

Creating contact icons in a Goodreads profile page

Michael J. Sullivan [\(edit profile\)](#)



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About this author

[edit data](#)



WIN Limited editions (early release) of my next novel, Rhune: Book #1 of The First Empire Series. [Details here.](#)

After finding a manual typewriter in the basement of a friend's house, Michael J. Sullivan inserted a blank piece of paper and typed: It was a dark and stormy night. He was just eight years old at the time and mimicking Snoopy so we'll forgive the use of that overused opening. But the desire to fill the blank page and see what doors the typewriter keys would unlock wouldn't let him go. For ten years Michael developed his craft by studying authors such as Stephen King, Ernest Hemingway, and John Steinbeck. During that time he wrote thirteen novels, and after finding no traction in publishing, he quit and vowed never to write...[more](#)

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The About the Author Section

On the previous page is a screen shot of my Goodreads Author Profile. In the **About this author** section I've created three sections:

- **A button bar** - which provide convenient access to my contact information and social network pages.
- **A short promotional blurb** - which could be used to advertise the release of a recent book, provide a link to a free giveaway or short story, or inform readers how they can buy signed copies from my online store.
- **My standard author bio** – In general, I think it is best to “tell a story” rather than recite a dry list of facts such as where you grew up, where you live now, and what college you attended. Mine talks about the first time I found a typewriter and how that experience put me on the path of becoming an author.

Many authors have asked me how I created the button bar, so I created this document to explain the details. With this information you should be able to add one to your own site.

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Hypertext Markup Language (HTML)

The first thing you need to know is Goodreads supports a subset of the hypertext market up language (commonly referred to as html). You may have heard about html in reference to websites or blogs. Many people are intimidated (or confused) by html. Don't worry, I'm going to make this easy so that anyone will be able to work through this.

HTML consists of a combination of tags and text. The tags are surrounded by opening and closing "pointy brackets" (known to most people as the "less than" and "greater than" symbols used in mathematics). Here's an example `
`. These tags tell the program reading the .html to perform an action rather than display the characters between the pointy brackets. For instance the `
` shown above is used to add a "line break" which adds a blank line.

In many cases, tags appear in pairs where the second tag is preceded by a slash (/). Basically these tags pair tell the html reader when to "start doing something" and the second tag tells it when to "stop." For instance when text is surrounded by `` and `` any words between the two will appear in bold, whereas characters between `<i>` and `</i>` will be italicized.

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External References and HTML

Sometimes a .html tag can reference a file (for instance to display an image) or direct the browser to jump to display a different page from elsewhere on the Internet (a URL). We will use both of these tags for the button bar.

Let's first look at the .html for displaying an image. This type of tag is not paired. It follows this format: ``. There are other instructions that could be placed within this tag such as specifying the width or height. So for instance `` will display the image at a size of 100 pixels wide and 200 pixels tall. We won't be using this in our button bar, but I wanted to mention it in case you wanted to change the size of your buttons.

Now let's look at the .html for jumping to another page on the Internet...or what is commonly known as "a link." Links can be text (usually shown in blue and underlined), or a picture. We'll make use of a picture which is a link in our button bar. Link tags are paired and the two ends indicate where the link starts and stops. The link tag follows this format: `` and of course a `` is used to indicate the "other end" of the link's boundary. Like the image tag, you can place other instructions within the tag for instance `"target=_blank"` indicates that you should open a new window when displaying the specified URL. If you don't specify a target it will use the browser window you are currently in

You can specify an email address (rather than a URL) by preceding it with `mailto` followed by a colon (for example: `mailto:michael.sullivan.dc@gmail.com`). If you do this, you're telling the computer to start an email to that address rather than going to a page. So this html

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code will create a link that says “[Click here to email me.](#)” And when it is clicked, it will start an email.

```
<a href="mailto:michael.sullivan.dc@gmail.com">Click here to email me</a>
```

Buttons

If you were creating the button bar on your own, you would have to:

- Make graphics for each button
- Upload them to the Internet
- Find and use the URL indicating where the image “lives”

Since I already have created and posted the images, you don’t have to do this. All you need to know is the URL of each one which I’ll provide in the following table.

NOTE: Goodreads may limit the number of characters allowed in an author’s profile, and several links with long URLs can quickly eat these up. [bitly](#) (and other programs) provide “shortened” URLs. The following table shows both the long and the short version. You can use either.

	Email me	http://michaelsullivan-author.com/images/email_but.jpg http://bit.ly/1seQ86o
	My website	http://michaelsullivan-author.com/images/website_button.jpg http://bit.ly/1seWDWO
	Twitter contact	http://michaelsullivan-author.com/images/twitter_button.jpg http://bit.ly/1AZunpW
	Facebook contact	http://michaelsullivan-author.com/images/facebook_button.jpg http://bit.ly/1mo8kYF

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	Amazon authors page	http://michaelsullivan-author.com/images/amazon_but.jpg http://bit.ly/Zz11pt
	Wikipedia page	http://www.michaelsullivan-author.com/images/wiki2_button.png http://bit.ly/1wCQ6U1
	Newsletter signup link	http://michaelsullivan-author.com/images/newsletter_but.jpg http://bit.ly/XGgnEs

Your button bar doesn't have to have all of these. You can pick and choose which ones you want and also change the order of the buttons.

Links

Okay, we are just about ready to make the button bar, but first you need to get the links you wish to go to. For illustration purposes here are mine.

	Email me	mailto:michael.sullivan.dc@gmail.com
	My website	http://www.riyria.com http://bit.ly/1yl2Tip
	Twitter contact	https://twitter.com/author_sullivan http://bit.ly/1C0j1Et
	Facebook contact	https://www.facebook.com/author.michael.sullivan http://on.fb.me/1ubdNVm

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	Amazon author page	http://www.amazon.com/Michael-J.-Sullivan/e/B002BOJ41O http://amzn.to/1rcKwGj
	Wikipedia page	http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_J._Sullivan_(author) http://bit.ly/YE0IFV
	Newsletter sign up link	http://riyria.us2.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=70fef9146f3a33f45678ff951&id=2741be37f0 http://bit.ly/15Lv45W

NOTE: Remember that for the mail you have to start with mailto: Also, if you want to shorten your links – go to www.bitly.com and input your URLs for which bitly will create the shortened versions. I've provided my bitly versions as I use them in my example.

HTML for a Single Button

Okay, you should be all set now. For each button you are going to surround an image tag with the link tags. Here is an example for the email button:

```
<a href="mailto:michael.sullivan.dc@gmail.com"></a>
```

Note the following:

- Both URL's are surrounded by quotes
- Don't forget the "closing" tag

If you wanted to open the mail in a new window this is what the command would look like:

```
<a href="mailto:michael.sullivan.dc@gmail.com" target="_blank"></a>
```

Now you can pick your buttons and pair the images with the links.

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Code for my profile page

Here is the code for my Goodreads Profile Page

```
<a href="mailto:michael.sullivan.dc@gmail.com"></a><a href="http://www.riyria.com"></a><a href="http://bit.ly/1yl2Tip"><http://bit.ly/1yl2WuI"></a><a href="http://bit.ly/1C0j1Et"></a><a href="http://on.fb.me/1ubdNVm"></a><a href="http://amzn.to/1rcKwGj"></a><a href="http://bit.ly/YE0IFV"></a><a href="http://bit.ly/15Lv45W"></a><br><br><i>WIN Limited editions (early release) of my next novel, Rhune: Book #1 of The First Empire Series. <a href="http://firstempireseries.com/2014/09/18/rhune-limited-edition-giveaways/"><b>Details here</b></a></i>.
```

After finding a manual typewriter in the basement of a friend's house, Michael J. Sullivan inserted a blank piece of paper and typed: It was a dark and stormy night. He was just eight years old at the time and mimicking Snoopy so we'll forgive the use of that overused opening. But the desire to fill the blank page and see what doors the typewriter keys would unlock wouldn't let him go. For ten years Michael developed his craft by studying authors such as Stephen King, Ernest Hemingway, and John Steinbeck. During that time he wrote thirteen novels, and after finding no traction in publishing, he quit and vowed never to write creatively again.

Michael discovered that never is a very long time and ended his writing hiatus a decade later but with a condition: he wouldn't seek publication (as doing so was just too painful). Instead, he decided to write books he wanted to read and developed a fantasy series to for his then thirteen-year-old daughter, who was struggling in school due to dyslexia. After reading the third book, his wife insisted the series needed to "get out there." After Michael refused to jump back on the query-go-round, she took over the publication tasks.

Michael is one of the few authors who has successfully published through all three routes: small press, self, and big five, and he helps aspiring authors help determine the path that is best for them through is posts on publishing for [Amazing Stories Magazine](http://bit.ly/1udNp9C). Some key accomplishments of his career include:

- Three books nominated for Goodreads Choice Awards (2010, 2011, 2013)
- Named to io9's Most Successful Self-Published Sci-Fi and Fantasy authors
- Being translated to fifteen foreign languages
- Spending more than a year (and counting) on Amazon's Bestselling Fantasy Author's list
- Having his books named to more than 90 "best of" or "most anticipated" lists including those compiled by Library Journal, Barnes and Noble, Goodreads.com, and Audible.com

Today, Michael continues to fill blank pages and is working on completing the final book in his third series tentatively titled The First Empire (traditional fantasy). His first science fiction novel, Hollow World was released by Tachyon Publications in April 2014.

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I'll point out a few things about this the code in my profile:

- Notice it starts out with 7 buttons
- I could reorder the buttons by moving the `<a>` pairs
- I use two `
` commands to add some space after the buttons
- I put my “promotional text” in italics
- I include a “text link” in my promotional text
- The link in the promotional text is bolded
- The text of my bio has paragraphs and a blank line works as well as `
`
- ` ` is a “non-breaking space” and I use it to get 2 spaces after the bullets

Wrapping it up

So, there you have it. I hope this makes sense. If you do make your own button bar, drop me an email with a link to your profile so I know how many people found this helpful. If you have any problems while implementing the button bar – you can copy your code into notepad and mail it to me at michael.sullivan.dc@gmail.com and I'll try to see what you are doing wrong.

Enjoy!