

writers

GUIDE TO
GETTING
STARTED



You have an idea for a great book, now what do you do?

Start by writing your manuscript.

Once your book is written, now it's time to work with a professional editor to create a polished piece of work. I would NOT recommend sending out your work without working on it with someone else. You can contact my editor, she freelances and comes highly recommended! You can also look into joining a local Writer's Group for support.

Professional Content Editor:

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What is a Query Letter?

There is quite a bit of lingo that comes with writing books. One of them is a Query Letter. This is a formatted letter that will go out with or prior to sending out your manuscript. You can google to find out the format. Stick to it! Double check agent and publisher websites for specific submission guidelines.

Marketing:

Another thing to think about is Marketing, To sell your book, you will either need to do your own marketing or hire someone. Marketing needs to happen for your book to sell!

Learn about the Market



There are three resources I recommend you become familiar with...

1. *Children's Book Authors and Illustrator's Market*: This book is published each year. It lists current publishers and editors along with what their needs are and advice on how to submit your manuscript.
2. Similar information can be found at www.writersmarket.com I like this site because you can choose to only sign up on a monthly basis.
3. www.scbwi.org The Michigan site is great for information on local writing conferences and joining a Writer's Group.

Know the different types of Publishers:

1. Vanity Press or Subsidy Publisher
A Subsidy Publisher distributes books under its imprint. Authors are to pay for everything from editing the manuscript, illustrations, printing and marketing. Any publisher that requests a fee from the author is considered a subsidy or vanity publisher. Authors do not receive royalties but have the copyright of their books and can sell them on their own. In most cases, a small percentage of royalties will go to the publisher from book sales.

2. Traditional Publisher
A Traditional Publisher distributes books under its imprint. It handles the cost of producing manuscripts, editing, illustrations, printing, marketing, distribution, etc. The author is not expected to pay any of these costs. The books are owned by the publisher and remain in the publisher's possession until sold. The author receives a portion of sales in the form of royalties.

3. Self Publisher
The term Self-Publishers today is used mainly to denote a class of publishers who strictly use Print on Demand technology to keep inventory at a minimum.

4. Independent Publisher
An Independent Publisher pays for the cost of designing, printing, and distributing their book. Frequently, an author forms and registers a publishing imprint. Independently published books are the property of the author and usually remain in the author's possession; all sales proceeds belong to the author as well as all of the money to produce the book.

Information from:
www.thebookconnection.com

Ask yourself: What is my goal in writing this book?



What do you want to do with this book?

This is the soul searching you really have to do before taking the leap in publishing a book. Are you writing a book just to have it sold at a bookstore? From my experience, I have learned that there is a very small profit if this is your main goal. In order to be successful in the slightest bit, marketing must be done on your book. One way to do this, is by attending book signings. The most common split with book stores is 65% for them, a cut for the distributor, a cut for the publisher, then you are left with less than 8%.

How would I answer the question above? I had a message to share when I wrote my first book, *Spaghetti In A Hot Dog Bun*. I will not stop until I feel that as many people as possible have heard my message. I spread the word by speaking to Girl Scout Troops, Preschool, Elementary and Middle school students, attending book signings, library visits, giving parent and teacher workshops, etc. After three years, I have found that speaking engagements is where you can make a profit in this business.

For Young Authors:

In the back of the book, *Children's Writer's and Illustrator's Market*, there is a special section listing places where children can submit their manuscripts to get published.

Finding an Agent

Many authors think having an agent is a money trap. I am currently looking for one and believe they are the key to finding the "right" publisher to print your work. Yes, they take a certain percent of your profits, but the pay off to having a good connection with a publisher is worth it. You can find a Literary Agent by looking at any of the three resources I mentioned on page one of this document. Most agents want to first see a "Query Letter" before reading your manuscript. Again, start by getting your work professionally edited before submitting to agents and publishers.