

So ... Are You Sure You REALLY Want to Write That Book? *Musings for Potential Authors*

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Some thoughts to keep in mind ...

- *Planning, writing, editing, and promoting your book will take FAR more time and energy than you can imagine.*

“Writing a book is an adventure. To begin with, it is a toy and an amusement. Then it becomes a mistress, then it becomes a master, then it becomes a tyrant. The last phase is that just as you are about to be reconciled to your servitude, you kill the monster and fling him to the public.”

– *Winston S. Churchill*

- *You’d better love what you’re writing—because you’ll be stuck with it for a very long time.*
 - Do you feel passionately enough about this book that you can “keep the seat of your pants in the seat of the chair?” for months and probably years?
 - Writing the book is the easy part. Are you up for promoting and doing talks on it for the next few (or more) years?
- *Be prepared to spend some money—maybe quite a lot of money.*
 - Even if you choose to go the traditional publishing route (more on that below), your book will need to be edited by a professional—even if you’re a professional editor. Check out the Editorial Freelance Association, www.the-efa.org, for rates and industry standards.
 - And if you choose to publish independently, you’ll need still professional editing, in addition to design (for both the cover and the interior), formatting, and printing.
- *Ultimately, what is your goal for this book?*
 - To be a book author? This, by itself, is a terrible reason to write a book.
 - To tell your personal story to your friends and family?
 - To entertain many readers with an enthralling story?
 - To inform many readers about an important issue or situation? Or a special place?
 - ~ Here’s a question to keep in mind: *Why should they care?*
- *Who’s your audience?*
 - Where will your book be shelved in Barnes & Noble?
 - If your book is a novel, how would readers of your book answer this question?
 - ~ *My favorite fiction authors are _____, _____, _____, _____, _____,*
 - If your book is non-fiction, what else does your ideal reader read?
 - ~ Books published by university presses?
 - ~ Papers in various scholarly journals, articles in trade journals?
 - ~ Literary general-interest magazines? *New Yorker, Harper’s, Atlantic Monthly?*
 - ~ Mainstream topical interest magazines: *Psychology Today, Smithsonian, etc.?*
 - ~ Websites, blogs?
 - ~ What publications are on your own coffee table?

- *What else is out there that's similar to the book you want to write?*
 - Do your homework:
 - ~ Research other books and projects that would compete with yours.
 - ~ For novels, list what books are similar to yours.
 - ~ For non-fiction, list what makes your book different – and more valuable.
 - ~ Check to see if other authors have covered aspects that need to be in your book.
 - ~ What about collaborating with one or more of them?

- *Why YOU?*
 - What do YOU bring to the project that will elevate this book above all others like it?
 - Why are YOU perfectly suited to write it?

- *What tools do you intend to use?*
 - Yes, you'll be using a computer and a word-processing program; most likely, Microsoft Word, Apple's Pages, or an open-source (i.e. FREE) program like Open Office or LibreOffice.
 - How are you going to build your book? And keep track of your source material? Index cards? Yes, but also check out the various mind-mapping and reference programs. (I'm a Scrivener fan.)

- *What will your book look like?*
 - No, it's NOT too soon to think about that ...
 - ~ Just text?
 - Typography gives a visual tone to your book — what tone do you want for yours?
 - ~ Images, either photos or illustrations? (Yes, fiction too: Think *Miss Peregrine's School...*)
 - ~ What physical shape is your book? Vertical? Horizontal?

- *Do you want to go with traditional or independent publishing (self-publishing, or a hybrid)?*
 - Traditional publishing: Advantages
 - ~ The clout of the "Big Five" (IF you can get their attention)
 - ~ A wide variety of small and independent presses
 - ~ Some do design, editing, promotion, distribution very well. Others not so much.
 - Traditional publishing: Disadvantages
 - ~ It's slow, VERY hard to get accepted, they keep 92% of the profits
 - Independent publishing: Advantages
 - ~ It can be quick; you have more control (not always a good thing!).
 - ~ You keep more of the profits.
 - Self-publishing: Disadvantages
 - ~ You pay for ALL the editing, design, production, promotion, distribution.
 - ~ Your book may not be deemed acceptable in some markets (including TFoB)
 - Hybrid publishing (Examples include Wheatmark, She Writes, 1106 Publishing)
 - ~ A mix: You pay part of the costs; they handle editing, design, distribution (sometimes).
 - ~ Amount of hand-holding, investment, promotion, etc. varies tremendously.

DO YOUR HOMEWORK.

- *And here's a final thought: Maybe what you really want to do ... isn't a book at all?*
 - Maybe it's a website? Or a podcast? Or a video?
 - Or a collection of recordings for an oral history?
 - Or a gallery showing with touch-and-feel exhibits?
 - Or

GOOD LUCK! And please let me know if I can help in any way.