

Information in a Nutshell™
WRITING AND PUBLISHING

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Information in a Nutshell™: Writing and Publishing

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my family, who puts up with my latest “great idea” and crazy working schedule when I have a deadline. It is also dedicated to all of you who have wanted to write and become published but didn’t know where to begin. I pray this little book is an answer to your prayers.

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INTRODUCTION

Sometimes the best-laid plans never come to fruition, and at other times, life leads you down another road. That sums up my writing career. I had not planned to be an author; then, when I did plan to be one, I was married, had a young child, and had no time to write. I tried to grab a few minutes here and there and waited for the day when I'd have time to dedicate to this endeavor. Well, the time never came, yet I have authored sixteen titles, many of which have received recognition. I have effectively run my own self-publishing business since 1994. It's been an adventure.

I have successfully sold my own books and published several other authors. I have been a consultant for authors desiring to become published; several were scientists, and one had his Ph.D. I was happy to help them fulfill their dreams and meet the needs of readers seeking quality materials.

Before writing a word of this book, I took my own advice that I've given to other would-be authors: I researched the need for this book. What was I going to offer my readers that they couldn't find in the hundreds of other titles written on getting published or self-publishing? I wrestled with this question for months. Truthfully, this is one of the hardest books I've ever written.

I own a shelf full of titles dealing with writing, publishing, and marketing, some of them five, ten, and even twenty years old. I glanced through these books and purchased some of the newest titles available. I then had my answer: there was definitely a need for this book! If I had read some of those books as a beginning author, I doubt I would have continued. Don't get me wrong: these books contain valuable information, but much of it is unnecessary for a new author to read right away.

I will focus on jump-starting your career, whether as an author wanting to become published by a traditional publishing company or as a self-publisher. I want this book to be an encouragement for you. This may have been a lifelong dream, or perhaps you are new to the idea of publishing. The only person standing in the way of your completed project is you! Understanding the mechanics of writing and publishing is only part of the formula. Having the will, drive, and ambition to get the job done is also essential.

In this book I hope to accomplish many things, but the first is in the spirit of this series title: to give you the information you need in a nutshell. You will find detailed questions to answer in every chapter. These will give you a road map to launching your project successfully. I hope to give you the confidence to write your

own book, get it published, and avoid some of the problems I've encountered. I'll also alert you to scams that are rampant in the publishing world. As the saying goes, if something looks too good to be true, it probably is.

I have included an extensive list of online resources which provide valuable information for writers and publishers. This list represents literally hundreds of hours of work! Remember that the Internet is a place to be cautious. I've done my best to include only the websites that I feel are trustworthy.

Writing and publishing a book is within your grasp. In the pages to follow, I will share insider's information and my publishing knowledge with you.

CHAPTER 1

BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING STEPS TO PUBLISHING

Before you begin writing, there are many things you need to know. This can be an overwhelming process because there are so many different roads to choose. It's often difficult to know where to start. As an encouragement, I want you to know that I had only two things going for me when I wrote my first book: a platform from which to sell and sheer drive. I printed the first few editions of my books at a local office supply store. I used basic shapes for the cover and drew some of it myself (no scanner in those days). I chose a bright cardstock and had my books comb-bound. Amazingly, they sold! They now sport four-color glossy covers and are perfect bound. If I'm still in business with that inauspicious start, think about what you can do with help from this book. Rest assured that the following

information is designed to encourage and not discourage you!

Here are the basic steps to writing and getting published:

1. Know your market.
2. Write the book.
3. Find an agent (or skip to step 5).
4. The agent finds a publisher for the manuscript (skip to step 6).
5. Self-publish your book.
6. The book is printed!
7. Market your book.

If only it were that easy. There are a lot of in-between steps that must be taken in order to see your book in print. It isn't as hard as it seems, but it will take lots of work. Writing a book is the easy part. Getting it into print—if you are looking for a traditional publisher—will be the hard part. Of course it can be done; there are many published authors. I have had the experience of self-publishing and being offered a four-book contract by a science publisher. I turned down the publisher and opted to publish myself. This is not to say that was the best decision of my life, but it was the right decision at that time. The main reason was the time factor of having my books ready for upcoming conferences where I was speaking. I may decide at some point to seek an agent and publisher.

This book is geared to both the self-publisher and the author who wants to try to find an agent and publisher for his work. You should decide which way you want to go; I leave that decision to

you. I have the information needed for you to be a success! Not everyone needs to self-publish, but the option is there. The writing process is pretty direct. For some of the steps the order doesn't really matter, but other steps are obviously sequential.

PUBLISHING STEPS IN A NUTSHELL

Agent/Publishing House

1. Know your market.
2. Research agents that represent the same type of books you wish to write.
3. No Agent? Research publishers willing to take writers without an agent.
4. For a fiction book, write it, place copyright info on every page, let others read it, and revise according to their suggestions.
5. For a nonfiction book, write a book proposal (but don't send it out yet).
6. For both fiction and nonfiction, write a query letter and send to an agent or agents.
7. Wait the required time for the agent to get back to you.
8. If he is interested, send him your nonfiction book proposal or fiction manuscript according to his instructions.
9. Wait to hear from the agent.
10. Repeat steps 6-9 with other agents on your list, until you find an agent who will work with you. This process can take from six months to two years.

11. You get an agent!
12. The agent submits your book proposal to various publishers.
13. Keep in touch with your agent.
14. Agent sells the manuscript! (This can take up to an additional year.)
15. Agent gets you a contract with an advance.
16. If your book is fiction, it's ready to send to the publisher. If it is nonfiction, you are writing furiously (or you took the time to write it beforehand anyway) and you send it off.
17. Go through the editorial process of working with an editor and revising your book.
18. The publisher chooses an illustrator or graphic artist. They show you the cover and work; sometimes they allow your input.
19. The book is printed! (This can be another year.)
20. Help with marketing and wait for royalties.

The minimum production time if you get an agent within 6 months of your first query letter is 2-3 years to see your book in print.

Self-Publishing

1. Know your market.
2. Research, research, research your topic.
3. Write a book proposal (optional).
4. Write the book and place copyright information on every page.
5. Let friends, relatives, and anyone else whose opinion you value read and critique the book. If it is nonfiction, try to find an expert in the field to review it
6. Check with several offset printers for the best price to print your books. Hire one, and obtain specification requirements for the cover and interior page layout.
7. Obtain an ISBN.
8. Hire an illustrator or graphic artist for the cover art and perhaps to design the layout of the text.
9. Hire a very, very good editor and send him the manuscript.
10. While the book is being edited, begin marketing.
11. Hire someone to create a website and an e-mail account with your website name (e.g., felice@mediaangels.com).
12. Decide on the retail price of your book.
13. Review and revise your manuscript when it's returned from the editor.
14. Resubmit it to the editor and re-edit (optional) or have skilled friends proofread it for typos.
15. Begin marketing and send out rough drafts for feedback or reviews.
16. Lay out your book using the specifications from your printer,

or give it to the graphic artist to lay out.

17. Check with the illustrator and approve the cover art.
18. Send the manuscript to the printer and self-publish your book.
19. The book is printed!
20. Market your book.

These lists give you a place to begin. The following chapters will fill in the gaps, and I hope to explain each of these steps in some detail. Remember, this book is to jump-start you into the process of writing and publishing; it is not exhaustively detailed.

The resource section of this book contains websites where you can find much more information related to writing and publishing. I've also listed some of my favorite reference books. Now that you know the steps, it's time to begin.

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH YOUR BOOK IDEA

As an author, if you are a prolific and proficient reader you will be steps ahead of the crowd. You will be required to read vast amounts in order to research. Do you want to write fiction? If so, read every book you can get your hands on that is similar to the fiction you want to write. Know your genre inside and out. Do you have a nonfiction book idea? Now is the time to research and fine-tune that idea.

Either way, before you write one line of a book, you should answer the questions below. Don't worry if you've already started or completed your manuscript. Answering these questions will still be valuable. If you are writing nonfiction, it will help you in writing your book proposal and query letter (see chapter 4). If you are writing fiction, it will help you in writing your query letter.

Think carefully and research before answering these questions:

1. Is there a market for this book?
2. What is selling now?
3. What is your platform for selling?
4. How will your book be a benefit over your competition?
5. Why are you the person to write this book?

If you can answer the first five questions, you are on your way to becoming successful . . . right? Well, answering these questions truthfully will definitely put you in the right direction. With some time and research, you can gauge the feasibility of your book project. There are many more aspects you need to consider, but this will jump start the entire process.

I have personally fine-tuned the publishing process through the years. Normally I jot down my answers, not necessarily in full sentences. Now it's your turn. Take out some paper, a notebook, or your computer and answer the questions above to the best of your ability. You should take your time and research your answers. Keep the information to one page if possible. This is just a beginning; it is not necessary to have every detail worked out at this point. You can keep adding to this as you come up with more information.

My first books just happened. I had no idea what I was doing;

I just did it, basically due to the fact that I had a platform from which to sell. In my first year on the speaker's circuit, I was invited to every conference I applied to attend. I was chosen as a guest speaker and even, to my surprise, as a keynote speaker. I was invited to speak based on my resumé, which included years of teaching and speaking experience, and a list of people to contact for referrals. Next, I came up with a title and wrote a book. My book was a natural progression from a series of talks and workshops I had previously given.

While the path I followed is not something I recommend because of the publishing mistakes I made, from a marketing standpoint this is exactly what you want to happen. Having more will than experience, I jumped in and paid the price, literally, by making several bad choices. The first was not researching my publishing options more thoroughly; the second was rushing to print copies of a book that was not professionally edited (more on this later). In the end, I gave away more copies than I sold.

By researching the questions listed above, you can avoid costly mistakes. Let's look at these in detail.

1. Is there a market for the book you want to write?

You can easily do a keyword search on the Internet using a good search engine. I tend to search for variations of the topic I plan to write about. This is an excellent tool to see if the market exists. Obviously if the topic is broad, such as this book on writing and publishing, you need to be specific. When I type in my keywords, I often use quotation marks. That tells the search engine to focus on all of these words together, not individually. If that brings up no

information, then I search without the quotation marks.

I used keyword searches such as:

“writing and publishing in a nutshell”

“information on writing in a nutshell”

“writing and publishing just the facts”

“writing for beginners”

From my experience in speaking with countless potential authors, I know that there are quite few people who want to write and be published. One year after a conference seminar on teaching children to write, more parents asked me about publishing than about the curriculum needs of their children. This was and still is a very hot topic.

Look for books similar to the type you want to write. Remember to check online bookstores, including Christian ones, if that is your market. What books are listed as their top sellers? Make note of the ones that are similar to what you want to write.

2. What is selling now?

This can be broad or specific. If you have a book idea, see what the competition has written. How is it selling? Check the hits on competitors’ websites. Some online book stores rate a book’s popularity. If you don’t have a book idea, this is a way to start those creative juices going. Check out the following popular websites for information on current bestsellers:

New York Times: *www.nytimes.com*

USA Today: *www.usatoday.com*

Publishers Weekly: *www.publishersweekly.com*

Writer's Digest: *www.writersdigest.com* (requires subscription)

Christian Writer's Market: *www.christianwritersmarket.com*

Writer's Market: *www.writersmarket.com*

There is controversy over whether or not the best-selling list truly reflects the books that sell the most. I am sure there is some bias there, but people tend to follow what they read in advertising. If they think a book is a best seller they may buy it, whether or not actual sales confirm the book's status.

You may wish to research the current favorites by demographics. Who are your readers? Are they grandparents, teens, or young parents? What geographic location do they live in? This information may help you in gearing your book for that target group.

Nonfiction books always have a readership, as evidenced by the numbers that line the shelves at the local bookstores. Notice what titles have prominent displays. The book publishers pay dearly for those and won't spend the money unless they believe the profits will be large. What sections have the most books or the most people congregated around the shelves? If the exercise and diet section are large, examine the titles.

I traveled to my neighborhood bookstore, where the shelves were lined with diet books (it is getting close to summer), how-to books, get-rich quick books, and books about spirituality, money,

power, or wealth. Prominently displayed on the fiction side were romances with a historical bent, young people's novels, fantasy chapter books for grades one through five, fiction in exotic locales, mystery, and adventure.

A good indication of what is selling is the number of books in the same genre you are interested in writing. If there are lots of books on a particular topic, there must be a market, or the publishers wouldn't spend the dollars to put them on the shelf. What angle will you take with your book to make it stand out from the crowd? This question needs careful consideration.

3. What is your platform for selling?

This is an important part of any book and one that is often neglected. Selling is the most difficult part of publishing and there is no way you can escape this fact. Even if you receive a book contract with a seasoned publisher, you will still be required to do your part to move book sales.

What is your experience? Have you been a paid speaker or generated crowds and rave reviews at local Toastmasters club? Do you have the inside scoop on a new, quick way to learn a foreign language? Setting up speaking events and other types of sales-generating workshops is the key. I know of a self-published novelist whose wife sets up book-signing events all across the United States. This is his second novel, and he has a following and name recognition by word of mouth. He has done extremely well, but he has worked hard for every sale.

Have you had success with other endeavors? I know of a

university professor with a Ph.D. in nuclear chemistry who began writing science textbooks for homeschoolers. He took difficult subjects and made them easy for students to follow with little teacher input. These were the first easy-to-use science textbooks specifically for homeschool and Christian schools. He has been very successful, and the books are a big hit. He travels and speaks at many homeschool conferences each year and has regularly been invited as a keynote speaker.

4. How will your book be a benefit over your competition?

This question is important. I dislike reinventing the wheel. If there is a good product out there and it is selling well, why would anyone need another? I wrestled with this question in writing the book you are now holding. My goal was to be brief and to the point, and I didn't see another product other than brief topical downloads online that came near to what I wanted to accomplish.

I also like to see innovative products. When I conceived my first series of novels, there was nothing remotely similar to use as a comparison. They were Christian-based with a focus on the controversy between evolution and creation. Our novels have sold extremely well because of the innovation of the concept, combined with the fact that my coauthor, my daughter, was a teenager when we wrote these. Another reason for their popularity was that each novel combined real science information with a fiction plot. The first print run sold out in less than a year. Look at your competition and see if you can come up with a different angle. There just may be a market for your book.

5. Why are you the person to write this book?

For those of you who are humble, which is a virtue, this question will be your biggest stumbling block. I will be the first to admit that there are people much more qualified than I who should be writing . . . but they aren't writing, so I should! Don't let feelings of inadequacy keep you from writing. If it is something you feel called to do, at least give it a shot.

I remember getting e-mails from a lady who liked my curriculum. She suggested additional book titles and also encouraged me to place lesson plans in my books (which I eventually did). She told me about her educational background and her love for tackling various projects, and I began to encourage her to write. She is a success story, not because of anything I did, but because of her hard work and the support of her husband. She is an accomplished writer and speaker, and I've lost count of the number of books she has written. I see her name in many of the same magazines I have written for, and she has surpassed me in that arena as well! She is more qualified to write the type of books that I don't care to tackle, and we've become long-distance friends.

If you are writing nonfiction, most agents and publishers look for someone who is a syndicated columnist, who is a paid professional speaker with expertise in a certain area, or who has made a mark in the world. Having a platform from which to speak is invaluable for a nonfiction writer.

I do recommend writing what you know or what you'd like to read. I'm sure you've heard this before. This helps to expedite the writing process for a beginner, but don't stop there. Remember,

if you don't write the book idea you have, someone else will, so it might as well be you! I've had an idea for a book series for young readers for the past two years. This desire came from what I felt was the dismal selection of quality, moral, children's chapter books. My daughter has written the first book in the series, and I'm in the process of having it illustrated. (Check my website www.mediaangels.com for updates. The release date is fall 2007.) I may write some of the books in the series, but for now I'll just publish the books. If you feel strongly about your project, then you should be the one to do it. If you don't have the time to write it, publish it!

CHAPTER 3

BEING PASSIONATE ABOUT WRITING

Writing is not for the faint-hearted. It is something that can take over your life if you let it. There is always one more line to add, another paragraph that needs to be edited and one more book idea to add to the folder of “Book Ideas.” There are classes and workshops to hone your skills; some are even offered online. Being an author takes hard work and dedication. It takes time to market and publish a book. If you are not totally convinced you have a book worth writing it won’t be worth the effort needed to make it out of your computer and onto a bookshelf somewhere. There is lots and lots of information to read about writing. Be forewarned: not everything you read online is accurate, so be careful.

If you are thinking of writing children’s fiction, for example, reading many children’s books is a good idea—not to copy the style

or methodology but to see if you have what it takes to write for children. After having my first child, I stayed at home and no longer taught school. I began toying with the idea of writing and took several correspondence courses on writing. (This was pre-Internet, and my computer had 64K of memory—yes, total!)

When I began writing children’s fiction, I received rejection letter after rejection letter. My writing course taught us to keep sending out the manuscript despite rejections. I did and was rewarded with a nicely written rejection letter with the comment “too verbose.” That was a nice way of saying, “Hey, look, lady, you shouldn’t be writing children’s literature because even though you have a kid and you were a teacher, your writing is way too wordy for kids to read.”

Well, I got it. But this was after spending many long days and nights toiling at my craft. Okay, there weren’t that many nights involved, but you get the picture. I was heartbroken, but only briefly. That’s when I changed over to what I called my “best-selling novel.” I won’t bore you with the story line, which I still remember and rather like, even to this day, but the fire was gone. The rejection letters had done their damage.

Whose fault is this? No, it wasn’t the publisher’s. They were just doing their job. Their job is to see what is selling and look at what comes across their desk that fits the needs of the readership of the day. They want to see how much the author knows the market. Actually, those publishers did me a favor. I spent the next years reading and studying, learning more about writing and publishing.

I have found websites at colleges and universities that offer online courses. I only mention larger, older institutions in this book.

(I'll have updates on my website if these sites change.) If you are interested in a list of courses offered online that are not included in this book, e-mail me at felice@mediaangels.com.

You can find these classes yourself by doing a keyword search online using the following phrases: writers' online workshops, writers' workshops for nonfiction, writers' workshops for fiction, nonfiction' authors workshops online, etc. See the resource section for more websites for writers.

Let's face it: not all writers are successful. Most are overworked and underpaid. But those of us who do write as a profession wouldn't trade it for the world! Analyze the following questions and answer them honestly. See if you have what it takes.

1. Why am I passionate about writing?
2. Do I really want to self-publish?
3. Do I want to find a literary agent and/or publisher?
4. How much time do I have to complete this project?
5. Am I teachable?
6. Am I willing to market this book?

1. Why am I passionate about writing?

If you don't know, maybe writing isn't for you. I want to write because I enjoy the activity, I feel I'm accomplishing something important, and I have something to tell. It is an outlet for all the ideas I have and allows me to be creative.

If your answer has something to do with making a lot of money, please reconsider. Some writers are wealthy; they have made substantial book deals, and have agents negotiating television and movie rights for their books. But for many this wasn't an overnight success. This shouldn't be your only reason for wanting to write, or you may be doomed for disappointment. Not that you shouldn't aim for the top, every good author deserves a happy ending; just remember this isn't the norm.

2. Do I really want to self-publish?

If you want to get your book out in a timely fashion because you have a platform on which to sell this title or you have been rejected by major book publishers your answer may be yes. I will devote several chapters to the details of self-publishing.

3. Do I want to find a literary agent and publisher?

You may decide you want to try to find an agent and a publisher that will take your work rather than going it alone. If this is the case, know what you are up against. It takes a long time—sometimes only six months, sometimes two years or more. Do your research to make sure your agent is reputable. There are websites you can check to validate the authenticity of an agent.

Here is one site:

Agent Research: www.agentresearch.com/agent_ver.html

You will never, and I repeat never, be asked to pay an agent or publisher to read your manuscript. This service is free. The agent makes his money by getting a percentage of the book deal he makes

for you. Beware of anyone or any website that promises you instant success—for a fee. Run, don't walk! This is bogus and not the way real publishing works. Your agent will try to obtain a book deal for around 6–10% in royalties, plus an advance (against future profits).

Most established publishers will not look at unsolicited manuscripts from nonagented authors. If you are interested in finding an agent, please read chapter 7 in this book dedicated to literary agents.

4. How much time do I have to complete this project?

Deadlines such as an upcoming seminar have always motivated me to write. But even if there isn't something imminent around the bend, it is wise to give yourself a deadline. I know of one writer who tries to produce at least 5,000 words per day. Having a goal keeps a writer on track.

I do the majority of my research online. I try to set aside a time to write each day, and I make myself do it. Sometimes I feel like a little kid. Recently, when one of my computers was returned from the shop, I purposely did not reinstall my e-mail accounts. I have Internet access but not e-mail. I knew I'd be tempted to check my e-mails when I was in a tight spot with writing. What is your weakness? Identifying this will help you to arrange your work area to optimize the time you can devote to your projects.

5. Am I teachable?

You may wonder what I mean by this and why I include it in the list of questions for you to answer. (Remember, I'm a teacher!)

Being teachable means treating your manuscript like a work in progress. Our words aren't sacred; only God's are. Being an author means working with others who will review and analyze your work. It means taking those suggestions to heart and making changes. As I told you, I turned down a contract for a four-book series. What I didn't tell you was that I turned down the contract because I wasn't teachable. I didn't want to go with some of the editorial changes the publisher suggested. I was targeting the homeschool market, and I felt the publisher was not. Yes, my books have sold well, but could they have sold extremely better? I'll never know.

Making decisions is a process in life. Even though I self-publish, I have my books read by many people—friends, family, and others in the field when possible. When I wrote my science-based curriculum, I asked scientists to read and critique my work. I used their suggestions or questioned them for further clarification. In the course of my work I can say that I have now become teachable. I appreciate not only my editor's comments but also those of my readers.

Not everyone feels this way; it may be a stumbling block you need to overcome to be published. My daughter had great difficulty with the editor's comments—so much so that I had to put in the corrections for the novels we penned; she just couldn't. Sometimes an editor's changes are not correct. Editors are, after all, human. In this case we can question the change or send an alternate revision via e-mail for the editor's review.

6. Am I willing to market this book?

Even published authors with agents need to help market their books. Being an established author, I now have a network of vendors (who sell my books) and a track record of successful sales on the Internet and through distributors. This wouldn't have happened without laying the groundwork. I attended conferences and passed out vendor packs to businesses that I felt could sell my products well. This pack contained a confidential wholesale price list for a business to resell my books. I shook lots of hands, researched, and collected names of businesses that sold to the niche market I was targeting. This improved my chances of being included in upcoming catalogs and on store shelves. Marketing takes hard work!

Getting feedback from your readers is important as well. When I get e-mails about a particular title, I often ask for permission to use the comments in future advertising, online or in print. Many times books ride waves of popularity due to readers' feedback. People often purchase books because of what others are saying about them rather than on the merit of the books. Depending on the market you are in, this can work to your advantage. You need to know your market well. A good marketing plan and a strategy to get invited on the speaking circuit to let others know about your product can make an author.

Having said this, I will admit that I have taken a break from the speaking circuit for several years. It's nice to have a stack of invitations and e-mails from conferences across the country, but at this time it isn't what's best for my family. Yes, my book sales do suffer because of this, but I have vendors who travel to these conferences.

I have to discount the books heavily to make it worth their effort, but it is worth it to me to get my products to the consumers. If you are capable and willing to travel and see the world, by all means schedule shows, speaking engagements, and book signings. I do plan to travel again in the future; as a self-published author, I have that option.

No one can sell your product better than you can. Only you know what it took to get the book into print. You have knowledge and enthusiasm, which can be contagious. That is why I produce a bimonthly newsletter. I can offer useful information to my readers and stay current in their thoughts. The ideal would be to have a monthly newsletter, but I can't make that deadline! My newsletters contain well-researched articles, websites, and children's activities based on various themes. We also include information about upcoming titles, awards or recognition we've received, and links to our website. It is a great marketing tool, and I don't have to leave home!

CHAPTER 4

WRITING A BOOK PROPOSAL AND/OR A QUERY LETTER

The first requirement for obtaining an agent or publisher is a query letter. This is a one-page document that explains the essence of your work. The goal is to have several agents clamoring to represent you to publishers; write your letter with that in mind. But before you write a query letter, I feel it is helpful to write a book proposal first. While it is not necessary for a fiction writer to send out a proposal, I believe it will ultimately help you when writing your query letter. Going one step further, neither the book proposal nor query letter is necessary for a self-published author, but knowing how to write one is invaluable.

Writing a good book proposal—whether you are writing one for submission or not—will fine-tune your thinking process regarding the market your book is geared toward. If you have already written

your book, answering the following questions in this chapter will help you to go back and edit, perhaps including other useful bits of information to make your book more salable.

A Book Proposal

A book proposal is a detailed summary of what you hope to accomplish in writing your book. Why do you want to write this particular book? Do you have a clear direction for where you are going? A writer without a plan is like a traveler paying to go to an unknown destination. Answering these questions and those in subsequent chapters will allow you to make sure you know where you're going, what you're taking, how long it will take to get there, and the resources needed to make the trip successful. Believe me, I have written with and without a guideline. Having a guideline is worth the effort it takes to create, and it will save you time in the long run.

Use the questions you answered in the previous chapter to draft your proposal. A through proposal for an agent should take you a week or two to write. Make sure you include the following points: the market for your book, your platform for selling, how your book will be superior to the competition, and the reason you are the best person to write this book. Make sure your proposal is free from error; if you are submitting it to an agent or publisher, hire a professional editor.

A Query Letter

A query letter is a one-page synopsis of your idea designed to convince an agent or editor to request your nonfiction proposal or finished fiction book. The most effective letters grab the reader in the first line. The query letter should contain a call to action, not a listing of features and benefits. It should include a working title and projected word count and should mention whether the project is completed or not.

Do your research. Remember to look for an agent who represents the kind of book you want to write. I used Agent Query www.agentquery.com and researched over fifty different literary agents. The listings specify the genres of books each agent represents. After you have identified the particular editors or agents to whom you will submit your query, research and follow their guidelines specifically. Some want the first few chapters of a fiction book with the query letter; most do not. Also, look for particular dates of submission. I read some which said they would not take any manuscripts between specific dates. Many agents will accept query letters via e-mail.

Check the Writer's Market or other publications such as the Writer's Digest for additional information. See Lisa Silverman's excellent suggestions on writing one on page 110.

Your Query letter has to be your best writing!

Here are some suggestions.

DO

Use normal font such as Times New Roman 10–12 point.

Keep it concise—limit to one page.

Address the agent or editor personally by name.

Let him know if this a multiple submission.

Provide clear information about the benefits of the work.

Tell important information about yourself only as it relates to your writing.

Always be professional and know publishing

List any other publishing credits or awards you may have

Include all your contact information—address, phone number, and e-mail.

Include a SASE for a response.

Research agents and know other work they have produced, especially if your work is similar.

DON'T

Discuss how much you want to be paid.

Sell yourself. Instead, sell your work.

Tell of your writing's similarities to other famous authors.

Tell that others have rejected your work.

Mention that your work is copyrighted (more on this later).

Tell irrelevant information about yourself.

Send the complete manuscript. Instead, send only the query letter.

Check the resource section for online sources for writing a query letter.

CHAPTER 5

CREATING YOUR MASTERPIECE

You've researched your topic and know your market; now you are ready to write your own masterpiece! Even Benjamin Franklin began with one word at a time. Take a deep breath and tell yourself, "I can do this!" If you need additional help in writing, there are many online classes, seminars, and workshops designed to get you writing. I attended several of these seminars years ago when I was planning on writing my "best-selling novel," and I enjoyed the fellowship and meeting other real, published authors. Surprisingly, they were people just like me, with one difference: they had agents and had made the leap into print! It was a great boost to ask them questions and listen to the information they shared.

There are countless discussion groups for writers. I have tried joining several but find I don't have the time to keep up with all

of the posts. This is a great way to learn, and many talented people give of their time to help others. Perhaps you feel more comfortable with a local writing group where you can meet on a regular basis with other authors. There are writing associations in every state. To find an association near you, search this index of professional organizations: www.asindexing.org/site/orgpub.shtml.

The first book I published had nothing to do with all the books I had previously written and never published. Those were all works of fiction, yet the first book I published was nonfiction and on a topic I had previously disliked. As a student, teacher, and parent I thought I hated science. When I began homeschooling my children, my son— who had learning difficulties—was naturally drawn to scientific inquiry. Using science for the major portion of his curriculum, I was able to teach him skills he might not have learned as well by another method. I creatively taught science to my children at home, held in-service teacher seminars at several preschools, and began holding science seminars and workshops for students.

I started to receive invitations to speak locally at workshops and seminars on teaching science. Yes, in the midst of all this, I did smile at the irony. This fact actually worked in my favor. I could stand up before people and say, “Look, I once hated to teach science, and now here I am teaching you how to teach! If I can do it, so can you.” And they believed me because it was true! I had enthusiasm, passion, and a belief that I was teaching them something worthwhile. Science was fun! Science included experiments that caused exciting things to happen; it always seemed to be changing. I was energized,

and the audience caught my enthusiasm.

When I completed workshops, participants often asked for copies of my notes. I would prepare handouts for my talks, and they grew longer and longer. When I was invited to speak at a state conference, I decided to turn those notes into a full-length book with many resources and teaching ideas. *Teaching Science and Having Fun!* has been in print since 1994. Of course it has had one major overhaul and several revisions through the years, yet this book has withstood the test of time. I know of many flash-in-the-pan authors whose titles are no longer available or are out of print. Writing a book with staying power is a great financial booster. It continues to make you money long after the book is written.

Here are some questions to think about:

1. Do I have an idea for a book that has passed the tests in the previous chapters?
2. Do I have a title for my book?
3. Have I written an ad or back cover copy for my book?
4. Have I outlined the book or my chapter topics?
5. Do I have goals to finish this book, such as how much time I'll spend on it each day?
6. Do I plan to research? If so, how will I go about this?
7. Do I have a mentor, someone I can be accountable to who can encourage me when I need it?
8. Do I have an editor?

1. Do I have an idea for a book that has passed the tests in the previous chapters?

I had lots of book ideas but none that were marketable, or so I thought until I began being asked for copies of my notes after giving seminars on teaching science. If you want to write a particular genre or style, read, read, read. Most of the writers I know love to read. Reading will help you develop your own style and understand what sells. If you are planning to write a nonfiction book, teaching or speaking about the topic builds credibility. For example, a writer of a cookbook who has won cooking awards will generally be more credible than someone who hasn't.

2. Do I have a title for my book?

I have the hardest time with titles. Sometimes the title comes to me before I begin writing; other times it changes frequently. Don't worry if you don't have the perfect title; it will come to you, or perhaps your editor will suggest one. A title gives you a point of reference and gives a "face," so to speak, to your work. I began this book with the title "The Myth of Self-publishing: Why Many Self-Publishers Don't Succeed and What You Can Do about It." This was, among other things, too wordy, but it covered the points I wanted to make. I kept it until I came up with the current title.

3. Have I written an ad or back cover copy for my book?

This was a good suggestion I read in Dan Poynter's *Self-Publishing Manual* (ParaPublishing, 2006). The back cover is a sales tool for those looking at the book and may cause them not only to

open the cover to check out the table of contents but also actually to buy the book! Beginning writers may want to start with an ad. What would you say to get someone to buy your book? Don't use false promises. Look at other ads in magazines or online that catch your interest.

Once you've written your ad or book copy, show it to everyone you know and determine their reaction. Do they look interested or bored? Do they begin to laugh (not a good sign)? You can use the input to make revisions. Don't be discouraged. This takes practice.

4. Have I outlined the book or my chapter topics?

Outlining will be of value for some writers and a burden for others. There is no one way to write. If you have a book idea with a complicated plot, outlining or mapping may save you lots of time. If you want to allow yourself creativity to go in any direction, then you may decide against an outline.

If you decide not to work from an outline, be warned: plan on doing many rewrites. I've been there. I wrote my first novel with my daughter, Christina, after successfully publishing nonfiction for six years. I didn't want write fiction at that point; I was very comfortable where I was. But Christina did want to write fiction, and she was very persuasive. I told her we didn't know anything about writing novels; Christina responded that she was a homeschooler, and she'd research how to write. She began when she was fourteen. After many rewrites, we took out computer paper. Remember the kind that was attached and accordion-folded in the box? It was great for mapping out a plot. We'd begin on the first page, and thirty or so

pages later, we'd have our book mapped out. If we didn't know what we wanted to say in a particular place, we'd write a big question mark to remind us to fill it in later.

I recount this story to share that our success was built on determination more than ability. It took two years to write the first novel, *The Missing Link: Found*, in *The Truth Seekers Mystery Series*.™ We gave it to many people to read and test marketed the book among students. We listened to their input and made changes when they mentioned an area they didn't understand. All three novels in the series, still in print and selling, were written in that way.

Recently I've been brought into the twenty-first century by my son-in-law with a wonderful piece of mapping software. I can begin by typing a main idea—just a word—in the middle of the computer screen. Then I list more ideas off this one main idea. My ideas can easily be dragged around the page, and the map can be imported into popular office software. To begin with, I “mapped” myself into confusion. I had too many subcategories and more details than I needed, so I scrapped the first map and began another. I used this software to write this book, and I'd use it again for all kinds of applications.

Do an online keyword search for “mind mapping software.” The popular versions allow you to download the software for a free trial. The free online encyclopedia website Wikipedia contains information on popular mind-mapping software and some sources for free software as well:

www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Mind_Mapping_software

Remember, a book outline can be as simple as listing the points you would like to cover, important facts, or just plain fun ideas. That is the way I began this book. Do whatever works for you!

5. Do I have goals to finish this book, such as how much time I'll spend on it each day?

My goals change depending on the need. If I know I have a speaking engagement and must have a book completed, I am much more apt to make myself work on it. If you are goal-oriented, you won't have the same problem, and I applaud your drive. Remember to make at least some time each day to think about your project, research, or lay the groundwork for some progress once you do have the time. For some, setting aside the same time each day works. I am juggling a family, homeschooling three children, and running a business. I don't have much free time. I've learned to make the best of my time, and you will rarely find me vegging out, watching mindless television shows. My laptop is my constant companion, and I work when I have the time.

I'm fresh in the morning, but due to other family obligations I tend to write in the evening when everyone is in bed. I am blessed: I can work in the midst of noise and confusion, but I often have to stop to take care of some minor crisis. Getting up, stopping, and starting again is very frustrating, so I opt for writing in a nonpeak time and revising when all the family chaos takes place. Once again, do what works for you. I'm sharing the events in my typical family life to explain that if you have the will to write, you'll make the time you have work for you, no matter what your life's circumstances.

6. Do I plan to research? If so, how will I go about this?

Researching is a very important aspect of writing, no matter what your genre. It is my downfall. I enjoy it too much and probably should have found a job that dealt with this aspect of writing. At times, I'd rather research than write. It is much easier. I don't have to think—just read and learn about a topic I'm interested in! Researching is a writer's best friend. I'm a stickler for detailing exactly where I found the information and giving another author or source credit for their work. It is not only a professional courtesy; it is also the copyright law. There is a fair use clause to the copyright law which specifies how much material may be quoted without express permission from the copyright holder. (www.copyright.gov) We learn things all the time, and some of them become part of our experience. Sometimes it can be difficult to trace exactly where we read or learned certain information. That's why it's a good idea to document sources when doing our research. When quoting directly, you must always specify the source.

Keep your research in files or somewhere you can access it quickly if needed. Writing takes a lot of research—in my case, anyway. Even if you are writing fiction, unless you are familiar with all the locations where your story will take place, research will be a pivotal part of being a writer. Keeping your information neatly organized can save you time. I now keep most of my notes in files on my computer. When I first began writing, I kept three-ring, tabbed notebooks with all the information for handy reference. Much of my research was done at the library. Now, everything is at my fingertips, literally. I have files on my computer with different resources, and I

bookmark websites of interest. I can't tell you how timesaving this has been. With a little bit of organization and a system for keeping your research handy, you can accomplish much in a short amount of time.

Do remember to save your document in more than one place. The first thirty pages of the manuscript for this book were obliterated from my computer. The document was there, but somehow it became corrupted. I haven't had anything like this happen in years. I forgot to save it under another name somewhere else on my system. I use file folders with names clearly marked for all of my work. After the book title I write the date, such as "Writing and Getting Published in a Nutshell, January, 10, 2007." In that way I can quickly find the most recent document I saved.

7. Do I have a mentor, someone I can be accountable to encourage me when I need it?

There is no greater tool for a writer than a friend who will encourage you to keep going. I have had several different friends in my life who have been an encouragement to me, either by offering to read my manuscripts or with prayer. If you happen to know a fellow author, that is even better. She will know what you are going through when you hit a brick wall and can give you the confidence to get through it.

I haven't experienced writer's block, but I wonder if it is because I don't have the pressure of another publisher's deadlines. Being self-published has allowed me the space to put a project down when I need to remove myself from it to think. I took a one-

year break three years ago. Yes, you read that correctly. I was only planning take one year off. I wanted to focus on marketing. I'm back now with even more ideas and a fresh start I don't think I would have had if I kept plugging along. I can be my toughest taskmaster. My mentor's suggestion to take time off was priceless.

8. Do I have an editor?

If you don't have an editor, you need to find one. In the resource section you will find helpful links. It took me many years to find an editor who could meet my needs. Friends and family who read my manuscripts were just too kind. I then began to use professional editors. Finding the right editor for the right job can be difficult. Let me explain. First of all, I've had many, many editors. I used a science editor to edit my science curriculum, and she did a great job. The problem was that I used this same editor to edit the novels I coauthored. When she mailed me the manuscript, she sent a complimentary letter saying she enjoyed the story line. In fact, she wrote, she almost forgot she was supposed to edit! Unfortunately, she was true to her word; there are many typos in that book. I had read the manuscript so many times I missed them myself. One gracious reviewer for a prominent homeschool magazine e-mailed me that while she loved the series, this book had editorial problems. Ouch.

I finally found an editor who is excellent at editing novels. She is a published author with a good eye for what works and what doesn't. Take heart when you receive your book back all marked up. With the wonders of technology, manuscripts are sent via e-mail and returned edited the same way. With a click of a button, all the

edits are incorporated, and you have the finished product before you. If you prefer, you can accept only the edits you want. If you do this, it is a really good idea to have it re-edited. Even with several edits, more than likely some mistakes will remain. I can't tell you the number of times I've read or reread one of my manuscripts from cover to cover. The ideal is to put the work away for a few days or weeks then pick it up again when you are fresh.

Be careful to protect your copyright, and put your copyright information on each page. This is easily done with most word processing programs; insert a header with the required information: "©Year, Name: All rights reserved." This is important if you are sending your manuscript via e-mail.

An editor can't repair a really bad manuscript. If you are still sold on your idea but the editor says it's really poorly written, you may want to hire a ghostwriter. This is expensive and mainly used for nonfiction work. Ghostwriters are paid up front because you have no guarantee that your work will sell, and they will be putting a lot of time into the work. You may consider this as an option only in extreme cases.

Typical fees you can expect for proofreading or copyediting:

Per hour: \$15.00-\$50.00

Per page: \$3.00-\$6.00

Per word: \$0.03-\$0.18

Editors can be very expensive, and prices have increased since I began my first book. The fee varies and may be negotiable. I try to have a set price for the entire work rather than an hourly rate so I know what to expect. If your editor is very good, this is money very well spent!

CHAPTER 6

A TRADITIONAL PUBLISHER VS. SELF-PUBLISHING

A traditional publisher is one who pays an author for his work and makes the larger percentage of the profits associated with the sales of the author's work. The publisher gives the author a contract explaining the rights associated with the sale of the author's works and an advance against future royalties. If the author has an agent (something I strongly recommend if you ever decide to go with a publisher), the agent will also make a percentage of the profits from the author's writing. Depending on the contract, the publisher may also make a percentage of profits from subsequent merchandising items.

The traditional publisher also takes all of the risks involved with the outlay of money to put the product out to the public. The editor of a publishing house must really believe in the work, take

it before many closed-door meetings, and do his best to see that it doesn't end up in a slush pile somewhere.

A self-published author picks up the tab for all costs associated with writing a book—everything from the software used to create the manuscript, editing fees, graphic design services, printing, marketing, and distribution. Self-publishers take all of the financial risks associated with the book. Self-publishing use to be considered nontraditional, but that has changed in recent years. There is an entire industry geared to print your books. This industry knows there is a market for self-publishing, and they are cashing in.

One of the best reasons to self-publish is that your books don't go out of print unless you say they do, and your profits continue every month—that is, if you have sales. You can maximize your sales with other book-related items, such as workbooks or audio recordings, and you don't have to share the profits on these items.

There are many reasons why people decide to self-publish, but the two main reasons are financial gain and expediency in getting the work from computer to print.

This book is a case in point. I decided to write this book a year ago and have worked on it off and on since then. If I had gone with a traditional publisher, I would first have had to convince an agent to take me on as a client. He in turn would convince a publisher on the merit of the work. As I discussed in previous chapters, the entire process takes time—a lot of time.

There are always the exceptions to the rule in first-time authors being “discovered” by a traditional publisher, but these are

far and few between. Self-published authors often decide to do it themselves rather than never seeing their books in print.

To be truthful, at times I've regretted my decision that I turned down a publisher's book contract. Sometimes I have a love-hate relationship with the entire publishing industry. I believe I have made more money self-publishing than I would have as a traditionally published author, but I've sacrificed writing time in order to accomplish this.

Finding a reliable printer can be tricky for a first-time self-published author. There are many people on the Internet willing to take your money to "help" you get your book into print. There is a host of subsidy (pay-to-publish) and print-on-demand (printing fewer books at a higher cost) businesses that have opened shop online. These businesses were virtually unknown years ago. I have already noticed that the wonderful communication mechanism that is the Internet has forced at least one and possibly two of these print-on-demand businesses to shut their doors to new authors. I will not mention them by name; I do not wish to slander anyone. To my knowledge, not all of them are scams. Some will tell you up front that they provide a service for pay. Have an attorney read any contract before signing.

Here is the problem. Authors are led to believe their work is being printed by a traditional publisher, when in fact it is not. One business claims it doesn't want the author's money; it wants the author's work. That sounds like a legitimate claim of any traditional publisher.

Here is the catch:

- The author is not given an advance against sales.
- The author has no way of knowing how many books are being printed.
- The publisher falsely promises to market the books, but doesn't.
- These books are banned from the shelves of bookstores.
- The author has to buy books at an incredible markup to resell.

I was totally unaware of this problem and was almost duped into recommending some of these sites to you! I attempted to see what it would cost to print this little book you have before you. This book would have cost me \$11.50 for one copy—more than I'm selling the book for retail! You can see this book wouldn't have a market at such a high price. Besides, wholesalers expect to buy the book for 30–55% off of retail.

Other publishers charge high fees to publish your books, and then they make a profit on your books as well. I found at least one publisher that seems fairly reputable and is up-front about what you'll receive for your money. They charge very large fees to help you get your manuscript into print, but they also offer services such as ghostwriters (paid authors who basically write the book for you) and full editorial services. You know up front that this is a full service to get your book into print and what you get for your money. You also choose how many books you wish to have printed. By printing larger print runs, you can lower the cost per book. As you will learn self-publishing is more than writing a book; it requires being aware of scams as well.

Here are the questions to think about as you consider your options:

1. Am I thinking about self-publishing to expedite the publishing process?
2. Do I want to self-publish to make money?
3. Will I do all the work myself, such as layout and cover design, or will I subcontract out those jobs?

We will consider the pitfalls to self-publishing as well as proven methods that do work. In continuing to self-publish since 1994, I have learned that the stigma has been removed, especially for those who continue to strive for quality productions. Several of my titles appear in libraries across the state due to customer requests. One of my titles was made “required summer reading” by a Christian school. Libraries clamored to meet the demand.

1. Am I thinking about self-publishing to expedite the publishing process?

This does work; I have done this for years. Your product will not always be printed on schedule, but you can have a finished product in hand in around 3–4 weeks once it is ready for print.

2. Do I want to self-publish to make money?

Don’t quit your day job yet. Yes, you can make money in publishing; you will need a killer marketing plan to do so. I can recommend several books I’ve used. (See resource section.) I have done a fraction of what I really needed to do to market my books.

My books are for a niche market. If you have a mainstream title or book idea, the possibilities are endless. From what I've learned over the years, more money is made from spin-off products —such as t-shirts, paid workshops, seminars, etc.—than directly from the books themselves.

Some self-publishers have been “discovered” by traditional publishers and sometimes have used this as a means to an end. There are many success stories of best selling book series that were originally self-published before receiving a lucrative contract with a publishing house. Your goal may be to self-publish until the day a publisher finds your book.

3. Will I do all the work myself, such as layout and cover design, or will I subcontract out those jobs?

Unless you have had the experience in this area, don't do it yourself. I have laid out all but four of my books. It was so much nicer to have someone else do the design and layout, which allowed me to concentrate on sales and marketing. Graphic designers charge varying fees. Look at their work and portfolio before making a decision. Again, a flat fee works better for me. The cover design can cost anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000. Laying out the interior can run between \$150 and \$500, depending on the number of pictures and graphics.

Here are some great websites for art:

www.istockphoto.com

www.photos.com

www.fotosearch.com

www.gettyimages.com

CHAPTER 7

LITERARY AGENTS

If you've read my book up to this point, you know I favor getting an agent if you want to be published by a traditional publisher. Remember, reputable agents do not charge you to read your work. They earn their pay through commissions. In my research for this book, I was surprised at how many links—even from good websites—led me to places where people wanted me to pay them to read my manuscript! Don't ever pay for this service. Many reputable literary associations forbid their signatories from charging to read their manuscripts.

If you are interested in self-publishing, skip this section. You can always refer back to this section if you change your mind.

Here are a few of the many reasons for finding agents.

1. They Know how publishing works
2. Represent the author's interests (or they don't get paid)
3. Can advise you on the best choice of publisher
4. Should get you a better contract than you could alone
5. Obtain a publisher more quickly than you could on your own.
6. Have experience working with other authors

Agents know how publishing works. Hopefully you've picked an agent who has a track record and at least a few titles under his belt. He also represents your interest in getting the most money he can for your work, and with good reason. Agents tend to make a commission of around 15% of the author's royalties. The author earns 6–10% of the profit from sales, while the publisher makes the balance. This doesn't seem fair, but that is the way publishing works. Everyone is giving of their time in the hope that your book makes it big. The only one really ready to put in the time, sweat, and tears on this project is you, the author! However, the agent and publisher are putting their time into this venture as well and must be rewarded. This time may be rewarded generously if your work sells well.

Of course, you need to do your homework and find the best agent for the work you would like to create. Agents are flattered if you know about the works they have represented. After opening your query letter with several sentences to hook the reader, add

something similar to the following in the body of your text:

One of my favorite authors is Christina Gerwitz, and I have read her work extensively. My favorite book is *Keys to the Past: Unlocked*, which you presented to Media Angels,® Inc. for publishing. My writing is similar to hers, and I've noted you publish other authors in this same genre.

Seek your favorite author's agent. If he is too busy to handle your work, perhaps he will recommend someone else in his firm. I recommend that you don't begin with some runaway best-selling author's agent, not because your work isn't worthy, but because the agent may already have enough clients and not be taking new ones. At the risk of sounding repetitive, do your homework and your research. There are thousands of agents out there. You can check online sources to make sure your agent is reputable. I have used the following websites with good success:

www.agentresearch.com

www.agentquery.com

You can also search out an agent's name on a search engine and see if there are any good or bad comments. Check reputable sources such as *www.writersmarket.com*.

Here are some points to look for in a good literary agent:

1. Reputation
2. Membership in literary organizations (in good standing)
3. No charge to read your manuscript

The Writer's Market is published yearly with up-to-date information about agents and publishers. When I was first trying to make it into print, I always had a copy on hand. Now I subscribe to their online service (www.writersmarket.com), which costs approximately \$30.00 per year.

There are also specialty books and organizations such as:

Sally Stuart's Christian Writers' Market Guide

www.stuartmarket.com

Your Guide to Marketing Books in the Christian Marketplace

Sarah Bolme

www.christianpublishers.net/marketing

Christian Small Publishers Association

www.christianpublishers.net

Children's Books

www.scbwi.org

There are good magazines such as The Writer and Writer's Digest. These contain writing information as well as advice on agents from time to time. A good agent is like a good editor—worth every penny of her pay.

CHAPTER 8

MARKETING: DO IT NOW!

I've read lots about marketing, and truthfully, it's hard work. I dreaded marketing with a passion. I know—how can a publisher be successful without executing the one cardinal rule in all of my lists? I have help in doing this. Some of us are natural salespeople; I'm not. I'm a natural people person; I love to talk and make friendships. Actually, that is the crux of marketing. In *1001 Ways to Market Your Books*, John Kremer talks about the two fundamental steps to marketing: promotion and distribution. He goes on to say that marketing is making friendships. I couldn't believe it. That is exactly what I have been doing for years, even before reading his book (which I do recommend you purchase).

I send out a yearly vendor letter to my wholesale customers,

which include bookstores, distributors, online catalogs, and conference vendors. These letters contain information about new products, awards, or recognitions we've received, as well as general information about our books and new titles. I begin the letter with the opening "Dear Friends," because I know many of the booksellers personally. I have either met them at conventions or talked with them extensively on the phone. While the larger companies have buyers or representatives, many of them have been there for years, and I feel as if I know them well.

Sample Vendor Letter (This can be 2–4 pages.)

1. Introduction: Something current that has happened during the year
2. Lists of all book titles with ISBNs
3. Information about each title (Many times vendors will reprint this information in their catalogs verbatim, so choose your words carefully.)
4. Confidential discounted price list

I offer discounts for mixed titles, such as 30% off 10–30 books, 40% off 31–50 books, and 50% off 51–100 or more books. Some larger distributors request larger discounts. The decision is yours. I turned down one online catalog because they require a 60% discount. You may decide it is worth that price to move books. As a publisher you can try different options and continue to use the ones that work for you.

An important part of marketing is name recognition. Having a good brand name associated with you as a person is important (more about branding is in the next chapter). You must remember that the customer is always right. If you need to ship books quickly or take returns (something I don't willingly do), do it cheerfully. We all want to be liked; marketing requires that we put our best foot forward.

Many marketing books encourage presales. I presold the third novel in *The Truth Seekers Mystery Series™* before the book went to print. I thought we'd have the book in a month, but due to many unfortunate situations, the book wasn't ready for nearly three months! I sent out postcards with an apology to all the buyers. While no one complained, and this does happen from time to time even to traditional publishers, I detested having other people's money and not delivering the product on time. As a result of this unfortunate event, I rarely presell. You, on the other hand, may not have qualms about preselling. One very well known public speaker presold his entire stock of public speaking CDs before he went to print. He was able to start a second printing (at a discount from the producer) before the first set was shipped.

Capitalize on your accomplishments. If you are writing a cookbook, obviously you know many others have sold. By now you will know your writing strategy to insure your product is a cut above the rest. While it may not seem that the world is in need of another cookbook, you can set yourself apart. If, for example, you happen to be a chef at a five-star restaurant, you have cooked for someone notable (a star or dignitary), or you consistently win baking prizes

in contests and magazines, say this in your advertising. Maybe you have developed recipes that for those with special needs, such as children who must eat gluten-free diets. These would all be viable in today's market.

Marketing a business also requires establishing a brand name. I came up with the name "Media Angels" because I knew I wanted to produce different products, such as books, audio CDs and the like. After several years, I decided to register trademark for the name.

I like the idea of series and have decided to create several series of children's fiction. This allows me the option of adding more titles easily. It is also ready advertising. Your readers will know there are more books to come if you create a series.

I have used another website I created years ago to generate sales for Media Angels,® Inc. This website, *www.Virtual-Field-Trips.com*, is a student—and teacher—friendly website that allows students to view safe pages online while learning something of educational value. This website is often used at the university level by professors teaching about the use of media in education; I'm often asked for permission to use a logo on the website or to link to my site. This website receives an incredible amount of traffic. It use to be first, second, and third on all the search engines. There wasn't anything else like it at the time. This website generates sales by sending people to Media Angels to purchase my book *Virtual Field Trips: An Online Study Guide*.

I have all but eliminated my print catalog at this point. At one time it was a great generator of sales. Today, though, many people shop online, and the sales through mail has dropped significantly as online sales have grown. The key is to get people to your website. Offering free material is one way. Whether it is a free download (worksheet) or useful advice, it will keep people coming back for more.

The Media Angels website offers:

- Free chapters of our books for viewing
- Free monthly science experiments
- Free reproducible sheets
- Audio clips
- Podcasts (coming)
- Free newsletter

You may consider looking into autoresponders. I have one attached to my credit card processor online; it sends an e-mail to customers thanking them for their purchase and saying the order is being processed. Kind of like a salesperson in a store saying, “Thanks for your order; please come back again!”

Now is the time to book tours and signings. Attend conferences and sell your books firsthand. The objective is to let people know about your book. You can hold virtual conferences online via blogging; 1001 Ways to Market Your Books includes an entire section on this method. You can research many of these free at: www.parapublishing.com.

Here are some low-cost ways to market your books

- Have bookmarks printed to distribute at conferences
- Write magazine articles for publication and mention your upcoming book
- Alert readers of your website or newsletter about your book
- Publish an online newsletter; ask visitors to your website to join
- Sell your book on eBay and other online booksellers
- Join online chat groups on your topic (Be careful; some ban selling.)
- Begin your own blog (*www.blogspot.com*)
- Trade links with other website owners
- Check into affiliate links and sales
- Create a podcast on your website

Here are some websites recommended in John Kremer's book:

www.bestsellerexperience.com

www.openhorizons.blogspot.com

www.teleseminars-free-reports.blogspot.com

CHAPTER 9

SELF-PUBLISHING IN A NUTSHELL (WITHOUT GOING NUTS)

If you're still with me and reading this chapter, your desire to write must be strong. My admission that I started out with more guts than knowledge should help you to understand that the process, while difficult, is not rocket science. It involves economics, and understanding supply and demand is important.

These are the steps you will take once you have a product that is selling. You will more than likely want to start your own corporation or L.L.C. (Limited Liability Corporation) and bank account specifically for your book. Treat your publishing like a business. I don't mean to rent office space, print letterhead, and buy furniture and signs. That may come down the road, but most writers I know work very comfortably out of their own homes.

My office is in a loft area surrounded by bookshelves and

often my kid's toys. I often have a laptop handy and go from room to room (wherever there is some quiet) if I have a deadline. I have gone from storing books in my home to renting warehouse space. At the beginning, try low-budget approaches. This book isn't long enough to get into budgets, but I will recommend a book (See Resource Section) that goes into detail in that area. My business has been run successfully on a shoestring budget.

My biggest expenses come from websites, good computers, a laser printer that can cheaply generate many clear, crisp copies to read, and top-of-the-line computer software. I use a popular office suite that is fully integrated; that is, the programs work seamlessly with one another. My other big expenses come from editor's fees, graphic artist's fees, printing books, and keeping inventory.

Here are ten key points you should know as a self-publisher:

1. Name recognition is pivotal.
2. Understand copyright and ISBNs.
3. When to Incorporate
4. Don't cut corners on computers and software.
5. Back up your copies with a reliable system.
6. When necessary, hire help.
7. Understand the process of printing for resale.
8. Smaller print runs mean each book will cost more.
9. Understand the mechanics of distribution.
10. Maintain your website.

1. Name recognition is pivotal.

As soon as you can, try to create a name brand for your company. After much prayer I came up with “Media Angels®.” I liked it immediately and used it without a registered trademark for some years. As I published more book titles I became concerned that I could lose the name if I didn’t register the trademark, and so I did. I used a trademark attorney, and it was costly. I know one businessman who registers his trademarks with online services. Media Angels® carried the word “science” after it for many years.

I no longer exclusively publish science materials, although that was my focus at the start. I opted to use “incorporated” rather than “publishing” after Media Angels® to make the name usable for other ventures. I recently noticed that someone has registered “Media Angel®” as a design. I wish I had had the presence of mind to register that name as well years ago.

Do you have an idea for a name? Research it online at the U.S. trademark office. Beware: the site is not user-friendly. You can type in your specific name; be sure to use quotation marks around the name (e.g., “Media Angels”), or thousands will pop up.

United States Patent and Trademark Office:

www.uspto.gov/main/trademarks.htm

2. Understand copyright and ISBNs.

Read parts of the copyright law as it pertains to the work you are trying to create. Copyright laws were created to protect everyone’s rights. Fair use is sometimes stretched; you should make every effort to quote or give credit to others when writing a

nonfiction work. This site has many answers for you. Read the FAQ (frequently asked questions) section. www.copyright.gov

An ISBN (International Standard Book Number) is a publisher's identification number. This alerts the consumer to the source of the book and where it can be ordered. There is only one provider for these numbers, which is Bowker. All publishers may fill out the necessary paperwork to obtain these numbers by mail or online. See chapter 11 for more information on ISBNs.

3. When to Incorporate.

Check with your attorney or CPA to learn the best time to incorporate your business. Writing is risky in some regard because of the liability involved, especially if you decide to publish other people's works. I have been very selective in the work I am willing to publish under Media Angels,[®] Inc. I first incorporated for financial reasons. After a personal loan to my business, which I paid back in six months (thank you, Lord), I was required to pay for the profit my business earned at tax time. I was taxed at a rate of roughly 15% self-employment tax. Much of my profits were eaten up in taxes. Incorporation saved me at tax time.

4. Don't cut corners on computers and software.

Good machinery is important in any business. I remember hesitating when I purchased my first laser printer. I asked my husband his opinion. He is a contractor and values good tools; he explained how time-saving tools can be. I took his advice long ago, and he was correct. Having the right tools to run a business can save

you from running out to get copies made, postage printed, or labels created for special shipment carriers. I run my business totally from online resources and our main computer. I can print out stamps for regular mail or postage for packages.

The first science book series I coauthored with Jill Whitlock was written on popular publishing software that was not compatible with high-speed copy centers. I didn't know this fact, and we proceeded happily with our first book. Our first publishing tragedy was losing the entire manuscript (when we saved an incorrect version over the original document)! The second was finding out our software wasn't compatible and we had to print quality copies to have recopied (and still look good). The output of the printed copies had to be 1200 dpi (dots per inch), hence the need to purchase a quality laser printer.

5. Back up your copies with a reliable system.

I also have a good computer battery and hard drive backup system. An external hard drive is where I place important documents I wish to keep safe. A battery backup can keep harmful power surges at bay and normally comes with a warranty against damage to your computer.

6. When necessary, hire help.

There is a fine line between running your own business and running yourself to death. Decide what jobs necessitate your undivided attention, and when financially feasible, farm out other tasks or acquire help. Word of mouth is the only advertising I've

used to obtain help for my business. Check with the nearest local university or college to see if they offer a business or marketing major. You can speak to the professors about the possibility of internships. This is an inexpensive way to obtain the help you need. I have used high-school students to create database entries, help with extensive mailing, or pack books for shipment. This has saved me from many long nights, and I can concentrate my energies elsewhere.

7. Understand the process of printing for resale.

At the time of incorporation you can set up your sales tax number as well. Once again, ask your CPA for information regarding sales tax. You will need to collect and pay sales tax on each book you sell within the state where you reside. This varies from state to state and when selling products on the Internet across state lines. I am not an expert in this area, but thankfully I have hired well-qualified people who are. Do your research.

An offset printer, where you will have your book printed, will supply you with all the information you need for printing your book (see the next chapter on creating your book). They will require a certificate of resale, or you will be charged sales tax on your purchase. This can amount to a major savings, so make sure to remind them that you have a certificate. (You will receive this certificate once the paperwork for your sales tax has been filed.) Each certificate has a blank space to write in the name of the seller. You are to photocopy your original and write in the name, and fax or e-mail (scan first) a copy.

8. Smaller print runs mean each book will cost more.

The more copies you print, the less you will pay per book. You will have to decide your inventory needs based on your presales or projections of sales each year. You will also need to store the books in air-conditioned space in the South and temperature-controlled space elsewhere. The goal is to move your inventory quickly and keep rotating your stock. The price break usually comes at 1,000 or more books, so plan accordingly.

9. Understand the mechanics of distribution and fulfillment.

Customer care and quick delivery of a product will garner repeat customers. We can do all of our shipping from our home office. I exclusively use online resources and print labels on my printer. You can track shipments; if you add your client's e-mail account, the shipping service will notify them when the package ships and arrives. If there is a problem, the shipping service will notify you.

There are still lessons to learn after many years of being in business, as my Canadian vendors will attest. Carefully follow their instructions when they order books. I always require customers to sign for their packages, which documents that they received the product. Recently, I shipped packages to Canada using the postal service instead of an independent carrier, not realizing that the postal service will not deliver to the courier service my Canadian vendor uses to get the packages across the border! Therefore, I paid to have books shipped to the post office near the border, and then back to me. I will reship the package at my expense to fulfill my customer's order. The courier service is not new, but not many of my Canadian

vendors used it in the past. Canadian orders were always filled by mailing them via the United States postal service. Obviously this has changed. That is why I didn't notice the error.

Two online postal services I have used are:

www.stamps.com

www.usps.com

Alternate carriers include:

www.ups.com

www.fedex.com

www.dhl-usa.com

Let's say you get that windfall order and can't handle distributions yourself. If you are ready to forego between 55 and 60% of your profits, a distributor is for you. According to Tom and Marilyn Ross, authors of *The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing*, larger distributors such as Baker & Taylor and Ingram will not take authors of fewer than ten books.

They suggest the following options:

Quality Books, Inc.: works with the library market, among others

Bookpeople: caters to small publishers and specialty stores

New Leaf Distributing Company: niche market distributors

The Rosses also discuss exclusive distributors—a one-stop distributing spot for publishers who want to stand clear of the entire distribution process. They handle shipping, billing, payments, returns, and customer service, including: credit card orders, toll-free numbers, etc. Some of those mentioned in their book are:

Publishers Group West
Independent Publishers Group
Login Publishers Consortium
National Book Network
Biblio Distribution (for very small presses)
Partners Book Distributing, Inc.

If you are thinking about using a distributor, there are many things to consider. Distributors usually pay in 60–90 days. This is later than most vendors, who pay in 30 days or whatever you have agreed upon in your contract.

When hiring a distributor, you may want to ask the following questions:

1. How prompt are they at returning your calls and answering your questions?
2. Do they distribute the same kind of books you write and sell?
3. Do they distribute to the locations you wish your book to appear in, such as your local bookstore?
4. Do they have any hidden costs, incentive programs, or other advertising costs that will eat into your profits?
5. Is the contract clear and specific?
6. Is this an exclusive contract, or can you have more than one distributor?

I use Appalachian Distributors. They work with Christian publishers and cater to Christian bookstores and booksellers for

niche markets, such as the homeschool market.

In some cases a distributor turns down authors because they require prepublication notice. Make sure you research a distributor's requirements before you approach them. The more you know about the company, the better it will be for all involved.

10. Maintain your website.

I won't spend the time to discuss all the marketing strategies on the Internet and the value of a good website other than to mention that you must maintain and update the information regularly. In researching this book, I disregarded any website that had information that was dated, even a few years ago. I try to keep my home page relevant with information of the happenings at Media Angels every few months. I send out a bimonthly newsletter and run contests for children from time to time.

I offer free downloads of pages from my books, a free chapter of each of the novels, teacher and student reproducible worksheets, and useful free information. My website also acts as a catalog of products. I can easily and quickly update the information. The first two websites I owned could only be updated by the webmaster. This was time-consuming because he was busy and couldn't get the information up in a timely manner, so I seldom updated the content. My current website is very functional and easy to use; best of all, I can update all the content myself! If you want the name of my website designer, e-mail me.

Running a business has its rewards. I maintain control of the finances myself and keep as much as I can in-house. Media Angels,®

Inc. is constantly growing and changing. Our expansion has been slow and steady on purpose. I have seen too many businesses grow too quickly, often losing quality and integrity. My goal for this business was to publish quality books and curriculum with the homeschool parent in mind. The business has quietly grown to service public libraries, as well as many Christian and church libraries. A marketing plan is a good place to start; create yours today.

CHAPTER 10

THE BOOK

My brother-in-law, who works in the corporate world and is on the cutting edge of technology, once aptly described my work as “drawing with crayons.” My comment at the time was, “The crayons work!” What he meant that was my methods were simplistic and I needed to use better software to create my books.

It took many years of frustration before I listened to his advice. I used a basic desktop publishing program to create my first five books. It was easy to create the text, set the margins, and place the appropriate table headings, page numbers, and other pertinent information inside. I printed the pages on a laser printer and had copies made, 250–500 at a time, at the local office supply store, which also spiral-bound each copy.

Thankfully, we only did this for one year before we were able to presell thousands of our books to a large vendor. This wholesale customer would only take “real” books that were perfect bound with four-color covers. At one of the larger homeschool conferences I attended, a nice gentleman approached me with a three-ring binder. He was a professional graphic artist whose work was found in glossy magazines. After perusing his collection of medical syringes and the like (I kid you not), I hired him for a negotiated rate. Obviously this man’s qualifications were greater than I could afford as a start-up publisher. The price he quoted me for a single copy design made me gasp. He took pity on me, though, and we made a deal with a handshake. We agreed that he would give me a group discount for the four titles he would design. I in turn would use him for subsequent titles, and if my books sold well, I would then pay him the single-cover price he originally quoted me; I did. This gentleman no longer is a graphic artist, but he is a wonderful and generous man. He designed the covers for the four Creation Study Guides, Teaching Science and Having Fun, Virtual Field Trips: An Online Study Guide, and the first novel, The Missing Link: Found. He also designed the logo for the Truth Seekers Mystery Series.TM

While I had many blessings on our journey, it is important for you to be armed with information as you continue this venture. I am very hesitant to suggest or consider it acceptable to use an online publishing provider, such as a subsidy or vanity press. If you decide to go the self-publishing route, make sure you know where to take your book to print.

Remember that while your goal may be to sell the most books

you can, focusing on quality is better. Your book will last longer in the marketplace. Just think classics. You may need to revamp your titles to keep them fresh, but the market will last with some good strategies and planning.

When sending your books to an offset printer, ask for specifics on how they want to receive the manuscript. Many still take hard copies that are mailed or overnighted. The printer then has to take photographs of each one and turn the document into a digital copy. Many printers send proof copies to you via e-mail or have you view the document on their website. I find this extremely difficult, but this may be your only option.

I work with a printer that still creates “blue-lines”; these are yellow copies with blue ink. You have the actual “guts” of the book to look at, check for orphans (words split between the bottom of one page and top of the next page), and any other problems your document may have. As much as I enjoy using technology, I prefer to hold the copy of the bluelines in my hand and review the book in this manner.

You will also be asked to approve the cover proof. This is normally the same size as the actual book cover and is glued to a heavy piece of cardboard for you to view. Once you have checked both documents carefully, you will be asked to sign off and give permission for the copies of your books to be made. This entire process takes place via mail.

Once the document has been submitted, the normal turnaround time for a book to be printed is two to three weeks. This will be longer if it is a peak time, such as back to school or a holiday.

At this time you can also make arrangements, if you haven't already, about where the books will be shipped. If you have a distributor, the books will go directly to their warehouse.

I have hired professionals for book layout as well as doing it myself, as I've already explained. The cost to hire a professional graphic artist is minimal, and the work will shine. Graphic artists are found online or through chat groups related to publishing. You can post questions and ask for suggestions. I list several at the end of this book.

If you want to do it yourself, you may want to purchase a good book on graphic design and book layout. You will need to become familiar with the terminology that is used. I once purchased a publishing program that was the industry standard of the day. It was very expensive, and when I installed it onto my computer I knew I had entered a new world—one I was unfamiliar with. Not only was I unfamiliar with this world, but I also had no desire to enter and learn! I hired a young high-school student who was incredibly gifted with computers and who happened to be an artist. She was the daughter of one of my friends. I gave her my laptop and the program and asked her to take it home, learn it, and then come and teach me how to use it. It was very state-of-the art, but she learned it fairly quickly and taught me how to use only the bare minimum (as I requested) to get by. It worked! Not only was I able to use this software with some success, but I actually became quite proficient.

Decide what you want to spend your time doing. I know for most of you money is an issue and a shoestring budget sounds within your price range. Check online sources for trial runs of many of the

popular publishing software programs. Before you invest, however, make sure the printer you are using can read the software you are using.

It was amazing how I was provided for, through divine intervention, in many of my publishing endeavors. That basically is the story of Media Angels,[®] Inc. Many of the doors that have been opened have nothing to do with my capability or intellect. Things have worked out for me and all the authors I have published because of our belief in a divine Creator, putting him first, and attempting to follow His will and leadings. The name of my company was not an accident; it is due to this name that I will strive to uphold good moral content in all of my books, those of my authors, and any subsequent Media Angels,[®] Inc. materials. I pray that your journey into writing and publishing, no matter which way you attempt to travel, is joyful and filled with the hope that you are not alone. You are now part of a large group of individuals, many of us willing to help you become successful. Welcome!

CHAPTER 11

AN INSIDER'S TIPS

Here are some things to think about and information I wanted you to have as you consider your book publishing options. Some are cautionary in nature and others, I hope will be helpful.

In my research I have come across information online that is very troubling. I know that as a new author you are excited and really want to see your book in print. Please be cautious. Many seemingly legitimate offers are being made to new authors. Several offers I thought were good and worthwhile to include in this book turned out to be bogus; I was amazed at how easily I was duped.

Before you sign any contract, it is important to obtain an attorney to protect your rights. Even if the website appears to be another “book printer,” please take precautions to ensure they are what they claim.

Getting Published and Paying Dearly for It

Warning: If a publisher wants you to pay to have your manuscript published, this is not true publishing. There is a difference between self-publishing your product and this type of publishing. Self-publishers pay to have their books printed, store the books (or have a distribution agency in place), and distribute them, making the bulk of the profit. Some publishing gimmicks ask writers to pay up-front costs. One online publisher pays a token amount, several dollars, as an advance for the manuscript. They want your book, and they want to make the profit on the hard work you will put into marketing your book. They may have you sign a contract for one to ten years or even more for the copyright of your material. Then, they will do nothing to help you promote your publication other than try to sell your books to your family and friends from a list of names you provide them. Any sales you make with your own hard efforts must be shared with this publisher. I have seen several websites like this under different names. Authors should keep their copyright. Just beware of publishers that pretend to be the real thing but are wolves in sheep's clothing.

POD/ Vanity Press or Subsidy Printing

POD stands for Print On Demand. This type of printing may be the choice of a family collaborative effort to create a cookbook or a picture album. You may order as few as three books for different fees, depending on the size of the book. They can be a legitimate

choice for someone wanting to print a small number of books.

I went to one of these sites and typed in the specifications for my science fair book, *An Insider's Guide for Successful Science Fair Projects*. It is 5.5 x 8.25 inches and 80 pages long. Using the POD system, my book would cost me \$12.55. I sell this book at a retail cost of \$8.99 and must discount for vendors to resell the product. Even asking for print runs of 5,000 did not lower the cost significantly. Realize if you go with a POD operation, you will not make much profit (if any) on each book. If you sell many books you will not be permitted to purchase your books at a discount. Therefore many first time authors miscalculate and can not sell their books for enough of a discount for wholesalers to buy their products for mass distribution.

Vanity Press or subsidy printing can be confusing. They are known as a “vanity press” for the simple reason that people wanting to see their books in print will use these services. They require you to pay to have your manuscript printed and some make it sound like they market to big bookstores online and in retail locations. Sometimes they advertise themselves as “self-publishers.” Beware, they are not.

The ISBNs of both POD and Subsidy Printers are recognized by the big book sellers and they will not carry these books on their shelves. Many new authors have found this out the hard way when trying to get local bookstores to carry their titles.

Warning: Resellers of ISBNs

“As the U.S. ISBN Agency, R R Bowker is the exclusive U.S. source of publisher prefixes and accompanying ranges of ISBN numbers for eligible publishers. Bowker provides information and advice on the uses of the ISBN System to publishers and the book trade, and promotes the use of the Bookland EAN bar code format. In addition to their ISBN prefixes, publishers also register their titles with Bowker for inclusion in the Books In Print databases.”

www.isbn.org/standards/home/resellers.asp

As you can see from the quote above, there is only one agency that can legitimately sell ISBNs, and that is R R Bowker. I found several websites selling individual numbers at a much-reduced price. At first, I was not aware they were actually “reselling” these numbers in violation of the standards and practice of the industry. This is very important as it could affect the way your book is perceived in electronic retrieval systems.

Only a company that is your book publisher should assign your ISBN number, which is your identifier. If you self-publish, you need to register with R R Bowker and obtain your own ISBN. Please be aware of this current scandal and take all precautions to avoid this problem. The official website goes on to say:

“Discovering the consequences too late can lead to extensive costs to apply for a new prefix and reassign a new ISBN, and can potentially lead to the application of stickers to books already printed and in circulation.”

www.isbn.org/standards/home/resellers.asp

E-books

The consensus as of this writing is that e-books are around the corner in popularity but their time hasn't come yet. I think the value of e-books is in small amounts of information that you can download quickly. I have purchased e-books, but I'm not ready to purchase e-book works of fiction. I still like to hold a book in my hand. E-books require large tablets made for reading the electronic document, or you can read them from small handheld devices, like your cell phone screen. Of course, you usually can print them out to read, though that adds the expense of printer ink. The convenience of e-books will keep them popular.

Ad Links

These are the neat little advertising buttons on the side of any search engine or website you may be browsing. Please beware: many times claims such as "quick, easy, editorial help, agent representation," etc., need to be thoroughly investigated for authenticity. Anyone can purchase a click-through link, and these links are not checked for their good business practices. We have had click-through links for another business we own. We created the wording and supplied the website address and basically the entire process was generated through top-quality software online. Some advertising links can be for legitimate offers, but caution is needed, so please screen these offers carefully.

Joining Writing Organizations

There are a few organizations I feel are worthwhile. Most of these are national organizations with regional chapters. They are costly but often provide services to their members, some even unrelated to writing, such as reduced rate insurance. Being a publisher does have its advantages. Joining organizations which offer meetings, conventions, and other ways to learn in a group setting may be beneficial.

Book-Selling Conventions

These conventions are a valuable asset if you have the resources and the time to travel. Most conventions require participants to pay a fee to display their products. They will provide you with a space, table, and chairs. The larger and nicer conferences are equipped with table coverings, poster-size banner displays, and many bells and whistles. These events are often staged at convention centers of five-star resorts. Careful planning can make this a wonderful opportunity to meet customers, gather e-mail addresses for newsletters or other promotions, and meet vendors who may agree to sell your products. Look for niche market conventions, such as those geared for homeschoolers. These conferences, especially on the state level, often require credentials and resumés before offering invitations to participate. Speaking at smaller conferences is a wonderful way to begin and gather experience.

Paid Speaking Engagements

Most speaking engagements offer preset fees. Until you have a book that is soaring on the bestsellers list, expect to have the speaker's fee set for you. Of course, if the offered fee doesn't pay your costs, you can decide not to go. Not all authors are great speakers, so if you're not, please work to polish your speaking abilities or just don't speak. I knew an excellent writer who had a loyal following who was asked to speak at a large conference. She was unequipped to handle the length of the presentation. Her information was very good, but it was punctuated with ums, ums, and more ums. She never appeared at public conferences as a speaker again. If you want to speak, make sure you practice before friends and family and respect their critiques.

Selling in a Bookstore or a Large Online Bookstore

The goal of every writer should be to produce the best manuscript he can and leave the rest to the reader. If your book is in demand, bookstores will find a way to order it. Many bookstores have ordered my titles for individual customers. I sell at full price (if they won't order my minimum wholesale requirement) and ship free. I decided long ago that the major online booksellers require too great a discount per book and don't keep enough in inventory. (I was constantly having to drop-ship individual titles.) They all carry my books anyway, but as resales. Authors don't make any money when their books are sold again and again on these websites, but the

online book dealers do. The decision is yours. The online bookstores have complete directions on how to make it onto their websites. As for the brick-and-mortar buildings? You need a distributor to enter their hallowed doors.

Bogus Reviews

On one of the Internet marketing sites there was a link for making money by writing reviews. The directions stated the writer was to contact certain authors (whose e-mail addresses were provided) whose products were on popular online bookstores. The writer was to ask for a copy of their books and post a favorable remark with at least 4–5 stars! I couldn't believe this was a real recommendation to boost Internet sales. If the remark was favorable, the reviewer would be compensated by the author. The caution remains buyers beware, not all the reviews you read on online bookstore websites are legitimate.

Real Reviewers

These can be an asset to any author. People want to know what professionals or other readers think about your product (which is why, I guess, the bogus book-review industry is thriving). If you can, send out an edited copy of your pre-published book and gather those reviews. Post them on your website. If a reader e-mails you a favorable response, ask him to write a lengthier one or ask for permission to post it on your website or other advertising medium.

Reviews sell books.

You can locate legitimate review sources through books such as those listed in the resource section. I have asked professionals in the industry associated with the niche market I write for to review my books. Reviews guarantee the author name recognition, and the reviewer gets more exposure on the back of your book cover.

CHAPTER 12

PROFESSIONALLY SPEAKING: EXPERT ADVICE

Experienced authors have valuable advice to share with those who are just getting started. I invited many authors and self-publishers to share their opinions with you. Many of them are currently on the speaking circuit, and I want to thank them for taking the time to answer these in a well-thought-out manner. I asked them:

1. What advice do you wish you had been given before writing your first book?
2. If you could give a new author any advice, what would it be?
3. What tools do you think are of the most value to an author?
4. Have you self-published? If so, would you do it again, and why?
5. Have you been published by another publisher? If so, would you do this again, and why?

(Note: Not all respondents answered all questions.)

Dr. Jay L. Wile

President, Apologia Educational Ministries, Inc.

www.apologia.com

“Exploring Creation with...” series of textbooks

1. What advice do you wish you had been given before writing your first book?

I wish someone had told me how important editors and proofreaders are. In our first books, we used only one proofreader besides me. That just didn't catch enough of the typos. You really need at least one editor, and after you have made the corrections suggested by the editor, you then send it to your proofreaders. An editor's job is to look for consistency, suggest stylistic changes, and offer alternative layout and wording suggestions. A proofreader's job is simply to look for typos.

2. If you could give a new author any advice, what would it be?

Make sure you have several people read your manuscript in depth before you publish. The more eyes that see it, the more mistakes will be caught. In addition, you never know where an excellent suggestion that will improve the book might come from.

4. Have you self-published? If so, would you do it again, and why?

Yes. I would do it again only if I thought I could generate the

market. The problem with self-publishing is getting your book out there so that people know it exists. Some books (like homeschool curricula) are much easier to market on your own than are other books (such as an inspirational work).

5. Have you been published by another publisher? If so, would you do it again, and why?

Yes. I would definitely do that again, and I plan to. Although the monetary return is much lower (per book sold) when someone else publishes you, the headaches are significantly lower as well. In general, even though I have made a lot of money self-publishing, I would always choose to have someone else publish my book. The headaches associated with self-publishing, in my mind, are not worth the potential for extra money.

Cathy Duffy

Author and publisher

100 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum

www.cathyduffyreviews.com

1. What advice do you wish you had been given before writing your first book?

Have at least four different people edit it for you. Some will be good at following the logic of the presentation and can help with better organization of your thoughts. Some are good at catching the tone of your language and can help you speak in proper language to

your intended audience. Some are great on grammar and sentence structure. Some are marketing-oriented and might have suggestions for presentation that make your book more appealing. Take in as much “criticism” as possible, then decide what to implement.

2. If you could give a new author any advice, what would it be?

Understand that marketing your book might be as much or more work than writing it.

3. What tools do you think are of the most value to an author?

Computer and the Internet!!!

4. Have you self-published? If so, would you do it again, and why?

Yes, and I would definitely do it again given the right circumstances. Self-publishing gives you control over everything so that you can ensure your book will be properly produced and marketed—at least there’s no one to blame but yourself if not. It’s more work but far more profitable if it sells well.

5. Have you been published by another publisher? If so, would you do it again, and why?

I have had two books published by other publishers. Circumstances dictate which route—self-publishing or being published by another company—makes the most sense for each book. I would definitely be open to being published by another company again. Sometimes, another publisher will be in a better

position to market your book than you might be to do yourself. Also, for new authors, being published by a recognized publisher often gives you more credibility than does self-publishing. Also, if you don't have time to market your book well, or if your time is more efficiently spent writing than marketing, going with another publisher makes sense. One caveat: make sure the publisher knows the target market and is set up to deal with that market, or you will end up doing all your own marketing even if the book is published by another company.

Frank Sherwin

Zoologist and author

The Ocean Book

Winner of the 2004 San Diego Christian Writers Guild award
Excellence in Educational Writing

www.ICR.org

1. What advice do you wish you had been given before writing your first book?

Well, I already knew it is a very competitive market. I wish someone had told me to keep extremely careful records of all citations. After I completed all the chapters of my *Ocean Book*, requests started to come in from my publisher asking where I got this information and that statistic. It was a nightmare! Keep careful records of all quotes.

2. If you could give a new author any advice, what would it be?

See #1. Also, you must have a very thick skin. Expect many rejections. Count on it. There will be an acceptance among all those dozens—yes, dozens—of rejections. Do not despair. Continue to pray (Matthew 21:22), and submit, submit, submit.

If you get disenchanted after only two dozen rejections in a row, then you're on your way out as an author. Remember the 99:1 rule—99 rejections to 1 acceptance. It's a rough field, but if that is where God has led you. . . .

One other item: cut. Now cut again. Get rid of all that fluff and redundant material. Cut, cut, cut!

3. What tools do you think are of the most value to an author?

Spel cheque and a detailed thesaurus. But the very best tools are educated friends who are not afraid to be honest and critical of your efforts but who are able to praise your work as well. Make no mistake; they should be blunt and brutal as they review your manuscript—just like the publisher you'll send the manuscript to.

4. Have you self-published? If so, would you do it again, and why?

No. I have found that self-published material doesn't receive a fraction of the distribution like major, known publishers.

Betty Smith, co-author

Considering God's Creation

Eagle's Wings Educational Materials

www.eagleswingsed.com

2. If you could give a new author any advice, what would it be?

Find mentors! There are several online e-groups that provide valuable information for authors. It would have been nice to have all that help when we were getting started twenty years ago. But we did have friends who shared their experience with us, and that helped us get started.

4. Have you self-published? If so would you do it again, and why?

Even though it has been a challenge to self-publish, we wanted the freedom to decide what to write and when to write it. We didn't want to have to go through committees to make changes or deadlines from people who didn't understand that life and family come first.

Marilyn Rockett

Author and speaker

Homeschooling at the Speed of Life

www.MarilynRockett.com

1. What advice do you wish you had been given before writing your first book?

Writing a book doesn't sell a book! If you choose to self-publish, you have to market the book. If a publisher publishes your book, you have to ask hard questions about how they will market your book. I self-published my first book and marketed it myself. Then I turned it over to a curriculum publisher, who did not do a very good job marketing it. I didn't get a marketing plan in writing from the publisher and should have before I agreed to the arrangement.

2. If you could give a new author any advice, what would it be?

Get an excellent editor. It is worth the price, even if you are a good writer. You don't see things in your own writing. There is a difference in proofreading and editing, and while it is good to have several pairs of eyes proofreading your work, a good editor will make your book "shine." If you think hiring an editor is too costly, you don't have enough confidence in your book sales. This book represents you. It must be of excellent quality, or readers won't consider subsequent works you publish. A publisher will have it edited for you. You have to be thick-skinned when an editor goes over your work—but you should listen and consider strongly the editor's advice (that is, if you hired an excellent one!).

3. What tools do you think are of the most value to an author?

The Internet is a wonderful tool that introduces an author to a wide audience quickly without readers needing to see the book or hear of the author through a group or other people. Wisely used, the Internet can be a helpful tool to get the word out about a book, whether you are published or self-published.

4. Have you self-published? If so, would you do it again, and why?

I self-published my first book and marketed it successfully. Yes, I would do it again. In fact, with the advent of the Internet, marketing is much easier than when I published that first book. When an author self-publishes, it is a trade-off. You have more control over the content, title, graphics, and marketing, but you fund the venture and take the financial risks yourself. You earn more from your book when you self-publish than you do with royalties from a publisher, but you have to factor the publishing and marketing costs into your earnings. Self-publishers can sometimes miscalculate their selling price and not allow enough to produce and market the book. You might have difficulty getting your book into the large bookstores and distributors when you self-publish, but you have to determine if this is important or not with your particular book topic.

5. Have you been published by another publisher? If so, would you do it again, and why?

Yes, I have been published by two publishers. Yes, I would do it again, depending on the book. It is better to get the book out to readers with a publisher than to be unable to publish the book yourself due to lack of capital. Possibly royalties from one book can fund self-publishing another book. I would make the decision between self-publishing and using a publisher based on my ability to commit the time to the finished product (You have to commit the time to write it either way.), the funds to produce the product, the topic of the book (Would a publisher be interested or not?), offers publishers make for a book, and my “known” factor at the time (Are you a known author in your niche, or is this your first venture?). I think there is a place for both publishers and self-publishers depending on the individual author and book.

Sharon Jeffus

Author and publisher

Visual Manna, Inc.

Artsy Animals Learn to Read

www.VisualManna.com

1. What advice do you wish you had been given before writing your first book?

The best advice about writing a book is that if God has given you an idea, then you need to develop it.

2. If you could give a new author any advice, what would it be?

You should never give up. Tenacity is very important in the book business.

3. What tools do you think are of the most value to an author?

Authors need excellent research skills, creativity, and the ability to finish what they start. How many unfinished books are out there?

4. Have you self-published? If so, would you do it again, and why?

I love to self-publish because I have total control of content and ownership of the idea.

Kym Wright

Author and publisher

Learn and Do Unit Studies

www.KymWright.com

1. What advice do you wish you had been given before writing your first book?

To start with a big picture in mind: an outline, an idea of where you are going. To spend time daily/weekly writing—but to keep family life going. Pay attention to the spouse and children. Write for a specific audience—homeschoolers, afterschoolers, parents, moms of many, children, teens, young boys, etc.

2. If you could give a new author any advice, what would it be?

Write what you have a passion for, what you have knowledge about, or something which you know nothing about, but want to find out lots about. Plan on it taking twice as long to complete as you think it will. Let friends borrow it to give their response. Listen to your friends' responses. My friends borrowed the unit studies I wrote and encouraged me to make them market-ready—available to others. It took me a while to believe them and to make it happen.

3. What tools do you think are of the most value to an author?

Computer, library resources, online research, thesaurus (www.thesaurus.com), dictionary (www.dictionary.com), pencil and yellow legal pads, someone to brainstorm ideas with.

4. Have you self-published? If so, would you do it again, and why?

My husband really is in charge of this area. He loves self-publishing because we make so much more of the profits. But I love the look of a finished book, hard-bound, published by a firm. We have been approached about publishing with a firm—we're still considering it. There are a few publishing firms I would consider. It will bring higher yields, for a few years, but the money is about the same. In the homeschool arena, books have a few years of selling well, then they become available on eBay and become less popular.

QUERY LETTERS TEN WAYS TO HOOK A LITERARY AGENT

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www.BeYourOwnEditor.com

1. Leave out the bells and whistles.
2. Proofread it.
3. Include a SASE (stamped, self-addressed envelope).
4. Include a synopsis, but keep it brief.
5. Do your homework.
6. Type. Seems obvious.
7. Get the agent's name right.
8. Don't make it a form letter.
9. Don't compare your manuscript to bestsellers.
10. If you've written eighteen unpublished manuscripts,
don't say so.

To read the entire article, visit:

www.writing-query-letters.com/ten-ways-to-hook-a-literary-agent

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

I have done my best to include only the websites I have found with the most useful information. As you know, some websites will not work from time to time or the links are no longer available. Here is where an extensive knowledge of searching using keywords can be an invaluable help. Under each heading I've included the keywords I used to find these websites. Feel free to search out your own sites.

Disclaimer: Writing and publishing tends to bring out interesting people. Not all of them would be welcomed at my dinner table, and I'm sure the sentiment is shared. The problem remains that national writing organizations tend to bring all types of people together. Realize this as you are searching the sites. I've included some websites that contain good information even if the author's works would not be considered for my bookshelf. The mechanics of writing a query letter or book proposal remain the same no matter what genre you are writing.

Some of these websites are entirely free; others allow users to access some of the information for free and encourage you to sign up for full use. The choice is yours. I belong to several of the organizations. Don't get carried away with joining all of them or even most. After doing your research, concentrate on writing your manuscript. Leave the blogging, e-zines, and writer groups for those trying to sell their work. It takes up a lot of time, and one seasoned veteran stopped online posting because she realized how much time she was devoting to this endeavor.

WEBSITES AND RESOURCES

Research for current best-selling titles:

Type in keywords for best-selling book lists: “top ten selling books”; “best selling books”; “best selling children’s books” (cookbook, novels, etc.)

New York Times:

www.nytimes.com

Publisher’s Weekly:

www.publishersweekly.com

Writer’s Digest:

www.writersdigest.com

The Writer’s Market:

www.writersmarket.com

The Book Standard:

www.thebookstandard.com

USA Today:

www.usatoday.com

Marketing Ideas:

Type in keywords for marketing: “marketing books”; “marketing children’s books”; “marketing non-fiction books (your specific type of book, etc.)

Google Book Partner Program:

<https://books.google.com/partner>

Booklist Online (free 30-day trial):

www.booklistonline.com

Free Information Sources:

Type in keywords for free information: “free information for e-books”; “free information for marketing children’s books”; “free information for writers”; “free information for non-fiction writers”

Creating and selling e-books online:

http://ezinearticles.com/?Selling-Books-and-E-Books-Online&id=5202

Lots of information about marketing, some of it free:

www.bookmarket.com

Information about writing and lists of current freelance writing positions and pay schedules:

www.writersweekly.com/books/818.html

www.freelancewriting.com

Lisa Silverman:

Many very good articles and advice for authors

www.beyourownditor.com

Free information about writing and editing; click “Stylebook” by Rob Melton for free download:

www.jea.org/curriculum/writing/index.html

Free Demographics Online:

Sign up and search various areas. You can save your information into popular office software. This site currently only works with Internet Explorer.

www.freedemographics.com/AllocateOnline.srct?commid=&skin=

American Organization of Indexers (find writing, journalism, publishing, and editing information):

www.asindexing.org/site/orgpub.shtml

Classes and Seminars/Conferences:

Type in keywords for classes and seminars or conferences: “writers’ conferences”; “best writers’ seminars”; “best writers’ classes”; “best writers’ classes online”

American Society of Journalists and Authors:

www.asja.org

Take classes on writing, writing a proposal, etc.:

www.writersonlineworkshops.com

www.writersweekly.com/books/818.html

www.absoluteclasses.com

www.writingclasses.com

<http://watkins.gospelcom.net/americanchristianwriters/acwconferences.htm>

American Christian Fiction Writers—writers’ contests and conferences:

www.acfw.com

Christian Writer’s Group International—nonprofit Christian writers’ group offering education, scholarships, and submission opportunities.

http://cwgonline.org/

Christian online groups:

www.writing-world.com/links/christian.shtml

Finding an Agent:

Type in keywords for finding an agent: “finding an agent for non-fiction writers”; “information about agents”; “best agents for children’s fiction” (hook an agent, literary agent, etc.)

http://aar-online.org/mc/page.do

www.agentquery.com

www.writing-query-letters.com/all-you-need-to-know-about-agents.php

www.writing-query-letters.com/how-to-sign-with-a-literary-agent.php

www.writing-query-letters.com/ten-ways-to-hook-a-literary-agent.php

Writing a Query Letter or Book Proposal:

Beware: some of these sites offer good information but then try to get you to buy something. One of the articles I read tried to pitch

a \$197 program guaranteed to get you a six-figure book advance. At that rate, the seller of this promotional program is making at least that. Please don't fall for these gimmicks.

Type in keywords for writing a query letter or book proposal: “how-to-write a query letter”; “best query letters”; “how-to-write a book proposal” (writing query letters, book proposals for non-fiction writers, etc.)

www.writing-query-letters.com

www.writing-query-letters.com/how-to-use-cover-letters.php

www.writing-query-letters.com/preparing-email-mail-queries.php

www.writing-query-letters.com/e-mail-queries.php

Information on both queries and book proposals:

www.writersdigest.com

Publications:

Type in keywords for publications: “top publications for writers”; “best publications for writers”; (writers, children's fiction publications, etc.)

The Writer magazine published monthly:

www.writermag.com/wrt

Writer's Digest magazine Published bimonthly

www.writersdigest.com

Extensive Writing Resources:

Type in keywords for extensive writing resources: “best writing resources for non-fiction authors”; “best resources for children’s authors”; “top sites for mind mapping software”; (software for authors, mind mapping, book reviews, contests, etc.)

Mind mapping software:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Mind_Mapping_software

Information about and book reviews of top picks, available to libraries with subscriptions:

www.bookpage.com

A free website; upload a portion (site recommends around 1,000–2,500 words max) of your story and manuscript and get feed back from other authors, for free:

www.editred.com

Another site for comments by peers; reading is free; submitting requires a small fee:

www.thenextbigwriter.com

Resources for writers, including editing, contests, and more:

www.writingclasses.com/WritersResources/index.php

Lots of information for those wanting to write fiction and science fiction:

www.hollylisle.com

Find writing jobs online:

www.sun oasis.com

For Speakers:

Toastmasters International—helps you work on your public speaking skills (Toastmasters is available for children and teens as well. Check availability in your area.)

www.toastmasters.org

For Publishers:

Type in keywords for publishers: “publisher’s market place”; “information for self-publishers”; “best sources for e-books”; (bookstores, book cover design, etc.)

Some of these websites contain free information, and some are fee-based:

Publishers Market Place.

www.publishersmarketplace.com

American Booksellers Association—nonprofit organization of independent bookstores (with storefronts):

www.bookweb.org

Everything self-publishers need to know:

www.danpoynter.com/sites/para/resources/supplier.cfm

A source for e-books:

www.e-booktime.com/publish.html

Information and resources for publishers:

www.bookwire.com/bookwire/bookwire.html#mem

Industry statistics relating to publishing:

www.bookwire.com/bookwire/BookIndustryStatistics.asp

Reasonably priced graphic artists:

www.bookcoverdesigner.com

www.sorcadesign.com

ISBNs (an identification system for books):

This official site will lead you to R. R. Bowker and has information regarding ISBNs:

www.isbn.org/standards/home/index.asp

This is the only legitimate source for purchasing ISBN numbers:

www.bowker.com

Organizations:

Type in keywords for writers' organizations: "author links"; "author blogs"; "author societies"; "authors' guild" (writers' web

loops, blogs, writers' societies, etc.) There are too many to list, but these will get you started.

Author Link—informational site:

www.authorlink.com

The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators:

www.scbwi.org

Christian Writers Guild: *www.christianwritersguild.com*

Academy of Poets: *www.poets.org*

National Writers Union: *www.nwu.org*

The Writers Guild of America: *www.wga.org*

Journalism Education Association: *www.jea.org*

For Christian writers:

Type in keywords for Christian writers: "top Christian writers' sites"; "contests and tools for Christian writers"; "Christian writing guild" (Christian conferences, Christian organizations for writers, etc.)

Free tools, contests and submissions, and e-book division, but you must be a member to access the contests and tools.

www.faithwriters.com

Great information; you need to dig a bit to find it. A complete guide to writing a proposal, among other information for free download.

www.christianwriters.com

Christian Writers Guild (offers contests for new writers; pricey yearly membership):

www.christianwritersguild.com/contest.asp

Sally Stuart's Christian Writers' Market Guide:

www.stuartmarket.com

Your Guide to Marketing Books in the Christian Marketplace

www.christianpublishers.net/marketing

Sarah Bolme- Co-Founder and Director of Christian Small Publishers Association

www.christianpublishers.net

Christian conferences around the country by month and year:

www.stuartmarket.com/Conferences.html

Christian Writer's Fellowship International:

www.cwfi-online.org

Christian writing resources:

www.writing-world.com/links/christian.shtml

InScribe Christian Writers Fellowship (Canada)—One of the best sites for free information for writers. Excellent.

www.inscribe.org/first-page.htm

E-books for Christian writers:

www.writersebook.com

Copyright Law and General Information:

Type in keywords for copyright law and information: “important information about copyright laws”; “copyright and publications”; “copyright and liability for publishers” (copyright law, copyright attorneys, etc.)

www.copylaw.com

www.copyright.gov

www.benedict.com

RECOMMENDED PUBLICATIONS ON WRITING AND PUBLISHING

Herman, Jeff, and Deborah Levine. *Write the Perfect Book Proposal: 10 That Sold and Why*. 2nd ed. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc, 2001.

Kremer, John. *1001 Ways to Market Your Books: For Authors and Publishers*. 6th ed. Fairfield, Iowa: Open Horizons, 2006.

Masterson, Pete. *Book Design and Production: A Guide for Authors and Publishers*. El Sobrante, Calif.: Aeonix Publishing Group, 2005.

Poynter, Dan. *Self-Publishing Manual: How to Write, Print and Sell Your Own Book*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Para Publishing, 2006.

Ross, Marilyn, and Tom Ross. *The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing: Everything You Need to Know to Write, Publish, Promote and Sell Your Own Book*. 4th ed. Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer's Digest Books, 2002.

———. *Jump Start Your Book Sales: A Money-Making Guide for Authors, Independent Publishers and Small Presses*. Buena Vista, Colo.: Communication Creativity, 1999.

Strunk, William Jr., E.B. White, and Roger Angell. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed. Needham Heights: Allyn & Bacon, 2000.

University of Chicago Press Staff. *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 15th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

WRITING TERMINOLOGY

Account Manager – The person who handles your account at a publishing house or at the office of your offset printer.

Bio – This is about you and anything you want your reader to know. It should be written in the third person.

Byline — Credit given to the author of an article.

Clip – A sample of original work that has been published.

Copyediting – Correcting a manuscript for grammatical errors. This is normally fee- based. Note: writing for publication does not have two spaces after each sentence, but only one.

Design Layout – Transferring a manuscript is from the typing program or word processor into a final layout that looks like a real book. This may include graphics, digital photos, sidebars, etc.

Deadline – The date when you must have your work completed and handed in to an editor. Self-publishers should give themselves deadlines as well.

DPI – Dots per inch— a measure of the resolution quality of a digital picture. The higher the number, the crisper and shaper the image will be. Books must have at least a 300 DPI for publishing.

Full Color – Also known as four-color (cyan, magenta, yellow, and black).

Guidelines – Specifications for an article, book, query letter, proposal, etc. Guidelines should be followed explicitly; this isn't the time to be creative.

Hook – The first sentence or paragraph of your query letter, article, or proposal. This sentence should be your best and “hook” the reader’s attention.

MS/MSS – Abbreviations for the words “manuscript” and “manuscripts.”

On Spec – “On speculation.” This means there are no promises being made that your work will be published.

Offset Printing – A type of printing that is used by large publishing houses to keep the cost of each copy lower, especially for larger print runs.

Perfect Binding – This refers to the binding of a soft-cover book, which has been sewn and glued to keep the pages together. This is done by the offset printer.

Print Ready – Ready for print following all the printer’s specifications.

Print Run – The number of copies the printer will produce of each given title.

Query – A one-page letter that sells your idea or story to an editor or agent. It must be extremely well written and should be professionally edited.

Rights – The right to publish your work or other works based on it (such as movie adaptations, audio recordings, etc). The person purchasing your work agrees to pay you for the manuscript and possibly buy the rights so that you cannot resell it again. An agent normally negotiates this for the author.

Slant – The direction you are taking with your book idea or proposal.

Submission – Your completed manuscript.

Tight – Brief and to the point; concise.

Trim Size – The dimensions of the final book.

For printing terminology visit:

www.printingyoucantrust.com/glossary.cfm

WORKS CITED

“An Important Message about Unauthorized Resellers of ISBNs,”
R. R. Bowker, www.isbn.org/standards/home/resellers.asp.

Kremer, John. *1001 Ways to Market Your Books: For Authors and Publishers*. 6th ed. Fairfield, Iowa: Open Horizons, 2006.

Masterson, Pete. *Book Design and Production: A Guide for Authors and Publishers*. El Sobrante, Calif.: Aeonix Publishing Group, 2005.

Poynter, Dan. *Self-Publishing Manual: How to Write, Print and Sell Your Own Book*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: Para Publishing, 2006.

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———. *The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing: Everything You Need to Know to Write, Publish, Promote and Sell Your Own Book*. 4th ed. Cincinnati, Ohio: Writer’s Digest Books, 2002.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Felice Gerwitz is a wife, and the mother of five children. She has a B.A. degree in education and has home educated her children exclusively since 1986. Felice is an award-winning author and has written and published seventeen titles to date. She is a conference speaker and writes for many well-known magazines. She lives in Florida and is currently homeschooling her three youngest children.

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

Media Angels,® Inc. is owned by Jeff and Felice Gerwitz. It was formed to publish high-quality materials with the busy family in mind. Media Angels curriculum has been listed in Cathy Duffy's book *100 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum* and featured in *Homeschooling 101: The Essential Handbook* by Mark and Christine Field. Media Angels is working on publishing a series of novels that will focus on geography, history, environmental issues, and character. For more information, visit www.mediaangels.com or e-mail felice@mediaangels.com.