



PUBLISHING 101

HOW IT ALL
WORKS, AND
WHERE YOU FIT IN

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ONCE UPON A TIME, NOT SO LONG AGO...

- We checked out books at the library
- We bought books at the local bookstore
- We held books in our hands
- We waited to get our news until the newspaper or magazines arrived, or for a specific time on the radio or TV
- We went to movies at the theater or the drive-in, or rented them from Blockbuster... or waited for them to come to television
- If we missed a favorite TV show and forgot to record it, we had to wait for reruns



ONCE UPON A TIME, NOT SO LONG AGO...

- Book publishers made their money on the backlist
- Book publishing was the primary business of these companies, which typically were family- or privately owned
- Publishing house editors worked to develop new writers with promise
- Midlist writers could make a reliable income
- Generally, self-publishers had written family books or weren't good enough to get published traditionally and had a lot of money



THEN EVERYTHING CHANGED!

- We get what we want – news, entertainment, whatever – when and where and how we want it
- Large publishing houses are owned by larger conglomerates looking for sure-fire, short-term profits
- The midlist is dead
- With new technologies, anyone can self-publish very inexpensively... and some once-traditionally published authors are choosing to go that route



BUT WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE ME?

- What are your goals?
 - To entertain/inform/inspire?
 - To meet the reader's needs... or your own?
- What does success look like to you?
 - Smiles on your children's or grandchildren's faces?
 - Your book in a bookstore?
 - Fan mail, likes, and compliments?
 - Showing a profit?
- How much time/money are you willing to commit to achieve that success? Are you in this for the long haul?



THE ABCS OF TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

- Do your research
 - Read in your genre, especially authors who were first published by traditional publishers in the past three to five years
 - Spend time, online or real time, with others who write in your genre – to a point--and get in a good critique group
 - Read writers' magazines and online guides – to a point
 - Check out Amazon or your local bookstore; who publishes books like yours?
- Write – and show it to the world
 - Start a blog, submit a short story, publish an essay. Finish something, and share it
 - Write – and rewrite – on a regular basis. Develop a thick skin



SOME NOTES ABOUT PUBLISHING HOUSES

- The large, general publishers are looking for big books, generally by big names, represented by big agents
- It's hard to get an agent for a contract that doesn't involve a substantial advance (say, \$5,000 to \$10,000); with those small- to midsize publishers, you're probably going to end up doing your own book proposal (just as you would for an agent)



SOME NOTES ABOUT AGENTS

- They get paid when you get paid – not for sending out your work (12-15%)
- They should be members of the Association of Authors' Representatives (www.aar-online.org) or ascribe to AAR's canon of ethics
- They need to have identifiable sales to publishers within your genre
- They should be in it for the long haul – for your career development – not for a single sale
- Networking is helpful; meet agents at conferences or through fellow writers/mentors



THE SUBMISSION PROCESS

- Query letter: Three paragraphs – hook (compelling what-if premise for fiction; compelling market need for non-fiction; title); exposition (how will the book meet the need, how will the novel answer the what-if; word count); why you're the one to write it
- Book proposal: synopsis (max. 5 pages) for fiction, project description/chapter outline for nonfiction; fleshes out the story/ provides a rundown on how the book's content will be organized
- First novels must be finished (including revisions) when you begin the submission process



THE SUBMISSION PROCESS

- Comparative/competitive analysis: a non-fiction staple and increasingly important part of fiction proposals; three to five books similar to yours published in the past three or so years and written by an author with credentials similar to yours; the book should have done well (based on Amazon ratings); explain how yours is different/unique
- Marketing plan/resume/platform/endorsements: include speaker experience/connections/people who will cheerlead your book along with you



SELF-PUBLISHING

- Make sure your book looks like the others in its category (word length, is the mystery solved, does the guy get the girl, etc.)
- Comparison shop; make a list of what's important to you (e-book and audio book support? Layout? Cover design? Editing?)
- Ask for references... and look on Amazon for other authors who used their services
- Don't cheap out; use an experienced cover designer, not your artist son, and hire at minimum an experienced proofreader, not your friend who's an English teacher
- Make sure you understand when you'll get paid and on what



GREAT RESOURCES

- www.WritersMarket.com
- [Poets & Writers](#)
- [Publishers Weekly](#)
- [Publishers Marketplace](#)
- [Association of Authors' Representatives](#)
- [Writer Beware](#)
- John Kremer's Book Marketing and Book Promotion [site](#)
- Dan Poynter's [self-publishing resources](#)
- Genre-specific writers' organizations ([Romance Writers of America](#), [Society of Children's Book Writers & Illustrators](#), [Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America](#), [Mystery Writers of America](#), etc.)
- Regional organizations ([New Jersey Authors' Network](#), [Eastern Shore Writers Association](#), etc.)



DON'T FORGET...

... to have fun! Because if it's not fun, don't do it. Life is too short!

Thanks for coming!



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