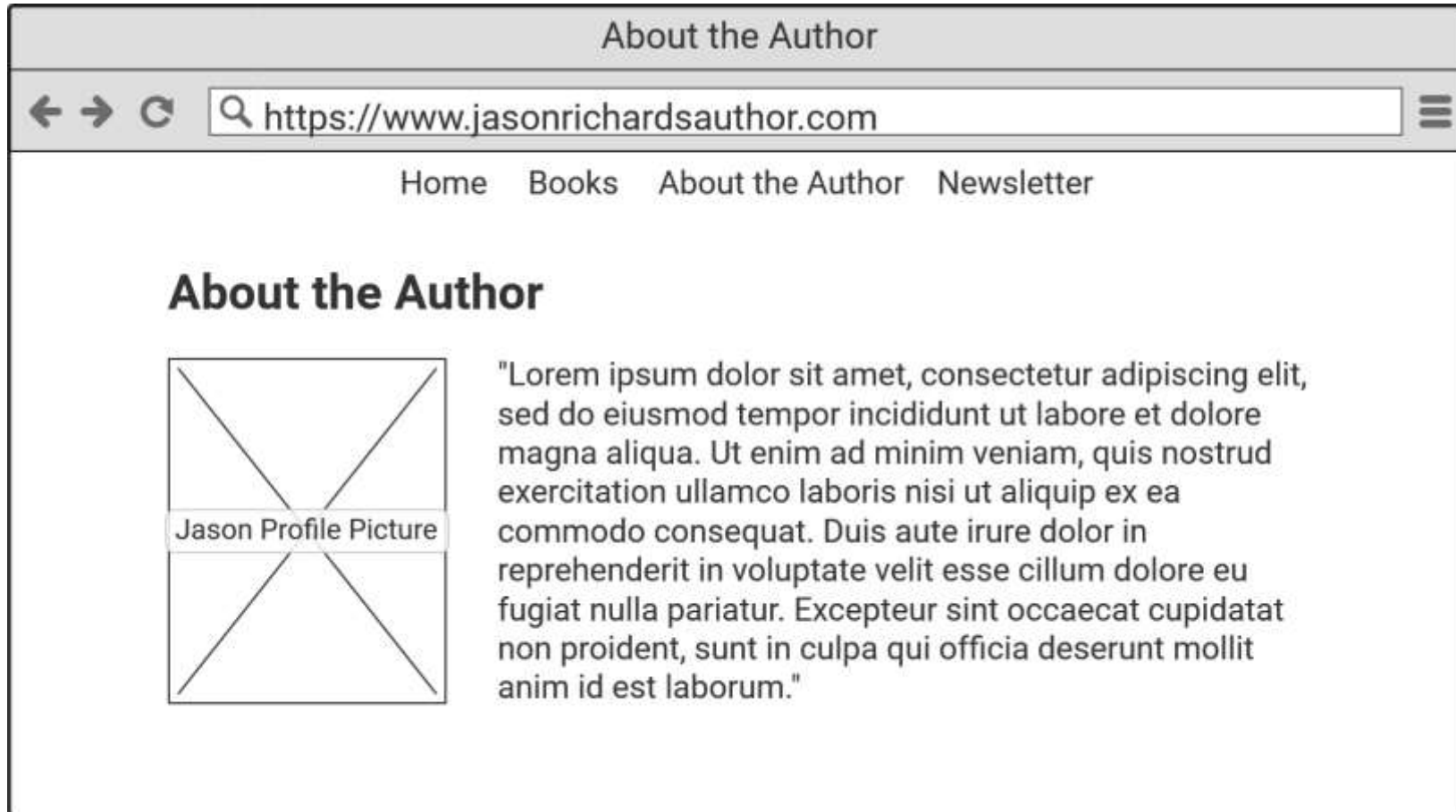


## Book details pages

- 1 Sofia and Barbara can view a cover image and book synopsis, providing needed information to help make a purchase decision.
- 2 Automatically scrolling reader reviews help Sofia and Barbara discover what other readers think.
- 3 Buttons link offsite to book retailers like Amazon so Sofia and Barbara can purchase the book.



## About the Author

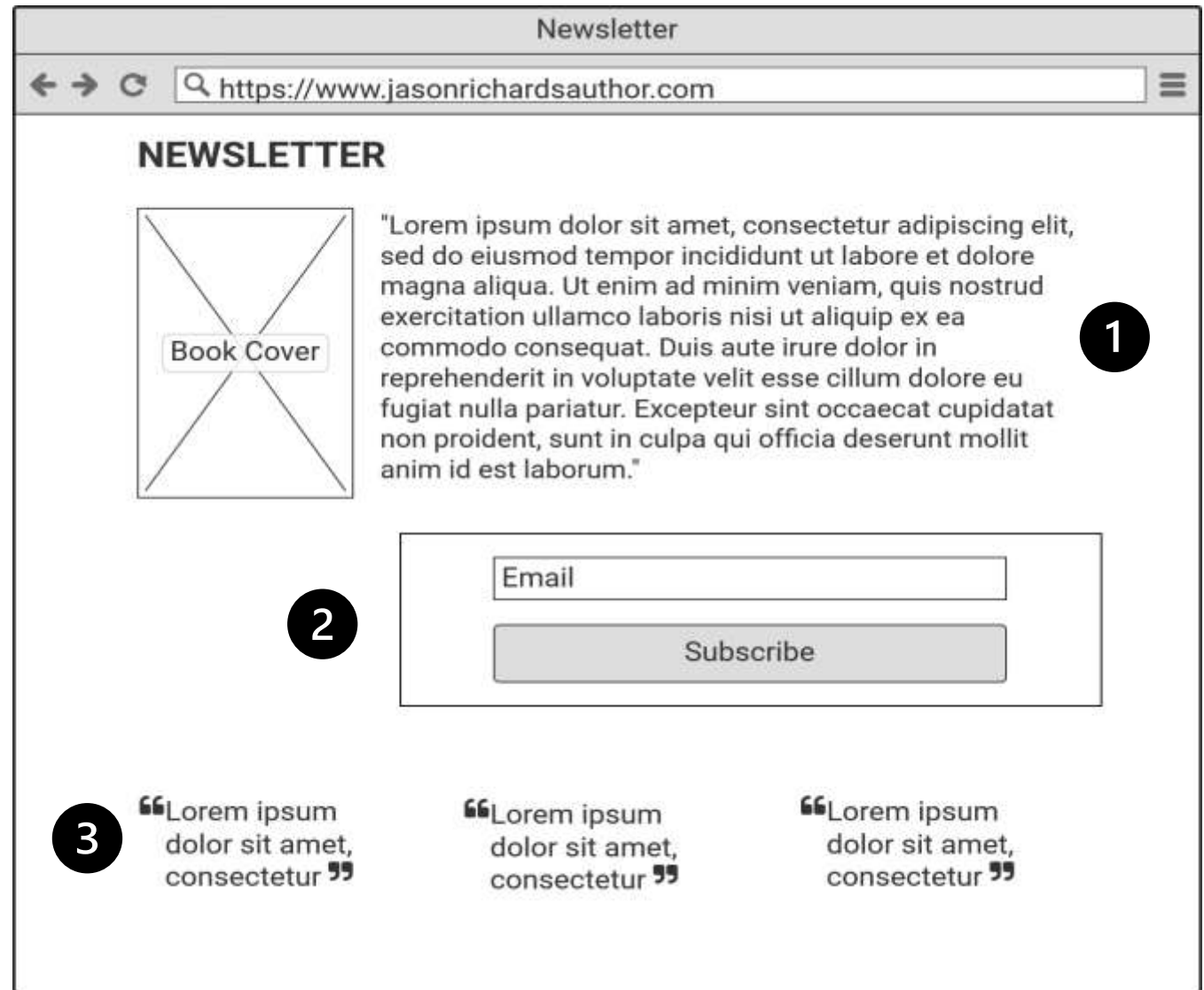


Sofia can learn about Jason and that he writes books like one of her favorite authors.



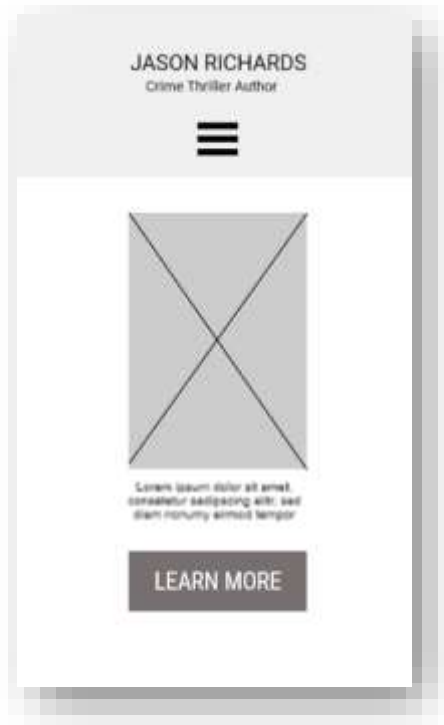
## Newsletter

- 1 The cover image and synopsis helps Frank learn about the story.
- 2 Frank can provide his email to receive the free short story.
- 3 Reader reviews for the short story can help Frank to decide if he wants to provide his email to get a free copy.

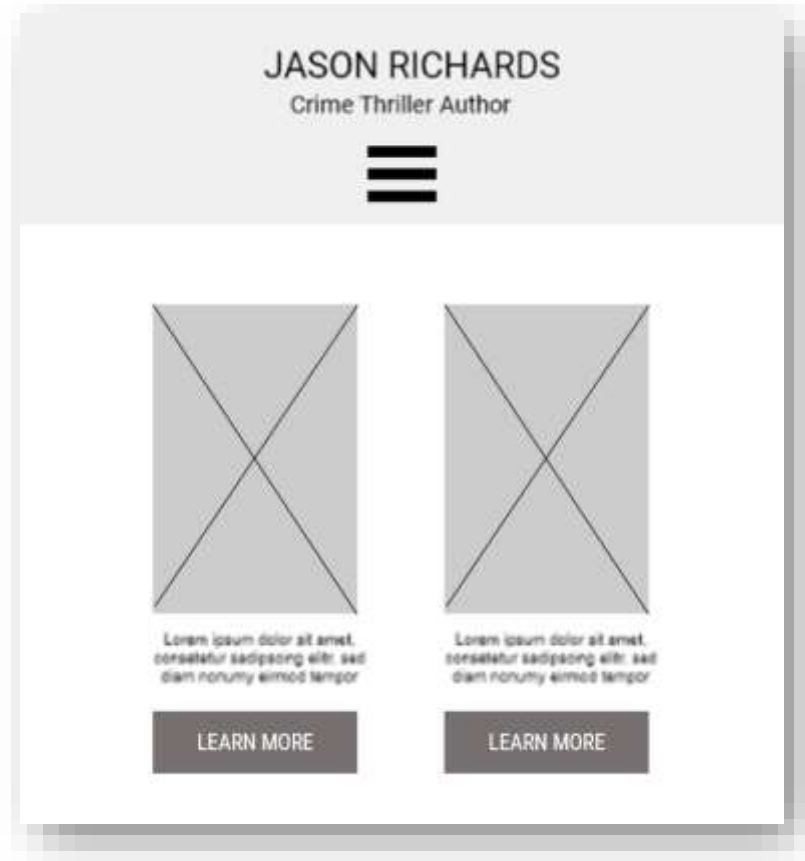


**Mid-fidelity wireframes** for **different screen sizes** helped me think about breakpoints and resizing of images and text for a **responsive layout** to provide **appropriate formatting** across **different devices**.

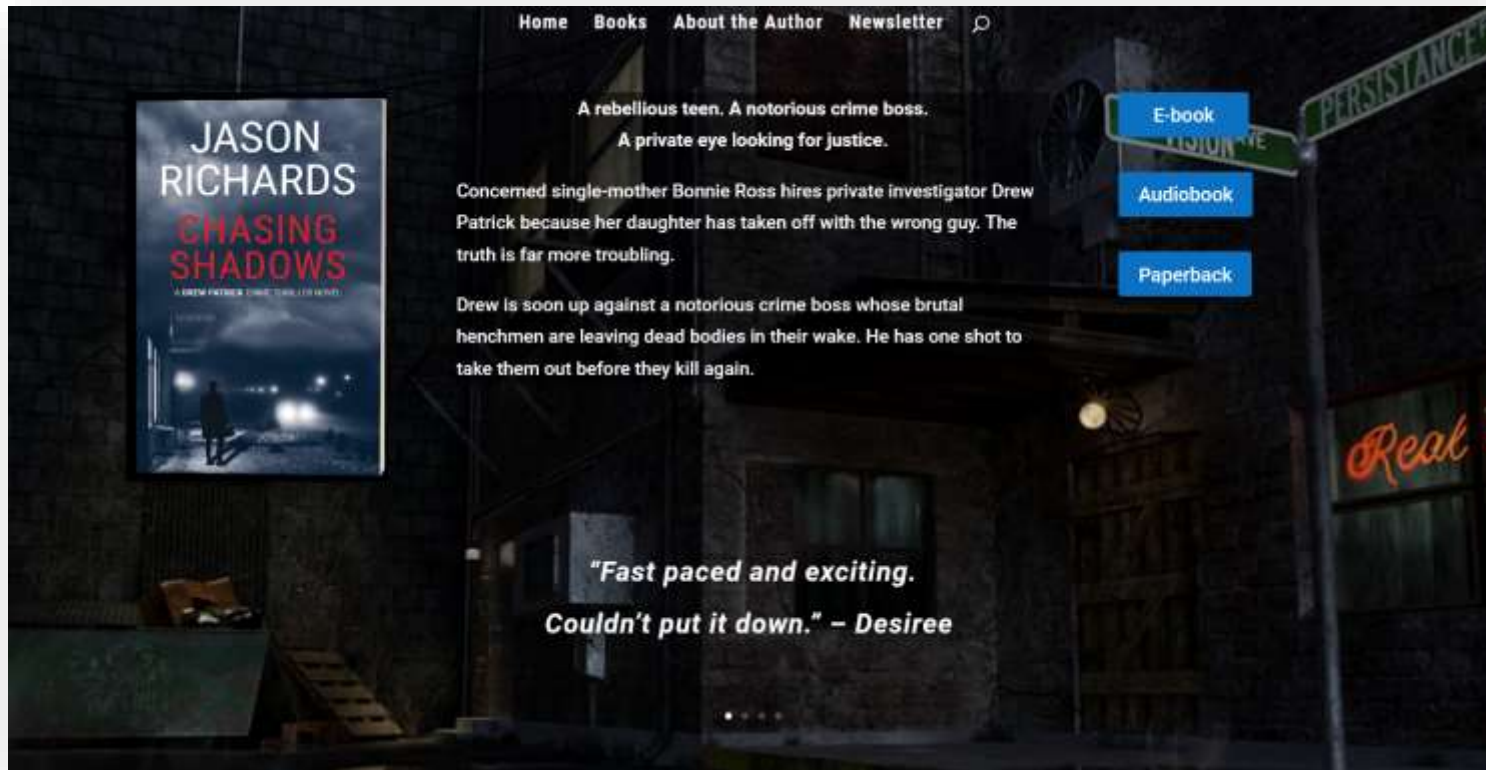
Mid-fidelity wireframe of Book Series page on a mobile phone.



Mid-fidelity wireframe of Book Series page on a tablet.

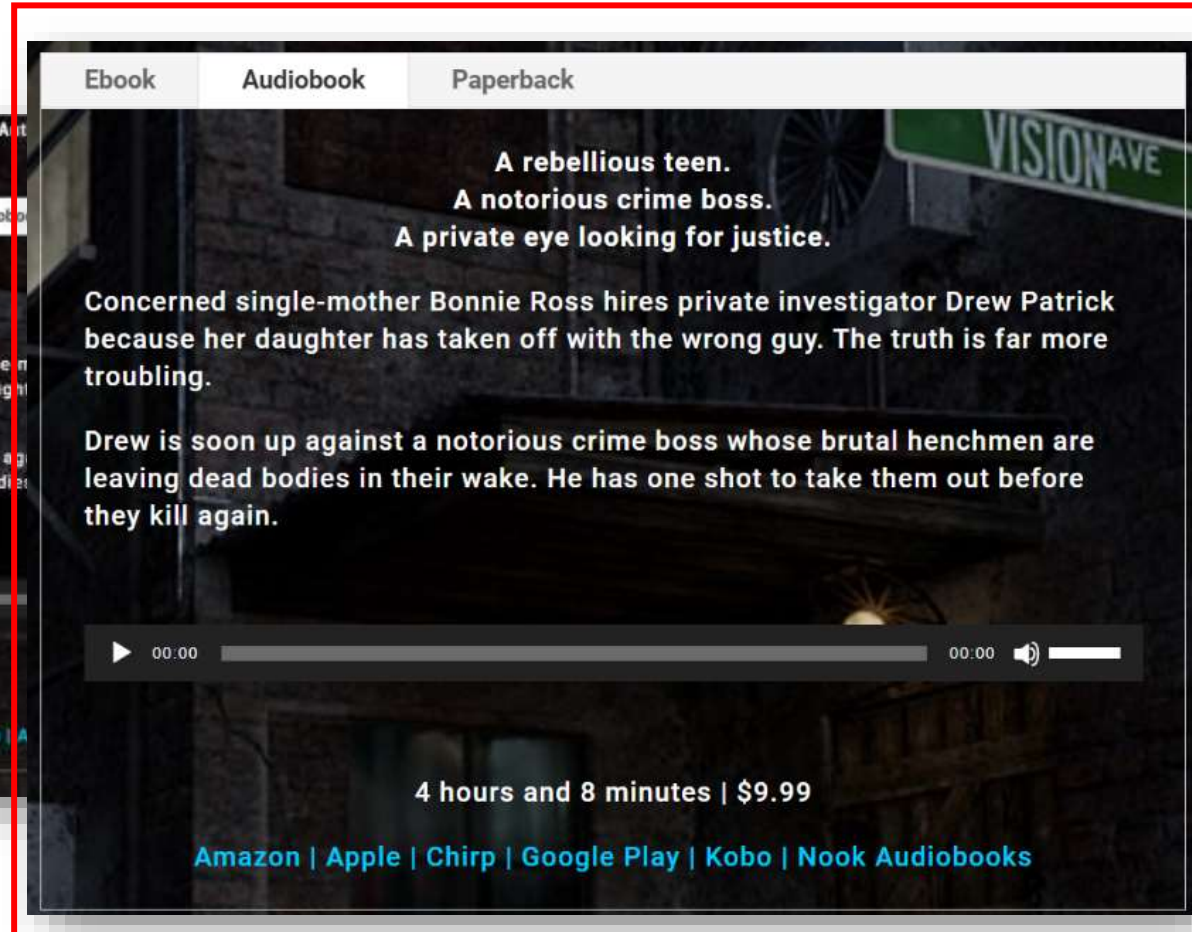


I developed a **high-fidelity clickable prototype** for an **online moderated usability test** with **10 readers**, helping me **understand readers wanted** the ability to **access details** about different **book formats** on the **book page**.



*"I can see buttons to order different types of books, but it would be nice to quickly get details on the formats, like an audiobook sample and price."*

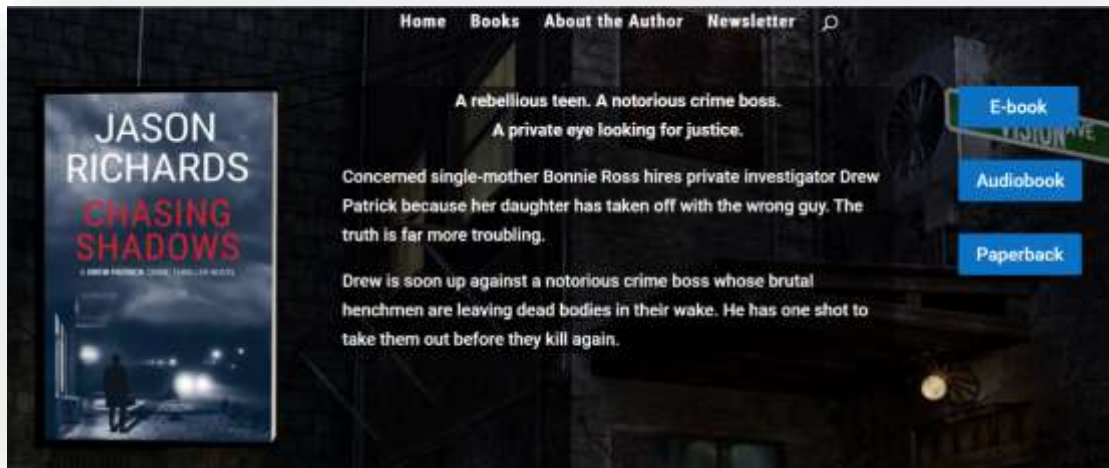
I revised the design by creating tabs for the different book format details.



Clicking/tapping on a tab reveals details for the selected book format.

I conducted an A/B preference test with 10 users, which told me the revised page provided the best user experience.

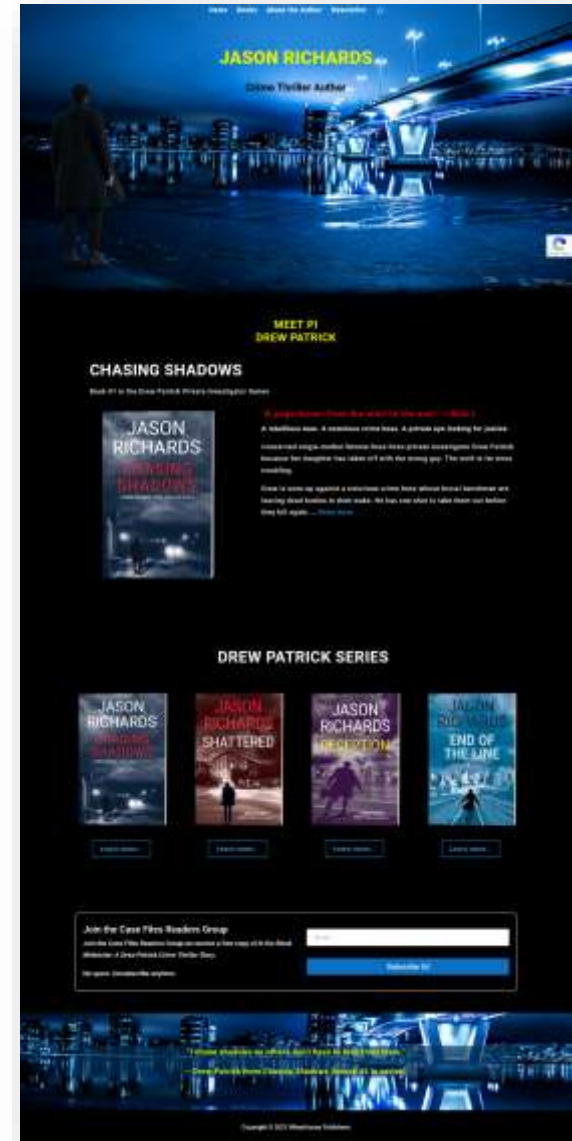
Original: Page A (Selected by 10% of users)



Revised: Page B (Selected by 90% of users)



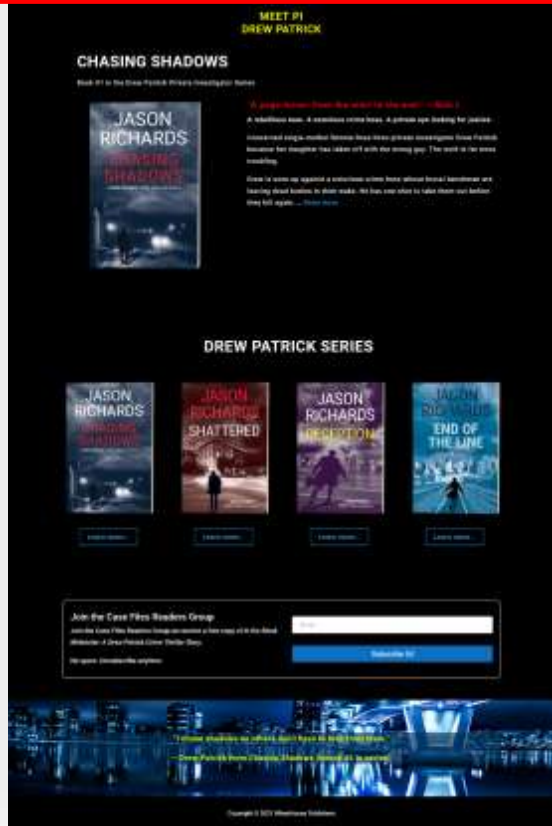
Here is how Sofia, Barbara, and Frank encounter the website in its final design. A scrollable home page allows them to scan content found on the website and then easily click to get details.





1

Home page establishes visitor is on website of Jason Richards Crime Thriller Author with hierarchy headings, a genre-fitting page image, & use of genre colors.



# HOME page

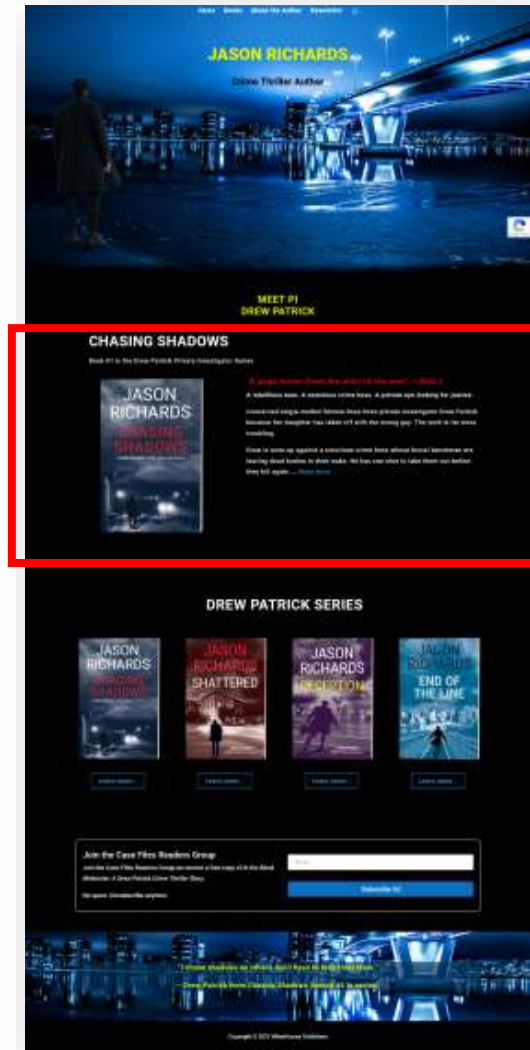


2 Navigation menu has familiar placement on page and provides quick access to site content.

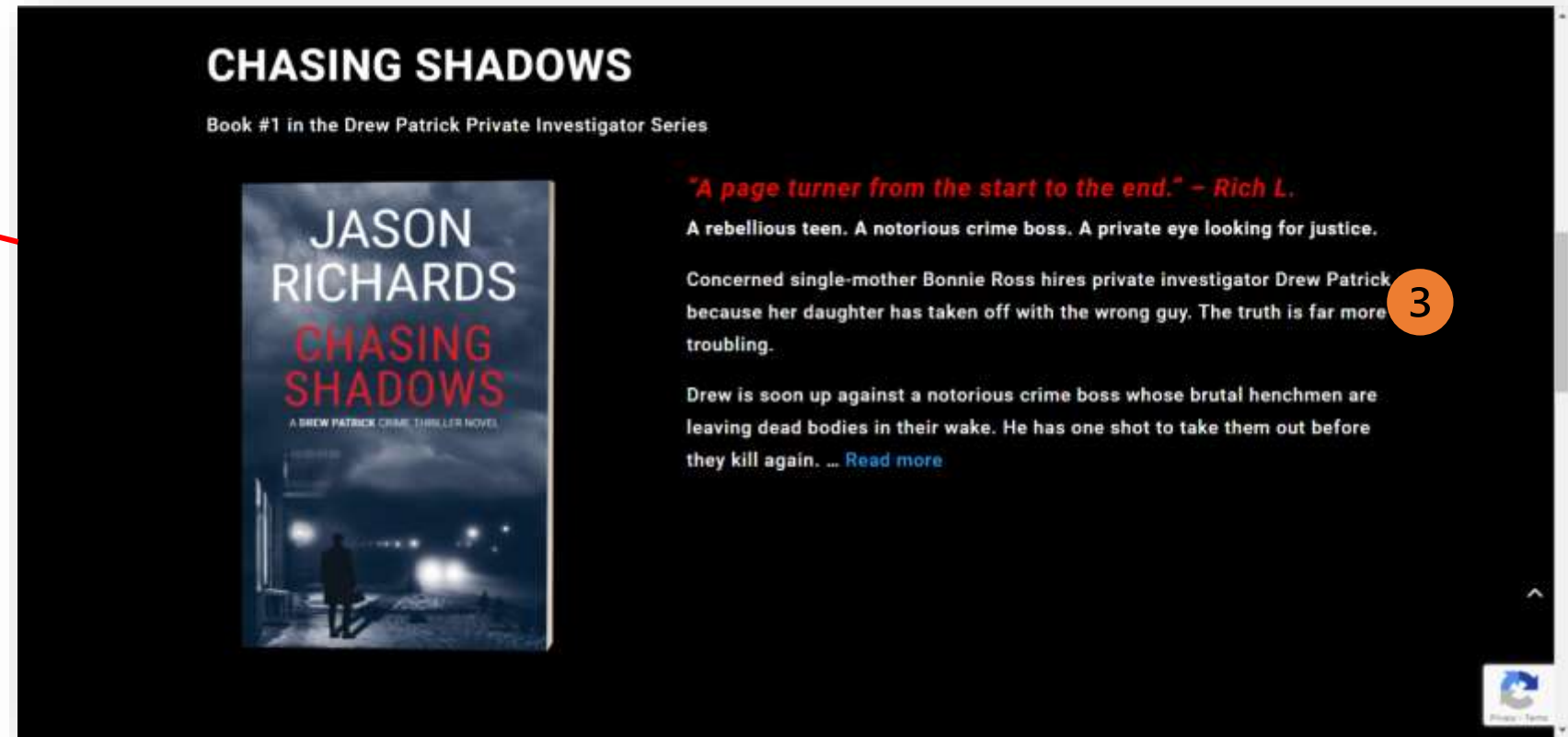




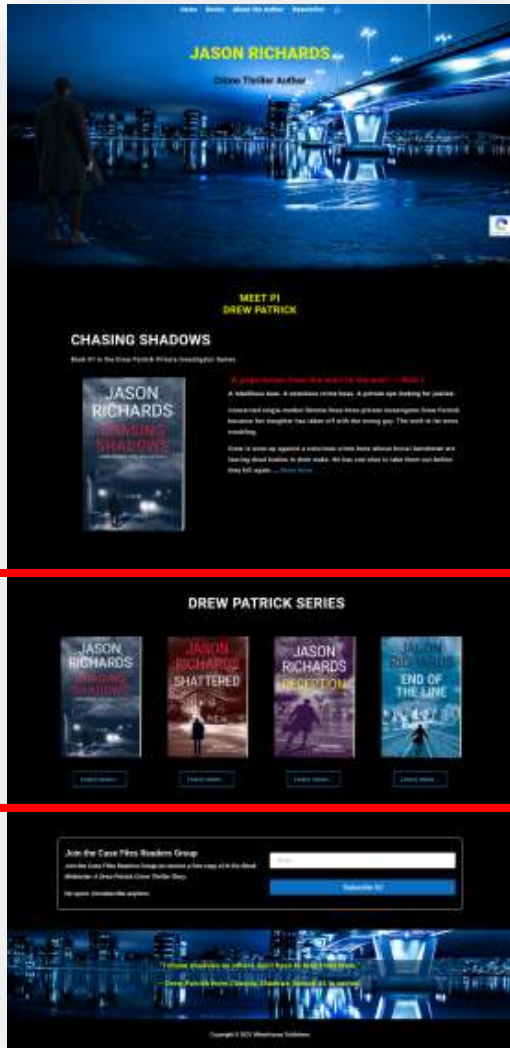
HOME page



3 Scrolling down, Sophia, Barbara, and Frank can get a summary of the featured book title and easily click a link to read more details.

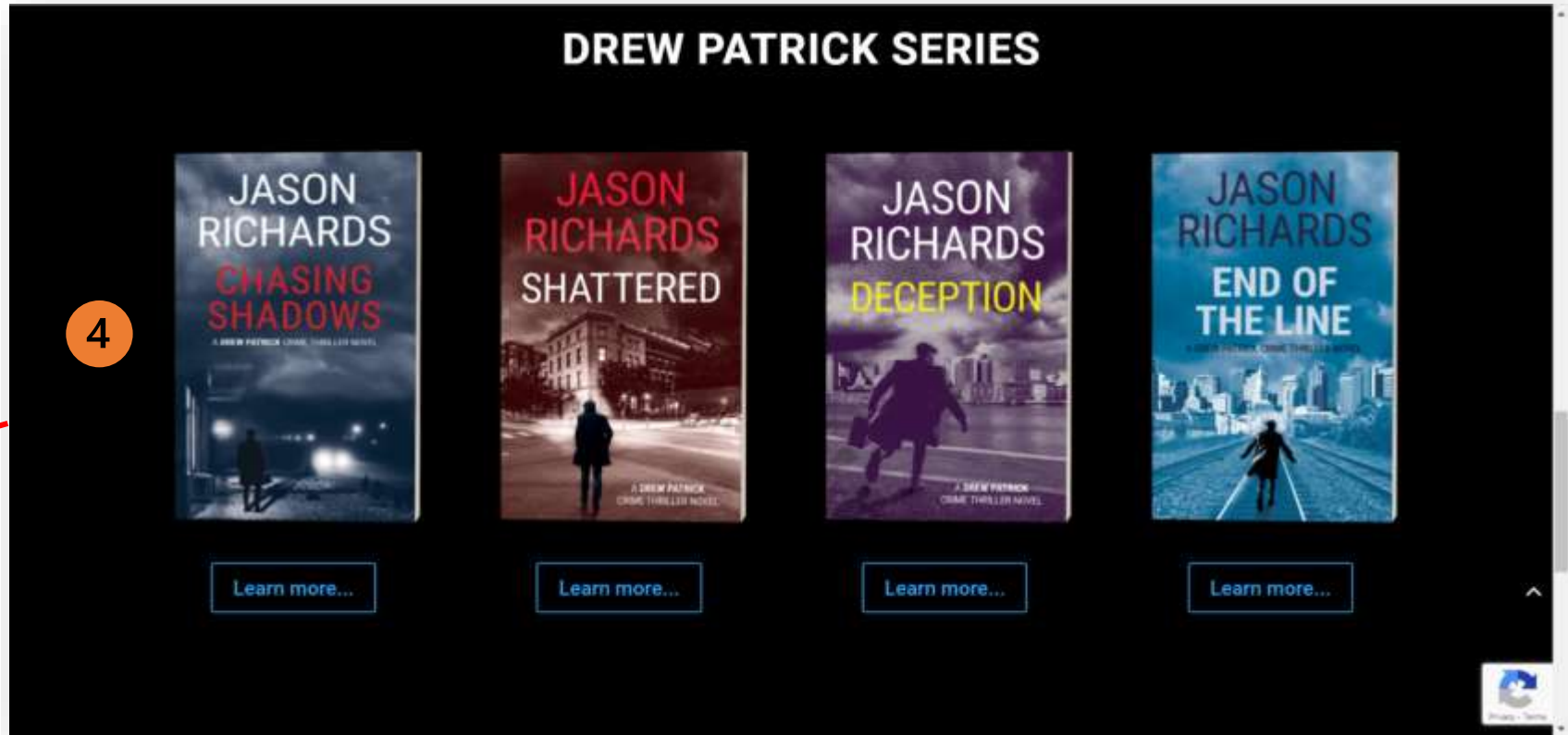


# HOME page



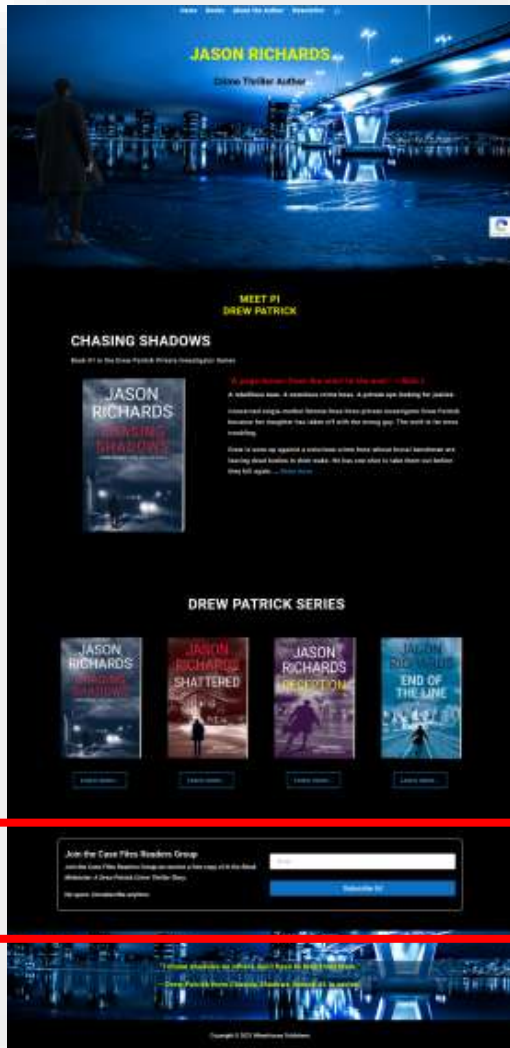
4

Scrolling down more, Sophia, Barbara, and Frank can quickly glance at the books in the series and click a CTA button to learn more about each title.



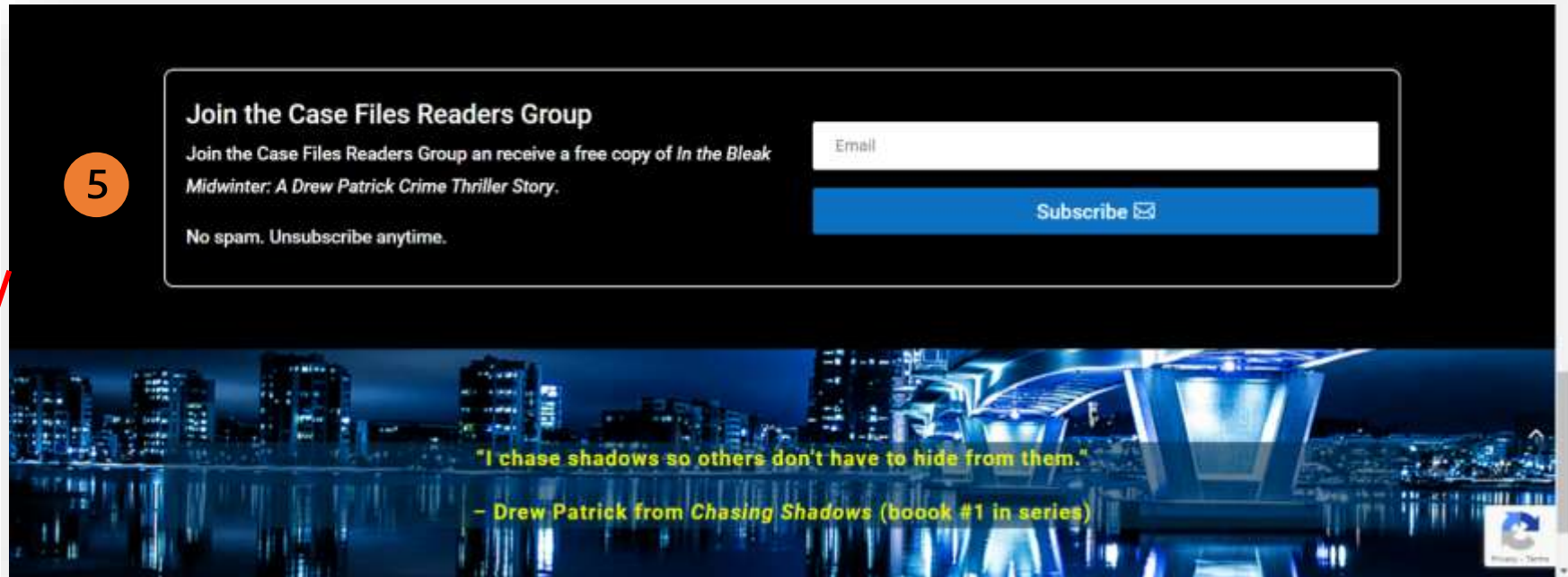
4

HOME page



5

Near the bottom of the page, Frank can subscribe to Jason’s newsletter and receive a free short story by just providing his email address (reducing user friction to join).



5

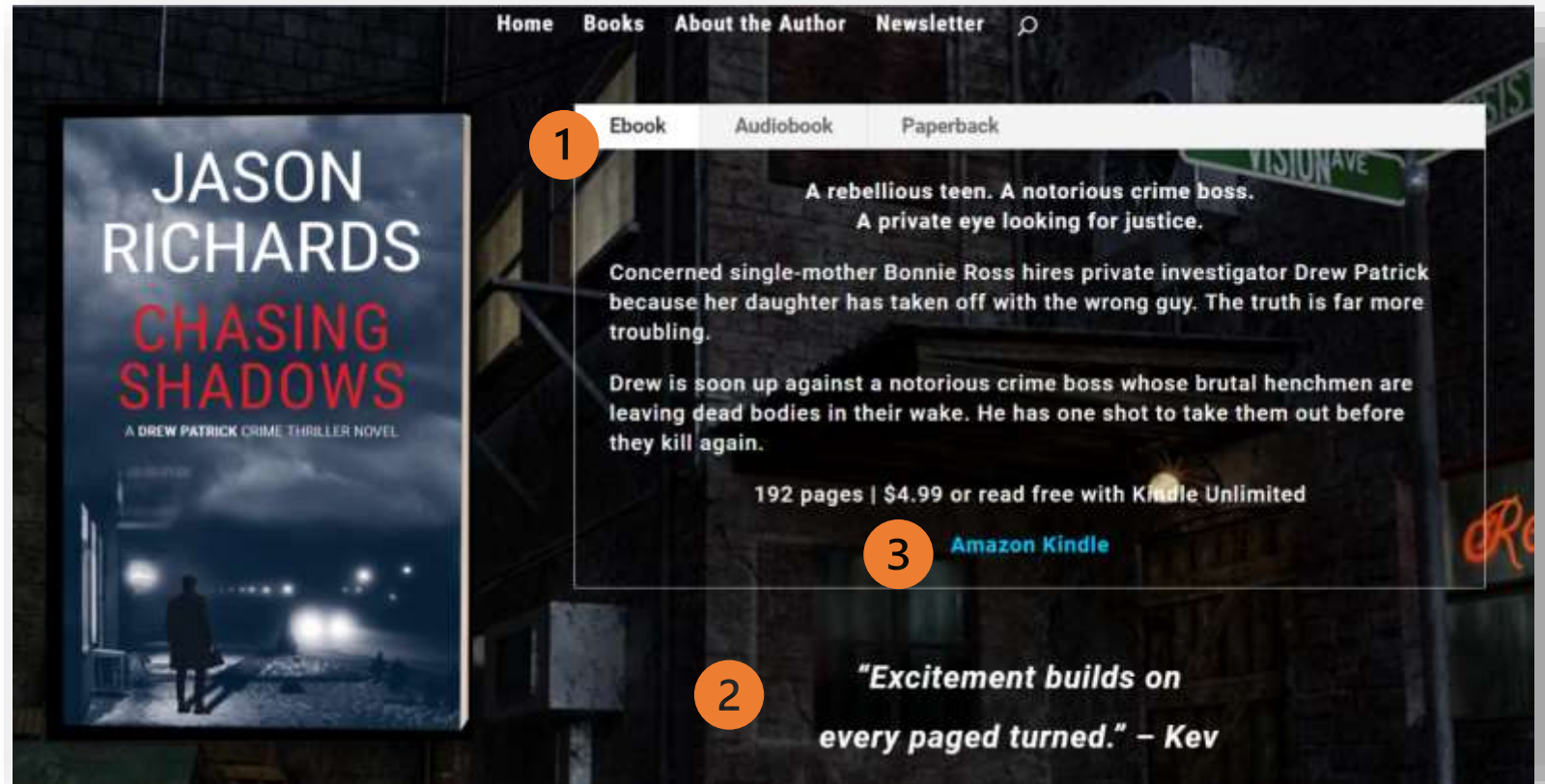
## BOOKS page



- 1** Readers like Sofia can read the premise of the series.
- 2** Covers allow Sofia to scan books in the series and the order in which they were written.
- 3** “Learn More” CTA buttons means Sofia is just one click away from getting title details.

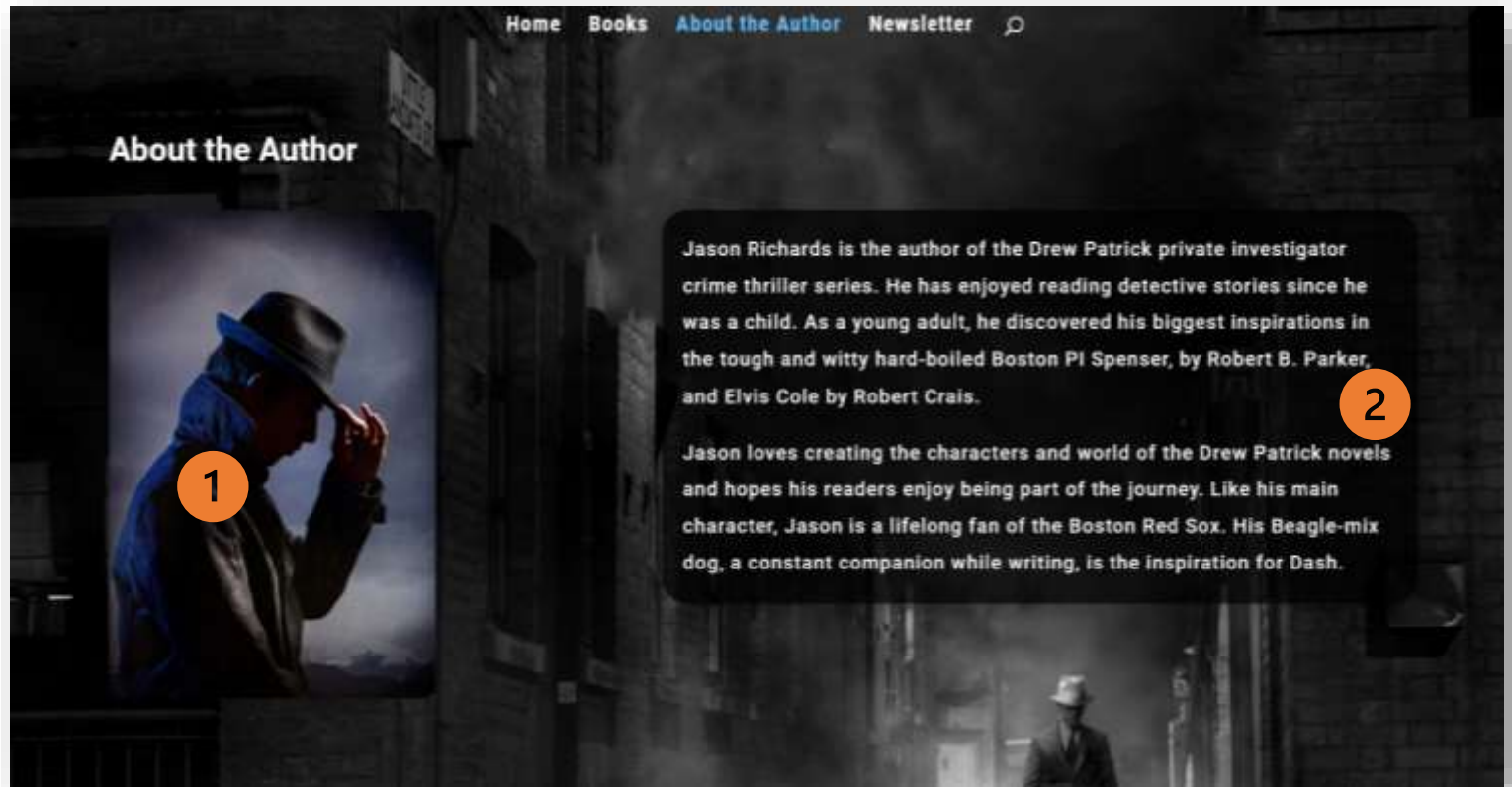
## Book Details pages

- 1 Sofia and Barbara can get book details through easy tab navigation (a revision from usability testing results).
- 2 Reader reviews are provided through an automatic slider to help Sofia and Barbara make a purchase decision.
- 3 Sofia and Barbara can click links to Amazon for quick purchase of available formats.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

- 1 An image of Jason looking every bit the detective author.
- 2 A bio lets readers know Jason writes hard-boiled detective stories, a crime thriller sub-genre, and the famous authors who inspire him.



## NEWSLETTER

Join the Newsletter for a FREE story!

**1**

**JASON RICHARDS**

**IN THE BLEAK MIDWINTER**

A DREW PATRICK CRIME THRILLER STORY

It's almost Christmas and private eye Drew Patrick is feeling jolly.

But after a mall Santa is brutally attacked, Drew finds himself up against one of Boston's most notorious loan sharks.

As he squares off against Santa's attackers, all Drew wants for Christmas is to bring them to justice – and stay alive.

In the *Bleak Midwinter* is a gripping Crime Thriller Story.

Join the Case Files Readers Group and get a FREE copy of *In the Bleak Midwinter* as your gift for joining.

No spam. You can unsubscribe anytime.

Email

**2**

Join for Your FREE Story

**3**

"Excellent read. Entertaining. Suspenseful."  
- reader Teresa

"Packed with plenty of intrigue, suspense, and action."  
- reader Mary Ellen G.

"This is a special treat when you want a, quick, satisfying read!!"  
- reader Loula44

"What a great series starter. Five stars."  
- reader Sammie

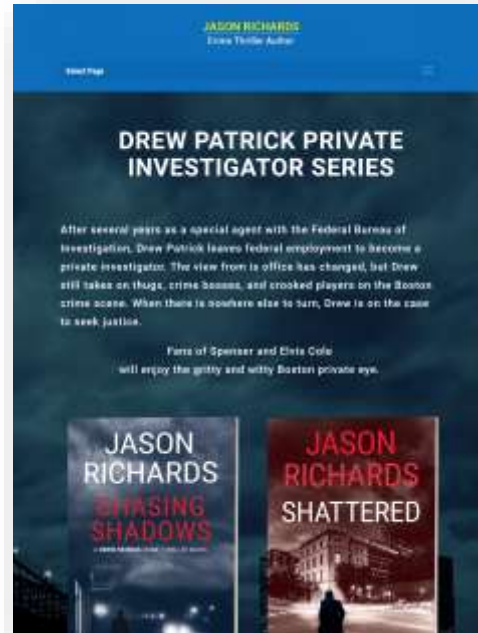
- 1** Frank can quickly learn about the free short story available to sample Jason's writing style.
- 2** Frank can get the story by only providing his email address, reducing user friction.
- 3** Reader reviews about the story provide social proof to help Frank make a decision about joining the list to get the story.

A responsive design means Sofia, Barbara, and Frank can view the website appropriately formatted across devices.

Book Series page as viewed across device screen sizes.



Mobile Phone



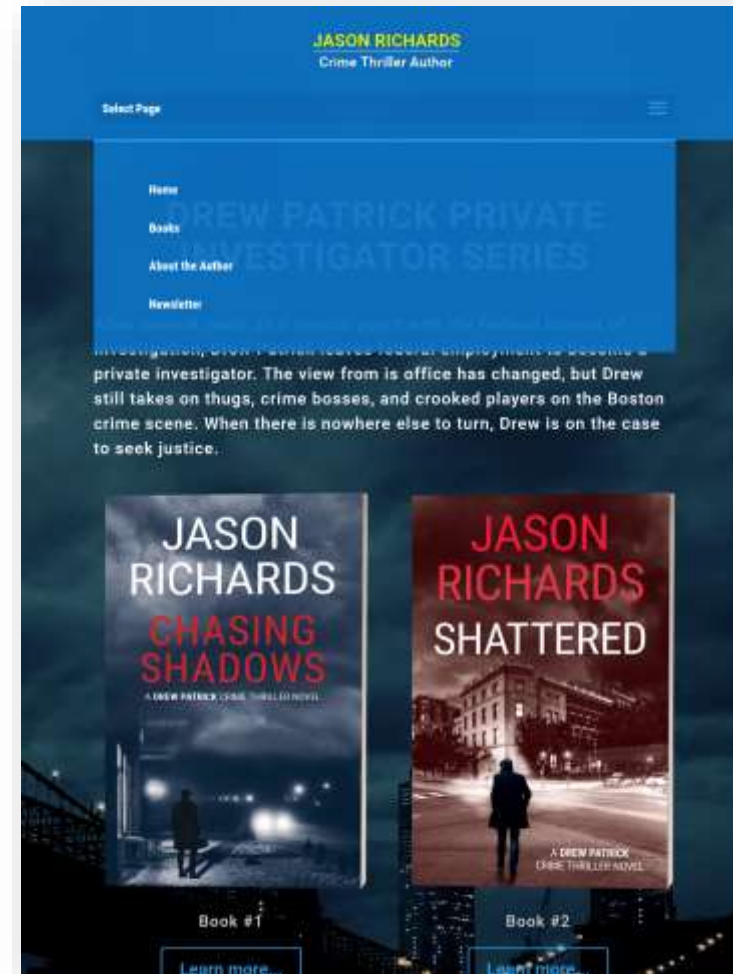
Tablet



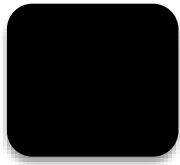
Desktop / Laptop



Mobile designs move the website heading text to the top of the screen, and a background color is added so the dropdown hamburger menu content are easily visible.



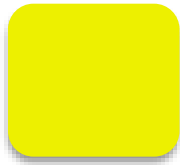
## COLOR PALETTE



#000000



#FFFFFF



#EDF000



#2898DF



#D90A00

The **color palette uses colors common across the crime thriller genre.**

The home page is a bright blue with complimentary use of black and yellow for text, followed by a black background and complimentary use of white, yellow, and red for text.

The remainder of the site uses mostly black and white as overlays against image backgrounds.

**Contrasts are carefully selected for accessibility using WCAG web accessibility standards.**

## TYPOGRAPHY

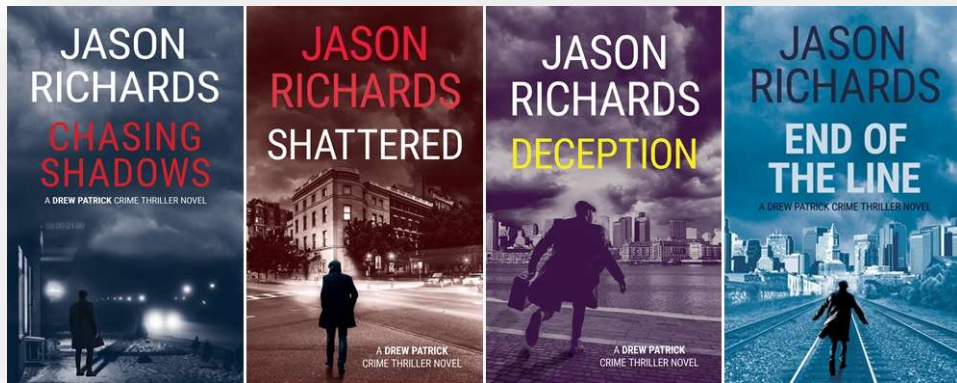
**Roboto Condensed is a popular font for thriller covers, so** I chose to use it throughout the website to match the JASON RICHARDS and crime thriller genre branding.

Roboto has a dual nature. It has a mechanical skeleton, and the forms are largely geometric. At the same time, the font features friendly and open curves. This makes for a more natural reading rhythm more commonly found in humanist and serif types.

ABCDEFGHIJKLMN  
OPQRSTUVWXYZÀÁ  
abcdefghijklmnopqr  
stuvwxyzàáéíõøü&1  
234567890(\$£€.,!?)

## IMAGES

Images feature prominently across the website to provide visual tie-in to the thriller/suspense theme.



## UI ELEMENTS



Join the Case Files Readers Group and get a FREE copy of *In the Bleak Midwinter* as your gift for joining.

No spam. You can unsubscribe anytime.

Join for Your FREE Story

Ebook	Audiobook	Paperback
<p>A rebellious teen. A notorious crime boss. A private eye looking for justice.</p> <p>Concerned single-mother Bonnie Ross hires private investigator Drew Patrick because her daughter has taken off with the wrong guy. The truth is far more troubling.</p> <p>Drew is soon up against a notorious crime boss whose brutal henchmen are leaving dead bodies in their wake. He has one shot to take them out before they kill again.</p> <p>192 pages   \$4.99 or read free with Kindle Unlimited</p> <p><a href="#">Amazon Kindle</a></p>		

### Join the Case Files Readers Group

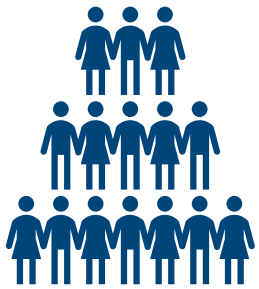
Join the Case Files Readers Group and receive a free copy of *In the Bleak Midwinter: A Drew Patrick Crime Thriller Story*.

No spam. Unsubscribe anytime.

Subscribe 

[Learn more...](#)

The website went live mid-November 2018, and in just two years it **delivered over 50,000 readers to the book series** and **driven a 27% increase in pages read through Kindle Unlimited.**



Delivered 50,000+ readers to book series



Driven 27% increase in Kindle Unlimited pages read

### **ALWAYS** keep the reader in mind!

Meeting reader expectations in the design has been **pivotal** to the **website's success** as it clearly **defines the brand** and allows users to access information without friction.

*Small changes can have a **BIG** impact.*

I was reminded of the importance of user testing as my **usability testing resulted** in a **design change**, leading to an **improved user experience** and **positive engagement** on the book pages. In an industry that has thin margins, **small changes can have a big impact.**