

HOW TO  
SPREAD  
THE

# WORD-OF-MOUSE

BY PEGGY TIBBETTS



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## **How to Spread the Word-of-Mouse**

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## **The Road to Weird**

by Peggy Tibbetts

<http://www.peggytibbetts.net>

"Weird" is wonderful! It has earned a permanent spot on my bookshelf, and I highly recommend it to anyone who enjoys young adult novels with a touch of the paranormal.

**Moira Allen, Writing-World.com**

... great fiction by a very, very strong writer. This book is actually two stories: *Carly's Ghost* and *Harpo Marx is Seeing Things*, both books about normal teens, or tweens, who find themselves visited by the paranormal.

**Readers Room**

The Road to Weird is a thrilling, chilling, fun, delightful read for young and old alike.

**Writers and Readers Network**

A two-story collection for those who like a touch of the abnormal, *The Road to Weird*, is a gem among pebbles.

**BookReview.com**

The Road to Weird is a thrilling collection written by a talented author.

**Midwest Book Review**

A great story of how many times special gifted people are not always understood and even teased for what they see and feel.

**Book Review Cafe**



## **Rumors of War**

by Peggy Tibbetts

<http://www.peggytibbetts.net>

This is a thriller as well as ... a tragic romance. This book would make a good movie.

### **Writer's Digest Certificate of Merit**

... a very powerful and stunning thriller portraying the horror of finding your reality is not what you thought it was.

### **The Book Reader**

... a well laid trap. Set against the backdrop of Desert Storm, this novel delves into the possibilities behind the real reason governments traipse off to war.

### **Midwest Book Review**

5 stars! Tibbetts has given readers a book that is full of plots and subplots ... I liked this book ... was disappointed when I read the last words.

### **Scribes World Reviews**

... a true suspense novel. Whenever I thought I had the plot figured out, Tibbetts would take me on yet another roller coaster ride by adding an unexpected and exciting twist.

### **US Times Bestseller List & Reviews**

... a fast paced novel interlaced with intrigue, danger, passion and ... one woman alone uncovering secrets of dangerous proportions.

### **Ebook Junction**

... builds into a frenzy of excitement. Every time you think you know where things are going, it takes a delightful turn ... leaves you wanting more.

### **The Bookdragon Review**



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## How to Spread the Word-of-Mouse

Marketing experts agree, of all the state-of-the-art promotional tools available, word-of-mouth gets the best results. It's the oldest and the simplest form of advertising. With your computer and the Internet, word-of-mouth translates into word-of-mouse.

I'm a published author and Managing Editor for Writing-World.com, where you'll find my children's author interviews, including: Ann Cooper, Marilyn Singer, Pattie Schnetzler, Julie Anne Peters, David Lubar, James Deem, Mary Peace Finlay, Deborah Holt Williams, and Maryann Weidt.

**[<http://www.writing-world.com/children/index.shtml>]**

I also have my own question and answer column, "Advice from a Caterpillar." I invite you to submit your questions to me about writing for children.

**[<http://www.writing-world.com/caterpillar/index.shtml>]**

I assure you up front I'm not an expert about promotion, marketing, e-publishing, or the Internet. But I definitely know my way around cyberspace. In fact my husband would like you to know I could probably write a book about "How to Shop Online." Truth is, for the past ten years, I've spent hours upon hours online, learning my way around, familiarizing myself with content and web sites, discovering the advantages of the Internet for me as a writer. What I've found is a land of plenty for ALL writers. And even though the focus here is on book promotion and marketing online, I assure you there are loads of opportunities for writers, whether or not you have a book published.

The beauty of the Internet for writers is you can break in long before you have a book to sell. Because you have a service to sell—writing. There's a popular saying, "On the Internet, content is king." Which means that web sites need words, and lots of them.

I can't show you "How to Get Rich Off the Internet." Or even "How to Make a Decent Living Off the Internet." Either of those is certainly possible. Anything's possible. But that's not the point. What I CAN show you is "How to Spread the Word-of-Mouse" about yourself, your writing, and your books.

In 1999, I was anticipating the publisher's release of my children's novel, "Carly's Ghost," and my self-published novel, "Rumors of War." I knew, like most new authors and self-published authors, the promotion and marketing of my books would rest solely on my shoulders. And, like all new authors and self-published authors, my advertising budget was slim. Naturally I turned to the Internet. I knew that online promo and marketing is the most cost effective way to reach the largest number of people.

But how did I know that?

During that same year—1999—two authors, Angela Adair-Hoy and MJ Rose, were not only successfully marketing their books online, but were busy letting others know—through interviews, articles, and newsletters—about the advantages of online book promotion.

Not surprisingly, Angela's ebook "How to Write, Publish, and Sell E-Books,"

**[<http://www.booklocker.com>]** sold phenomenally well, through her weekly online newsletter and web site, "Writers Weekly." **[<http://www.writersweekly.com>]** Self-published nonfiction can be extremely successful and Angela's ebook is 17 pages, in an easy-to-download PDF file, for only \$8.95.

What intrigued me more was MJ Rose's success with her self-published fiction novel, "Lip Service," which had become the first self-published novel to be a Featured Alternate Selection at both Doubleday Book Club and The Literary Guild, and subsequently contracted by Pocket Books for hardcover release in September of 1999. That kind of success for a self-published fiction author was truly extraordinary.

By then I'd already seen some of my articles published online, but those two women's successes opened my eyes to the real power of promotion and marketing on the Internet. Eventually Angela and MJ combined their efforts and their information into co-authoring the book, "How to Publish and Promote Online," which I strongly recommend as one of the best references out there today.

Okay, first you must learn the cardinal rule of online marketing.

Never spam!

Do you know what spam is?

For those who aren't real sure, here's a brief history of spam—not to be confused with SPAM—which, as you already know, is a canned lunch meat product, made by Hormel Foods of Minnesota.

In a policy statement on SPAM and the Internet, Hormel "does not object" to use of the slang term "spam" to describe unsolicited commercial email. Instead the company asks only that people writing specifically about the square, canned pork follow a set of trademark guidelines.

The suggestions, posted on the web site, are clear and simple:

"Please Do: Always put the trademark SPAM in all capital letters. Follow SPAM with 'Luncheon Meat' or other descriptor. Remember, a trademark is a formal adjective and as such, should always be followed by a noun."

But, Hormel wasn't always so user friendly. In 1997, the company sent a letter to Sanford Wallace, a notorious email spammer, objecting to his use of the word "spam" and his registration of the web site "spamford.com". Being the notorious email spammer that he was, Wallace made sure the contents of the letter was passed around to plenty of people.

Now comes the goofy part. Hormel blames, of all things, Monty Python, the British Comedy troupe, for the adoption of "spam" as a synonym for junk email. It all started with an old Monty Python skit, which some of you Python fans here might recall, in which a group of Vikings sing a chorus of "SPAM, SPAM, SPAM..." at increasing volumes in an attempt to drown out other conversation. According to Hormel, because unsolicited email is seen as drowning out normal discourse on the Internet, the analogy to modern-day spam applied.

Huh?

Goofier still, even Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary uses the Monty Python story to explain the derivation of the word "spam," as it pertains to "unsolicited commercial email sent to a large number of addresses." But the dictionary only notes in parentheses that the word is also a trademark for a canned meat product.

In the end it all works out quite well for Hormel, I think. After all, deleting spam emails all day builds up an appetite. And what better way to fill that craving than with a protein-rich square of salty, pink pork.

So there. Now you know what spam is ... and what SPAM isn't!

Sending out email announcements to friends and family about the release of your new book and asking them to forward your announcement to their friends and family is NOT spamming. By the way, spam is also a verb—spam, spammed, spamming.

However, paying \$500 to an online marketing firm, who promises to distribute your email announcement to 100,000 email addresses of consumers who might buy your book—like one unsuspecting new author did—well that’s your spam, spammed, spamming right there. Gee, that whole Monty Python thing is really catchy, isn’t it?

Let me tell you about Jonathan Tropper, who had so much success with his own personal email campaign, sending out announcements about his new book, “Plan B,” to the email addresses of friends, family members, and quite a few others he’d simply collected over time, that he decided to take it to the next level. His initial email campaign, the one he managed to pull off on his own, boosted his book sales at Amazon.com, plus something like 200 people showed up at his Manhattan Barnes & Noble book premier and signing in March of 2000. What Tropper didn’t know was that the next level was down.

He hired the Las Vegas-based Internet Marketing Group (IMG), who promised to target the promotion of his book to 100,000 likely readers online. Instead, IMG proceeded to send Tropper’s book announcement to dozens of un-targeted web communities and influential people. It was pretty much indiscriminate, including a bunch of kite enthusiasts.

Unfortunately for him, his email announcement included a link to his book’s page at Amazon, where the revenge was swift and ugly. A torrent of angry comments from the spam-ees soon cluttered the reader reviews section. His book sales plummeted, and Tropper’s reputation was tattered.

Although I do think he’s recovered somewhat, since The Wall Street Journal ran a story in August 2000, detailing his literary marketing blunder, garnering him some enormous publicity—and you know what they say, any publicity—even bad publicity—is good publicity. Not to mention his publisher, St. Martin’s Press released “Plan B” in paperback in February 2001. So I’d say the bad publicity turned out pretty good for him, all things considered.

Nonetheless, I DO NOT recommend these methods. There are other, much safer methods of online publicity.

If only Jonathan Tropper had published his own web site back then. He has one now. [<http://www.jonathantropper.com>] If you have a book published or are expecting the release of your new book, you should definitely publish a web site. It’s the best way to begin promoting your book online.

I’m not going to spend time telling you how to create a web site or web site software, or any of the mechanics of web site construction. You can find plenty of resources online, in print, and around your local community to help you get started on the construction of your own web site. Web sites are like fitness, there’s no one way to do it. Just do it.

Instead you need to know what sort of content to put on your web site. Always include the book cover, a short blurb about your book, reviews, the ISBN and price, and links to where your book can be purchased. You should also publish the first chapter. As a book buyer, when you browse in bookstores, you get the chance to pick up any book, see the cover, feel the weight of it, and read the first chapter. At your web site, you can’t give readers any physical grasp of your book, but you CAN give them the first chapter.

Be sure to provide information about the author—that would be you. Include announcements of book signings or speaking engagements, a short bio, articles and interviews, or links to them. Consider putting up a page that offers free information. Whether it’s resources for teachers, or resources for writers, everybody loves free stuff.

For example, James Deem, one of my interview subjects at Writing World, publishes a web site called, “The Mummy Tombs,” [<http://www.mummytombs.com>] dedicated to the subject matter

in his books, “Bodies from the Bog” and “How to Make a Mummy Talk.” David Lubar, another one of my interview subjects, publishes a collection of his own hilarious humor pieces at his web site. [<http://www.davidlubar.com>]

If you're really ambitious, you can compile a collection of your short stories, poems, essays, or articles into a free ebook. Be sure to include a cover image and blurb about your book or books and a link to your web site.

Now before you gasp in horror, “But I worked hard on those stories and/or articles! Why should I give away my writing?” Because it's cheaper than paying for advertising, which is very expensive. The average one time print ad costs \$400. Web site ads start much cheaper, at upwards of \$10/month, but you'd have to post a lot of ads to get the same kind of exposure you could with one free ebook. So don't think of it as giving away your writing, think of it as earning advertising revenue, and selling books.

In 2001, horror writer Doug Clegg published his entire novel, “Purity,” as a free ebook at his web site. [<http://www.douglasclegg.com>] He claimed that once he started giving away free ebooks, sales of his print books increased from 20,000 to over 100,000—in which case he didn't really give anything away. Incidentally his publisher backed him up on this. So before you publish anything in a free ebook, be sure you own the rights to it, which come under the category of electronic rights.

Some authors include a daily or weekly blog. No matter what, make yours a web site that attracts visitors.

If you don't have a book published yet, it's not as important for you to get a web site up and running. Or let's say you do have a book published, but, for whatever reason, you don't want to hassle with a web site. There are plenty of sites, where you can strut your stuff—post articles, essays, and reviews, advertise your book, and overall gain good exposure for yourself and your work. For those with published books, make sure your book and it's cover are listed at Amazon.com. If you're self-published or published with a small publisher, your best bet is to list your book for sale at Amazon's Marketplace.

Content is limited for book listing sites like Amazon, or Barnes & Noble. You, or your publisher, supply them with all pertinent data about your book, and as the author you can add more information about the book and yourself, plus publish all book reviews, and encourage readers, in the form of those faithful friends and family followers of yours, to submit reviews. On second thought, don't encourage them to submit reader reviews to Amazon—remind them, cajole them, beg them! It's the only surefire method I've found to get others to do those all important reader reviews.

Authors Den [<http://www.authorsden.com>] has a free introductory offer with fees for additional features. This site is designed specifically for writers to promote themselves and their work. Publisher's Marketplace [<http://www.publishersmarketplace.com>] is \$15/month. However writer's web pages are viewed by publishers, agents, and film producers, as they also post web pages there.

Writing-World has a feature called the “Author's Bookshelf,” where authors can display their book covers and information about their books, such as review blurbs, where to purchase their books, and a link to their web site, all for \$10 per month. [<http://www.writing-world.com/books/index.shtml>]

Information sites like Bella Online, About.com, and Suite 101, offer writers exposure, experience, and writing credits. At Bella Online, [<http://www.bellaonline.com>] they invite writers to make application to become Hosts on a wide variety of topics, from young adult literature to Southwest cooking. Same thing with About.com, [<http://www.about.com>] only there, writers are called

Guides. Things are a little different at Suite 101, [<http://www.suite101.com>] where writers are called Editors.

A word of caution about information sites like these: the Hosts, Guides, and/or Editors, are expected to perform a variety of jobs, which often include promoting the site, writing articles, providing links, hosting chat room discussions, posting regularly to message boards, and answering all visitors' emails related to their sub-site topic. This can quickly become a full time job, minus the full time pay.

Nonetheless, if you prefer to focus your attention on just one online resource, information sites can also be a very productive method of promoting yourself and your books. It's really up to each individual author, what method of promotion works best for you.

You should also recognize that even though you might not want to manage content for an information site, these sites are great resources for authors to promote their books. Look up the subject matter of your book at each site, contact the content editor and request a book review, submit an article, or request a link to your own web site. The possibilities are endless.

For example, to spread the word about my children's mystery novel, "Carly's Ghost" I emailed the Guides of two sub-sites at About.com, Books for Kids and Young Adult Books, to request book reviews. The Young Adult Books Guide reviewed my book, and that review is still indexed on the sub-site. Although the Books for Kids Guide didn't review my book, she included a blurb about "Carly's Ghost" in her new books section.

And speaking of reviews, book reviews are one of the best ways to generate a good buzz about your book. Word-of mouth. Your publisher should make every effort to get your book reviewed before it's released in print. However if that doesn't happen—and sometimes it doesn't with new authors—or your publisher only gets one review, or if you're a self-published author in need of reviews, you can continue to seek reviews even after publication. Dozens of web sites dedicated to book readers have sprung up in recent years. They're staffed with as many as a half dozen reviewers, some are paid, others just do it for the free books. No matter what their motivation, they're hungry for new books to review. Online book reviews have a longer "shelf life" than print reviews. Most web sites index and archive their book reviews, making them accessible for months, if not years to come.

You can start by entering "book reviews" into any search engine to look for specific markets to review your book. For example, if your book is in the Science Fiction/Fantasy genre, go to Science Fiction and Fantasy World.com. At this particular author friendly site, in the lower left frame, you can click on "Contact Us: Authors & Publishers," [<http://www.sffworld.com/submit/publishers.html>] to find publicity opportunities such as book reviews and interviews, there for the asking.

Search for web sites with similar subject matter to your book, check to see if they do book reviews. Browse other web sites that publish book reviews. Some of those web sites also publish an online newsletter or ezine, and will simultaneously publish your book review in the newsletter and on site. New web sites, ezines and newsletters that publish book reviews are showing up constantly.

Before you request a book review, spend some time at the web site. Look at the other books featured. Read the published book reviews. Make sure your book is appropriate for the web site. Even more important, decide whether you want your book featured with the rest of the site's content. This is especially important for children's authors. For example, a children's mystery doesn't fit in at a site featuring adult romance novels.

Web site editors prefer email queries. Follow their submission guidelines carefully. They will usually specify what to put in the subject line of your email, if not use "Book Review Request" or the title of your book.

Book reviewers want to know as much as possible about your book before they read it. Provide a brief synopsis and a link to your web site. If your book has been reviewed, include blurbs from those reviews in your query to pique the editor's interest. Book review editors know their competition and they will be eager to read what's already been said about your book.

Like hummingbirds to nectar, reviewers are attracted to good buzz. Online book reviews are one way to keep everyone buzzing about your book. With a click of your mouse, you can spread the word and reach thousands of readers across the world. For a complete list of reviewers go to Children's Book Reviewers at Writing-World.com.

**[<http://www.writing-world.com/children/reviewers.shtml>]**

Authors and publishers should always contact book review editors first, according to the web site guidelines. Never submit your print book, or ebook, for review without permission. In book reviewer circles that's considered spamming your book, and all because of that silly Monty Python skit ...

By the way, just because you don't have a book published doesn't mean you can't join in the process of online book reviews. Perhaps you have experience as a book reviewer, or maybe you'd like to break into book reviewing, the Internet is a great place to start. Contact the Editors at web sites that do book reviews to ask if they're looking for additional reviewers. Or publish your own Children's Book Review web site. Again, that's the beauty of the Internet, you can make a name for yourself by providing a service.

I review young adult books for Readers Room.com. [<http://www.readersroom.com>] I find it's a great way to keep up with what's new in YA literature and get to know other authors.

Now let's move on to the fun stuff. Interviews. I don't know about you but I love interviews. I enjoy giving interviews about my books and I enjoy doing author interviews. Trust me. There are plenty of opportunities for authors to give online interviews and for writers to do author interviews.

Spend some time at your favorite search engine seeking out web sites for readers and writers that publish author interviews, like Bookwire [<http://www.bookwire.com>] and Children's Literature Resources. [<http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com/index1.htm>]

Be sure to check out those information sites I told you about—Bella Online, Suite 101, About.com. Don't be shy. Request an interview from a content editor for children's books, or from the other sites related to the subject matter of your book. It never hurts to ask. And because of all the content they're expected to provide, the editors are often open to requests for interviews.

As always, if guidelines are posted for requesting an author interview, be sure to follow them carefully. Don't write a long, rambling email about how much you need the publicity. Keep it short, feature your books, review blurbs, and a link to your web site. Maybe even suggest a few topics for discussion. Tell your prospective interviewer what's special about you and your book.

Remember those ezines and newsletters. They are another good source for author interviews. Do a search at Yahoo! Groups and Topica.com to find the ones best suited for your book. If you don't have a book published, consider doing author interviews for those same web sites, newsletters, or ezines. Some of them pay in real money, others pay in promo blurbs and a link to your web site.

Remember publicity costs money, so free publicity is valuable payback. While we're on the subject of ezines and newsletters I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about publishing your own newsletter.

Whether you call it a newsletter, ezine, or e-mag, it's an electronic publication distributed by email to non-paying or paying subscribers, either daily, weekly, or monthly. Though newsletters for promotional purposes are usually free to subscribers, the idea being, again, to give people something for free as a way of saving yourself advertising dollars, while promoting your books. As the editor/publisher you have complete control.

Just as I avoided with the topic of web sites, I'm not going to get into the details about "How to Publish an Email Newsletter." You can find out more in "How to Publish and Promote Online," by Angela Adair-Hoy and MJ Rose. What we really need to talk about are the pros and cons of publishing a newsletter. In her book, Angela Adair-Hoy will tell you it's definitely the thing to do. For authors with a nonfiction book to market, I tend to agree with her. Newsletters can be an excellent way to promote a nonfiction book or series.

Since I don't have any nonfiction books in print, I'd like to use Ann Cooper's nature series as an example. Ann Cooper is author of nine nature books in the Wonder Series and Wild Wonder Series from the Denver Museum of Nature and Science Press, and she is also the subject of one of my author interviews at Writing World.

Now if Ann was so inclined, she could publish a couple different types of online newsletters. One newsletter could be targeted to parents and teachers. Let me title it for her—we'll call it "Discovering Nature." Short, catchy, one or two-word titles are best.

Ann's nature books are interactive, containing activity pages for use in the classroom. She also presents a popular in-school nature program. In "Discovering Nature Newsletter," Ann could include a nature activity teaching aid, a nature in the news item, her upcoming school visit calendar, plus how to contact her to schedule a school visit, news about her current titles or upcoming new releases, and links to her books at Amazon.com.

A second newsletter could be geared toward kids. We'll call it "Nature Games." Again she could include a nature activity, perhaps an easy quiz, or contest to win a free copy of one of her books, maybe some nature fun facts, and links to her books at Amazon.

Ann could then advertise her newsletters at her web site, and also post each issue, and archive past issues. But Ann already has a built-in means of marketing her newsletters. When she goes to her school visits she could hand out a flyer announcing her newsletters, with instructions how to sign up online.

For fiction authors, it can be more difficult to do a topical newsletter related to your subject matter. For my book, "Carly's Ghost," I considered doing a newsletter for kids about ghosts and ghost stories. But in the planning stages I soon realized that I'd be spending a great deal of time searching for content, and dreaming up activities. If I had a series of ghost stories published, that would be quite different. I could include excerpts and activities based on several books rather than just the one. Plus I would be marketing several books at once, with a greater possibility of return for my time and effort. I don't mean to discourage fiction authors from publishing a newsletter, I'm simply saying that you'll have an easier job producing and marketing it, if you have a hook, and that's best accomplished if you choose a topic related to the subject matter of your book or books.

In my case, I'm marketing a children's mystery novel and an adult suspense novel. Kind of hard to fit them both into one newsletter. Because I'm a new, unknown author trying to build readership I initially directed my newsletter marketing efforts toward writing articles about writing and submitting them for publication in newsletters and ezines. Sometimes I get paid in real

money, and sometimes I'm paid with a free ad for my books and links to my web site. In this ebook, you'll find a list of ezines where you can submit articles.

Now that I'm the Managing Editor of the Writing World email newsletter, I find I get excellent exposure without as much work. Based on my own ezine experience, I recommend a bi-monthly or monthly newsletter, simply because it's time consuming to gather content and put it all together. A weekly newsletter can take too much time away from your writing.

For those of you who are cringing right now, daunted by the prospect of all the work involved in publishing your own newsletter, remember any writer, published book or not, can submit articles, stories, essays, or poems for publication to ezines and web sites. Moira Allen, my editor at Writing World has written an excellent reference book on the subject. I think the title says it all: "Writing.com: Creative Internet Strategies to Advance Your Writing Career."

Finally—hang in there we're reaching the end of this information download—let's talk about discussion lists, and message boards as a way to get out the word-of-mouth about your book and connect with other writers all over the world.

Discussion lists and message boards. I call them the basement of the Internet. Remember in college how the bulletin boards were always posted outside the cafeteria? And usually there was a lounge nearby with comfy chairs and sofas, and it always seems like those areas are located on the lowest level or basement of a building on campus. Students gather in those college basements to find job listings, post news, share notes, or just gripe. It's pretty much the same thing with discussion lists and message boards. On the Internet they offer a way for writers to connect with other readers and other writers.

Go to Yahoo! Groups and Topica.com and do searches for other lists for writers or for list topics related to the subject matter of your book.

Let's use Ann Cooper as our guinea pig once again. As I mentioned earlier, Ann writes nature books. She could search for discussion lists related to the environment, wildlife and also lists for teachers and educators.

Once you join a list, use an email signature line in every email you post to the list. In your signature line include the title of your books and the URL link to your web site. Every email program is different, so it won't help if I tell you how to create a signature line. Your email software should have instructions on how to do that. The best way to decide how to make your own signature line is to look at others for ideas. A signature line is like a mini-promo of your web site and your work. Every time you post an email message to a discussion list you have the chance to put your book title and your web site in front of an audience of readers.

Although a word to the wise here, when you first join a discussion list it's best to sit back and read the posts from other list members before jumping into the conversation. That way you'll get a feel for the ongoing topics and what the members are like. Many lists have rules and regulations regarding promotional emails, be sure to find out what the rules are and follow them. It's always a good idea to find out who the moderator is for your particular list and direct any of your questions her way in an email off list, or not posted to the general members but to the moderator's personal email, which is always included with each post from every member of the list.

A growing trend these days with discussion lists is authors who host, or moderate their own lists. I'm co-owner with Natalie Collins [<http://www.nataliercollins.com>] of The Write List at Yahoo! Groups.

[\[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Write-List\]](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/The-Write-List).

You've probably noticed by now, I co-op my activities on the Internet. I'm Managing Editor at Writing World, a co-owner of a discussion list, and a reviewer for Readers Room. For me, it's been a great way to avoid spreading myself too thin. Joining up with an established web site and/or ezine is a great way to gain exposure, build readership, and if you're lucky, even get paid. I've made some good friends with other writers I've never even met. We are all comrades in our efforts to build readership for our work as writers on the Internet.

Message boards are much the same as discussion lists, except the messages are posted online directly to the web site, rather than distributed by email. Suite 101 [<http://www.suite101.com>] and Epinions [<http://www.epinions.com>] are two popular sites that have message boards for announcing your book titles, review blurbs, and web site links. AOL also has a variety of message boards open to their members. Posting to message boards is a good way to get a buzz going about your book. They can be especially useful for announcing any awards or achievements your book receives.

I saved chat rooms for dead last because I've learned from other authors that they're time consuming and their effectiveness is questionable. Live online author chats featuring well known, widely published authors are more successful than author chats with new authors. And even those "famous author" chats wind up drawing only a dozen or so visitors, on average, and all that after a lot of time spent getting the word-of-mouth out. Quite often new authors just end up chatting live with some of their faithful online friends—which can be fun and all—but they don't make many new contacts that way, after putting a great deal of time and effort into promoting the chat.

Having said all that if, as a result of your promo efforts, you're asked to be the guest author for a live online chat, by all means do it. Just make sure you get out the word-of-mouth as much as possible. I'm simply saying that I wouldn't recommend spending a lot of time pursuing chats as a means of online promotion and marketing.

Don't feel like you need to start out doing everything all at once. Above all the key to successful online promotion and marketing is finding those avenues that work the best for you. As I said before, you're probably not going to get rich promoting and marketing your work on the Internet, but you will get your work in front of hundreds, even thousands of people, and get a head start in making a name for yourself as a well known, respected author.

Remember this, when it comes to reaching the most people in the shortest amount of time, while spending the least amount of money, the Internet is your gateway to spreading the word-of-mouth.

## Email Query Netiquette

Writer's Digest magazine started off the new millennium with "50 Best Places to Get Published Online" [<http://www.writersdigest.com/hotmarkets03.asp>] by Katie Struckel. Before you fire off an email query to any of these "hot" sites, be sure to read the guidelines posted under each listing, then visit the web site and familiarize yourself with the content.

Unless the guidelines say otherwise, always query first. Email queries are commonplace and an acceptable way to make contact with online editors of web sites and ezines. Even though email is quick and informal, your query must be professional. If you're not familiar with the rules of email netiquette, check out "The Net: User Guidelines and Netiquette" by Arlene H. Rinaldi [<http://www.fau.edu/netiquette/net/>] Take some time to read "Electronic Communications", which definitely applies to the query process.

The example below, while somewhat exaggerated, is poor netiquette:

HEY PEGGY! I checked out your kid lit site and its way, way COOL! I'd really like to write an article or poem or story - whatever - you name it. I've done plenty of freelance work cuz I've been writing for like the past TWO YEARS. My stuff has been published in lots of TRADE MAGAZINES and EZINES. Oh yeah, I attached some of that too. If you see anything you like let me know. BTW how much do you pay? If you want you could just let me know what you need and I'll see what I cn do but I'm pretty buzy right now so get back to me by the end of the day. Uncle Fester.

Who IS this guy? Aside from the obvious gaffs—casual language, bad formatting, inappropriate capitalization, careless grammar and spelling—Uncle Fester might've visited the web site, but he didn't actually explore the content or the submission guidelines. His query is "way, way" too general. Be sure to query with a specific idea or project that's appropriate for the ezine or web site. Don't pitch Travelwise Magazine with an article or short story about time travel.

- Never email attachments with a query; always ask the editor's permission.
- Never discuss payment; once your article is approved it's okay to verify payment terms.
- Never give the editor a deadline.
- Never use a handle or nickname; pen names are fine.

Here's a nearly perfect query:

Dear Peggy,

I spent some time looking over your web site and enjoyed reading the articles about writing for kids.

Would you be interested in an 800-word article about writing photo features for the children's magazine market? My photo features have been published in "Nature Friend" and "Owl Magazine." Samples of my work are posted on my web site.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sara Smart  
[www-dot-sara-smart-dot-com](http://www-dot-sara-smart-dot-com)

Bingo! Short and to the point, this writer did her homework and knows exactly what I'm looking for. She's been published in a couple nature magazines, so I'm willing to take a chance. Her

salutation is informal—a simple “Peggy,” would be more appropriate—but I can overlook that. It isn’t necessary to use the formal “Dear Ms. Tibbetts.”

Another strategy is to lead with the hook. The query could begin, “Children’s magazine editors are hungry for photo features. I can show readers how to break into this little known market.” However at some point it’s a good idea to let the editor know you’re familiar with the site content.

For a comprehensive guide, “Writing.com: Creative Internet Strategies to Advance Your Writing Career” by Moira Allen, covers all aspects of writing for online markets, including a detailed chapter on netiquette.

# The Word on the Web is Succinct

Let's say you submitted a dynamite query and the editor wants to read your article. Whether it's ezine or web site content, writing for the Web is different than writing for a print publication.

## Short Attention Span Theater

Research, such as Jakob Nielsen's "How Users Read on the Web" [<http://www.useit.com/alertbox/9710a.html>], has shown that reading from a computer screen is 25% slower than reading from the printed page. Most people don't like to read online text, they tend to scan. Your article should contain 50% less text than it would for the print version, about 500 to 800 words is considered readable. Longer texts should be divided into two or more parts, with each part broken up into 300 to 400 word segments under sub-headings.

Make your article easy on the eyes. Use electronic format. Separate your text into several single spaced paragraphs, double space between paragraphs. Don't indent at the beginning of a paragraph.

## Be Succinct

You have less than ten seconds to hook your reader. Online articles must get to the point fast. Put the most important information up front. Use simple sentences, no long, descriptive sentences. Cut every unnecessary word or sentence, but be careful not to sacrifice clarity. Stay away from lengthy metaphors and anecdotes. Stick to the point of the article, never stray from the subject or you'll lose your reader.

Compared to print, online articles are engaging and immediate. Readers enjoy an informal writing style, spiced with bits of humor. Writing in a "news you can use" style allows readers quick access to the information they want.

Include links to other articles and web sites to pump up your credibility. Hyperlinks stand out visually on the page. Craft your text around the link, making sure to explain its significance. Don't put too many links close together, or you'll confuse the reader and lose the impact. Test those links to be sure they not only work, but lead to the information referenced in your text.

## Before Submitting

Print out and proofread your article. There's nothing worse than a poorly edited article submission, with misspelled words. Don't leave the editing up to the editor. Just because she asked to read your article doesn't mean it's been accepted. The article is your audition. Along with considering the content, the editor is judging your professionalism.

Ask the editor ahead of time whether she prefers the article submitted as an attachment or within the body of an email. Never send attachments without permission.

Strike while the iron's hot. If there's a deadline make certain you honor it. Minus a deadline, get your article to the editor as soon as humanly possible. Editors can be impatient and critical. Short attention span is an occupational hazard of editing. Above all, editors are looking for well-written, relevant content from skilled writers.

## Book Reviews Spread the Word of Mouse

Marketing experts agree, of all the state-of-the-art promotional tools available, word-of-mouth is the most valuable. Reviews are one of the best ways to generate a good buzz about your book. Whether or not your publisher secured pre-publication reviews, you can continue to seek reviews even after publication. On the Internet, word-of-mouth translates into word-of-mouse. Online book reviews are one way you can spread the word-of-mouse about your new book.

During the past decade book lovers have flocked to the Internet, creating a revolution in book buying with sites like Amazon and Barnes & Noble.com, as well as the e-evolution of e-publishing. Thousands of web sites dedicated to book readers have sprung up in recent years. They're staffed with as many as a half dozen reviewers, some are paid, others just do it for the free books. No matter what their motivation, they're hungry for new books to review. Online book reviews have a longer "shelf life" than print reviews. Most web sites index and archive their book reviews, making them accessible for months, if not years to come.

Enter "book reviews" into any search engine to look for specific markets to review your book. For example if your book is in the Science Fiction/Fantasy genre, go to: <http://www.sffworld.com> In the lower left frame, click on "Contact Us: Authors & Publishers," or type this link into your browser: <http://www.sffworld.com/submit/publishers.html> You'll find publicity opportunities such as book reviews and interviews, there for the asking. Search for web sites with similar subject matter to your book, check to see if they do book reviews. Browse other web sites that publish book reviews.

Before you request a book review, visit the web site and read their published book reviews. Look at the other authors' books featured. Make sure your book is appropriate for the web site. More important, decide whether you want your book featured with the rest of the site's content.

Web site editors prefer email queries. The submission guidelines usually specify what to put in the subject line of your email, if not use "Book Review Request" or the title of your book. Book reviewers want to know as much as possible about your book before they read it. Provide a brief synopsis and a link to your web site. If your book has been reviewed, include blurbs from those reviews in your query to pique the editor's interest. Book review editors know their competition and are eager to read what's been said about your book.

Here's a good format to follow:  
Editor, (or editor's name, if known),

I am the author of a new mystery for kids 8-12 years old (insert your own one line book description here).

Would you be interested in reviewing (book title) for (name of web site)?  
I'd be happy to send you a review copy.

Thank you.  
(Your name)  
(<http://www.your web site URL link>)

Book Title  
Author  
Publisher  
ISBN

Brief synopsis—about 25-50 words.

Review blurbs—up to 25 words each.

Examples:

“... a hauntingly good read.”

Bookreview.com

“Wonderful tale of mystery.”

The Bookdragon Review

Authors and publishers should always contact the editor first, according to the guidelines. Never submit your print book or e-book for review without permission.

Reviewers are attracted to good buzz, like hummingbirds to nectar. Getting book reviews is one way to keep everyone buzzing about your book. Use your mouse to spread the word and reach more readers through the Internet.

For a complete list of Children’s Book Reviewers go to:

**<http://www.writing-world.com/children/reviewers.shtml>**

## **Dreaming of Palestine**

By Randa Ghazy

George Braziller, Inc.

Reviewed by: Peggy Tibbetts

I wasn't expecting to like "Dreaming of Palestine." I assumed it would be heavy-handed, manipulative, and—since it was penned by a then-15-year old—perhaps not even well written.

But I was wrong—on all counts.

It's not heavy-handed. Ghazy's stream of consciousness prose woven through the narrative (translated from the Italian by Marguerite Shore) is at first distracting, then mesmerizing. As I began to grasp the reality of the characters' lives, I realized their story couldn't be told any other way. Violence, destruction, and grief don't happen in ordered, logical sentences, with proper structure and format. The story follows the intersections of the lives of eight young Palestinians—Ibrahim, Nedal, Riham, Mohammed, Ramy, Jihad, Ahmed, and Ualid. Religion is not the common denominator that draws them together, since one of them is Christian. Instead they share the common experience of having lost family members at the hands of Israeli soldiers. Generations of war have destroyed their families and their heritage. They have every reason to be terrorists, but they are not. They strive—not always successfully—to live lives committed to non-violence and peace. Throughout the novel, the recurring theme of achieving non-violence one person at a time resonates.

It's not manipulative. The seven men and one woman are like orphans in search of a family. This desire for family, to live among human beings who care for each other, is what binds them together. They cope with the unpredictable violence from the Israeli occupation forces by living together and helping each other create some sense of normalcy in their lives. Their bonds of friendship and love for each other give hope and meaning to their lives, under utterly hopeless circumstances. Politics and war represent disruption and devastation in their lives, not the force that drives them.

Each character is so uniquely drawn I couldn't help but wonder if they are based on actual people. Ghazy shows a keen understanding of the lives of young adults; their dreams, fears, and the everyday struggles unique to that stage of life that seems far beyond her years. In contrasting these essences of normal life with the horror of never-ending war, she displays real sophistication as a writer.

"Dreaming of Palestine" is not so much about religion or politics as it is about how war destroys young lives. It should be required reading for all young adults because they are the ones who will ultimately deal with the tragic inheritance of this conflict, and the trauma that will endure well into the future.

## **Memories of Sun: Stories of Africa and America**

Edited by Jane Kurtz

Greenwillow Books

Reviewed by: Peggy Tibbetts

"Memories of Sun" is a story collection that takes the reader on a sensory journey into and out of Africa. But don't mistake this book for a travelogue. Each poem and story is a generous slice of African culture spiced with an emotional punch.

While reading the book, I happened to see the movie, "Tears of the Sun". As the opening scenes played out, I realized it was also about Africa. Of course I immediately thought about "Memories of Sun". Because I had read most of it, I felt a deeper emotional pull into the film's story. No doubt the director and the publisher never intended for the two to complement one another, but they do.

Kurtz's superb editing is the glue that holds this collection together. She divided the book into three sections: Africa; Americans in Africa; and Africans in America. Each section is introduced with a poem carefully selected to set the tone for the stories to come.

In Africa, "Bagamoya" by Nikki Grimes offers the sights and sounds of an ancient African seaport. In the following stories, readers meet Annette who exchanges gifts with a South African Bushman girl; Hedi who learns about art in the Roman ruins of Dougga, Tunisia; Auma Adoch who journeys from the hills of Sudan to Mengo, Uganda, to discover whose child she really is; and Kamau who desperately wants his father to see him run his race on Sports Day in Nairobi.

In Americans in Africa, "Into the Maghreb" by Lindsey Clark takes readers on an enchanting trip to Morocco through a child's eyes. In these stories readers travel to Senegal with Josie and her Ole Ma; to a school in South Africa with the rebellious Lincoln; and to Ruaha, Tanzania, on comical safari with Sarah and her family. "Her Mother's Monkey" by Amy Bronwen Zemser, about the orphan baby monkey, Angus who comes to live with Francine and her family made me weep.

In Africans in America, "An African American" by Meri Nana-Ama Danquah shows readers how it feels to live with and love two cultures. These storytellers show us Chicago through the eyes of an Ethiopian refugee, and southern California through the eyes of a tough Nigerian child-soldier. In "Lying Down with the Lion" by Sonia Levitin, Ajang's re-telling of a Sudanese folktale changes his new friend, Terry's life. Most stunning of all, Jane Kurtz's "Flimflam" is a jarring look at apathy.

Throughout this collection a single theme resonates: How does it feel to be an outsider? "Memories of Sun" doesn't attempt to provide easy answers, only to steer readers down the path to understanding.

**Read more YA reviews at Readers Room!**

**Blue is for Nightmares, by Laurie Faria Stolz**

<http://www.readersroom.com/stolarzrvw.html>

**Going for the Record, by Julie A. Swanson**

<http://www.readersroom.com/swansonrvw.html>

## The Elephant in the Room: Marketing Your Manuscript

We're all aware of it, but we'd rather not talk about, or deal with it. Marketing is the elephant in every writer's room—unless you have an agent, then you don't need my help. Although as hard as it is to find an agent to represent children's books, most of you will want to keep reading

If you're like me, you have spiral notebooks stuffed with ideas you can't wait to make into stories. You love to write—but you hate to market your work. Take it from me: you don't have to love marketing to be good at it.

In the Indian folktale "The Blind Men and the Elephant," when six blind men approach an elephant from their own perspectives, they all disagree about how to describe it. The same goes for marketing, if we approach it blindly, without a plan, we come away confused and frustrated.

Children's book agents sell manuscripts because they've researched the market and know which editors are looking for specific manuscripts. The good news for children's writers is that many editors still look at un-agented, unsolicited manuscripts or queries. Your key to success is in knowing how and where to find those editors and publishing houses.

In order to sell your manuscript to a publisher, you must first research the market to find out which editors are publishing books like yours. In a perfect world, market research should begin before you write the book, especially for nonfiction. Researching the market in the idea stage will help you determine whether or not you should move forward with the project. If you find there is a market for your idea, you will also find clues as to how to approach your subject. For example, you took your kids to the zoo, and learned there aren't many tigers left in the world. That gave you an idea for a book about tigers. Your market research reveals lots of books about tigers; therefore your idea is too general. You'll need to narrow your topic, and come up with a new angle, or twist, to make your book stand out from the others.

Writers often ask me how to judge whether their story is strong enough for the picture book market, or whether it's better suited to the children's magazine market. Research is the key to finding the answer to the question.

If your book is already written, don't despair. You can still do an effective job of market research. You might find you need to make some revisions in your work to "fit the market," which will strengthen your chances of finding a publisher.

### Market Research Begins in the Marketplace

By marketplace I mean libraries, bookstores, specialty stores, and gift shops, because librarians buy books and retailers sell them. Grab your notebook, or PDA, and go to the library. Look for books that are similar in genre, length, and subject matter (this can be as broad as YA problem novels) to the one you've written or plan to write. Ask the librarian which books in your genre are popular; which ones have a waiting list.

Next, go to the bookstore and repeat those steps. Look for books similar to your subject matter and target age group. If your idea would make a good novelty book, look at those. Ask the manager what's hot in kid's books. But don't stop there. Does your manuscript fit into a niche market? If your manuscript has religious content, be sure to visit Christian bookstores and gift shops to look for similar books. If you've written a story about zoo animals, visit the zoo gift shop and look for similar books.

Due to publishers' mass marketing efforts, you can also find books at most discount stores, such as Wal-mart, Sam's Club, Costco, K-mart, and Target. Don't overlook these markets.

Okay, so the baby's napping and your 3-year old's good for one-stop shopping trips. In other words, your time is limited. If you have a computer, go shopping on the Internet. Amazon.com is the number one place for marketplace research because you can use their internal search engine to search for topics and genres. When you bring up a title everything is right there: author, publisher, year, even sales ranking.

Use a search engine like Google to look for specialty stores and niche markets. Let's say you want to write a children's book about quilting. Type "children's books about quilting" into the search engine and I guarantee you'll find everything you're looking for.

Once you identify titles somewhat similar to yours, jot them down in your notebook. Be sure to list the author, publisher, and year published. Books published in the past five years are more indicative of publishing trends. Yes, I know, editors always say you shouldn't follow trends, you should write about what you know. But if you want to market your manuscript successfully to the right publisher, you have to know what the publishers are publishing. Novelty books and niche markets are less affected by trends.

### **Research the Publishers**

After you search the marketplace, you should have a list of publishers. Do your research. Find out whether or not your story is right for a publisher, or whether or not a publisher is right for your story. If a publisher only publishes nonfiction, don't send the editor your picture book. You will be saving him time and aggravation, and you will be saving yourself the cost of postage, and a quick rejection.

Target your submission to a specific editor. However this requires a bit more research. The "Children's Writers & Illustrators Market" is a good, comprehensive listing of children's book publishers' guidelines. You will also find the URLs for their web sites, and the names of editors to contact. Because the information is compiled in the year preceding its release, some of it is outdated, so it's not a good idea to make this your only reference for guidelines.

Look at a publisher's web site before you send out that manuscript. Look for an online catalog to see what they publish. Does your story meet their needs? Does it fit in with the other books on their list? If so, mention that in your cover letter.

The Colossal Directory of Children's Publishers Online is an excellent Internet resource for locating children's book publishers' web sites. The listings are in alphabetical order with direct links to the sites. Most publishers post submission guidelines online, and if not, at least you'll be able to find an email address to send a request.

If you're a member of the Society of Children's Writer's & Illustrators be sure to go to the Publications page on the web site and click on "SCBWI Publications," then click on the "Members" prompt. Scroll down to the bottom of the page to find "Publishers of Books for Young People/Market Survey," a list of children's publishers, editors, submission guidelines, and it's free. You can download and print the PDF, or send an SASE with sufficient postage to have a printed copy mailed to you.

### **Submission Calls**

An editor will often put out a "call for submissions" when she has specific needs to fill, such as a series, holiday theme, or social issue.

Connie Epstein's "Publisher's Corner," in the SCBWI Bulletin, regularly publishes calls for submissions from editors who will look at manuscripts submitted by SCBWI members.

Monthly newsletters like "Children's Book Insider," and "Children's Writer" contain marketing sections where you can find tips, guidelines, and calls for submissions. "The Business Side of Children's Publishing" is a new monthly email newsletter featuring a Writer/Illustrator Friendly Market of the Month. Look for Margaret Shauers' "Children's Writers Marketplace" at Write4Kids.com. She includes an update on book publishers each month.

Editors also post specific needs at the publishers' web sites.

### **Get Organized**

Marketing is the business side of your job. Whether you use file folders, index cards, spiral notebooks, or computer software to track your manuscripts isn't important. Find a method that works the best for you and organize your marketing tasks around it. If you prefer to use the computer, you can find free Manuscript Tracking software at the Sandbagger's web site.

I prefer file folders because I make copies of my cover letters. Each letter contains the date, editor's name, publishing house, and address, which is exactly what I need to track the manuscript. I file my cover letters in a folder labeled "Children's Submissions 2003," a file for each year. When the reply comes back from the editor, I staple it to the cover letter, and place it at the end of the stack. This method also helps me track my annual submission progress.

Make a marketing schedule each week and stick to it. I set aside a few hours on Monday to check my submissions folder and decide whether I need to send out any queries.

### **When to Submit**

For nonfiction, you should query publishers first with your idea, an outline, and a sample chapter. It isn't necessary to have a complete manuscript, however you should tell the editor in your cover letter whether or not you have a finished manuscript ready to send.

For fiction, from picture books to YA, you should have a finished, polished manuscript ready to submit to publishers. Most editors want to see the full manuscript for picture books, but prefer a cover letter, synopsis, and three sample chapters for longer works.

Whether you query or submit a full manuscript, in your cover letter you can let the editor know what the market is for your book, how it stands out from others, or how it fits in with other books in the catalog.

If an editor requests the full manuscript, remember to include a brief cover letter including the title, that it was requested, and a word of thanks. Be sure to write "Requested" on the outside of the mailing envelope, and address it to the editor who requested it. If your query is for nonfiction, and the editor is interested, be sure to communicate with her about a reasonable time frame to complete the manuscript and submit it.

When in doubt, always double check and follow the publisher's submission guidelines.

The bottom line is, you can't get your manuscript published unless you submit it to editors. So what are waiting for? Do your research. Then push that elephant out the door. Send it out!

### **For more information:**

**The Colossal Directory of Children's Publishers Online**  
<http://childrenspublishers.signaleader.com/>

**Society of Children's Writer's & Illustrators**  
<http://www.scbwi.org>

**Children's Book Insider**  
<http://www.write4kids.com/aboutcbi.html>

**Children's Writer**  
<http://www.childrenswriter.com>

**The Business Side of Children's Publishing**  
<http://ritacammarano.smartwriters.com/>

**Manuscript Tracking software**  
<http://www.sandbaggers.8m.com/samm.htm>

# Advice from a Caterpillar

## Should I Send Simultaneous Submissions?

*Q: I have a multicultural picture book manuscript ready to submit. I have done some market research and found at least four publishers that are appropriate for my manuscript and they accept simultaneous submissions. According to Writersmarket.com they also take between one and six months to respond to manuscripts. Should I go ahead and send simultaneous submissions? Will the publishers care as much about a simultaneous submission as an exclusive? What happens if more than one publisher accepts the manuscript? In that case, would rejecting a publisher's offer ruin my chances with that publisher in the future?*

A: The truth is many editorial departments are taking an average of 6-12 months to respond to submissions. Writers have no choice but to send simultaneous submissions, otherwise we'd die of old age before we'd see our books published. Recently, I received a personal rejection from an editor who had considered my YA manuscript for 2 years! Most publishers, such as Charlesbridge, specify in their guidelines whether they expect exclusive submissions. If the publisher's guidelines say they will accept simultaneous submissions, you should do so. Publishers receive hundreds of unsolicited manuscripts each year and don't really have the time to discriminate between simultaneous or exclusive submissions. If a publisher has requested your manuscript based on a query and synopsis, then your manuscript will receive higher priority than other unsolicited manuscripts.

The chance of two publishers accepting your manuscript is slim to none. Manuscript selection is a matter of timing, and differs from one publishing house to another. However if you do receive two offers, then you should choose the better offer. Editors change jobs often enough that the editor who might feel slighted would no longer be with that publishing house in a year or two.

Remember that writing is also a business. Writers have the right to expect an income and a timely response to their submissions, especially solicited submissions. I see it like this: When an editor looks at an author's submission, she is also looking at submissions from several other authors. Authors can't expect the editors to look exclusively at their work; therefore editors shouldn't expect exclusivity from authors unless they specifically request it.

## Can I Submit Two Picture Book Manuscripts To The Same Publisher?

*Q: I have written two picture books. Can I submit both manuscripts to the same publisher? Should I send both in the same envelope or should I send them in two separate envelopes? Or is it better if I send the second manuscript once I've received a response for my first one?*

A: According to "The Complete Idiot's Guide to Publishing Children's Books" by Harold Underdown and Lynne Rominger, you should send one manuscript at a time to a publisher. It's considered unprofessional to send more than one manuscript per submission, unless an editor specifically requests it. Editors tend to feel bombarded even if the writer sends more than one manuscript in separate envelopes. If the publisher rejects your first manuscript, you can still send the second manuscript.

Aside from professionalism, you want your manuscript to stand out in the editor's hands. If you send more than one manuscript, you dilute the strength of each individual manuscript. The editor will be thinking more about you the writer, instead of your story.

## How Should I Submit A Synopsis For My Series?

*Q: I have just completed a set of 10 children's books concerning how, why, and when children should take their medicine. I am in desperate need of help, advice, and guidance. How should I submit my synopsis to publishers?*

A: My article, "The Elephant in the Room: Marketing Your Children's Manuscript" contains helpful information about how to get started marketing your manuscript. The first question you need to answer is: where will my books be sold? From your description, your books are geared toward a specialty market—children's health. Children's medications are prescribed by pediatricians; therefore consider visiting some local pediatricians' offices. Look at the children's books in the waiting room, especially the ones geared toward children's health. Make a note of the publisher(s). Ask the receptionist if anyone in the office would like to look at one of your manuscripts. Often people in the medical field have information about publishers who specialize in specific subjects, such as children's health. You might also consider contacting pharmaceutical companies, since they might be interested in publishing your books to promote a specific medicine.

"The Complete Idiot's Guide to Publishing Children's Books" by Harold Underdown and Lynne Rominger, contains an excellent chapter on children's book series, "Keep 'em Rolling: Series" which you'll find helpful. In fact, this book is a great reference "bible" for all children's book writers. Also, be sure to get your hands on the new "Children's Writer's and Illustrator's Market" for an updated list of specialty markets, and who's buying what.

For these and more answers to your questions about writing for children see "Advice from a Caterpillar" at Writing-World.com:

**<http://www.writing-world.com/caterpillar/index.shtml>**

# Ezines

## **Paying markets:**

**Absolute Write**  
<http://www.absolutewrite.com>

**C/Oasis**  
<http://www.sunoasis.com/oasis.html>

**Funds for Writers**  
<http://www.fundsforwriters.com>

**Writers Weekly**  
<http://www.writersweekly.com>

**Writing for DOLLARS!**  
<http://www.awoc.com/AWOC-Home.cfm>

**Writing World**  
<http://www.writing-world.com>

## **Non-paying markets:**

(Usually provide free ezine ad in payment.)

**Apollo's Lyre**  
<http://www.apolloslyre.com>

**Bobbing Around**  
<http://mudsmith.net/bobbing.html>

**The Business Side of Children's Publishing**  
<http://ritacammarano.smartwriters.com/>

**Chrysalis Creativity**  
<http://ewritelife.com>

**eBooks N' Bytes Informer**  
<http://www.ebooksnbytes.com>

**The e-Writer's Place**  
<http://ewritersplace.com>

**Fiction Factor**  
<http://www.fictionfactor.com>

**Fiction Addiction**  
<http://www.fictionaddiction.net>

**Scribe & Quill**  
<http://www.scribequill.com>

**Writers and Readers Network**  
<http://www.writersandreadersnetwork.com>

**Writer's Break**  
<http://www.writersbreak.com>

# Web Sites for Children's Writers

## **Aaron Shepherd's Kidwriter Page**

**<http://www.aaronshp.com/kidwriter/>**

Resources for children's writers. Articles, how-to tips, associations, mailing lists, links, etc. Definitely worth checking out.

## **America Writes for Kids**

**<http://usawrites4kids.drury.edu>**

Searchable by state and alphabet, this site links to nearly 80 authors and playwrights, along with many other sites of interest to readers, writers, teachers, and librarians.

## **Children's Book: How To**

**<http://www.interactivebooks.com/bookcon1.htm>**

"Welcome one and all to my Confessional, easy to follow, 2 step program on How-to-Become a Struggling, as of yet Unpublished, Children's Book Author." By author/illustrator Jim Witkins.

## **Children's Book Council**

**<http://www.cbcbooks.org/>**

Non-profit trade association of children's book publishers and producers of related literacy materials for children.

## **Children's Book Central**

**<http://www.elanorsbooks.com>**

Excellent resource full of links, discussion forums, lists, etc. Maintained by Eleanor's Books.

## **Children's Book Insider Interview with Joi Nobisso**

**<http://www.write4kids.com/joi.html>**

Noted author discusses the issues and process involved in reprinting her out-of-print children's books.

## **Children's Literature Resources**

**<http://www.cynthialeitichsmith.com/index1.htm>**

Author Cynthia Leitich Smith offers author interviews, links, resources, plus a newsletter.

## **Children's Literature Web Guide**

**<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/index.html>**

Amazing amount of info relating to children's lit, including a special section for children's writers and illustrators.

## **Children's Publishers' Submission Guidelines Online**

**<http://www.signaleader.com/childrens-writers/index.html>**

Focuses on the manuscript submission process with direct links to hundreds of children's publishers' submission guidelines.

## **Dotti Enderle's Marketing Tips**

Advice from the Promo Ho

**<http://www.smartwriters.com/index.2ts?page=swjdec2003#enderle>**

Get it in Print: Advice from the Promo Ho

**<http://www.smartwriters.com/index.2ts?page=swjjan2004#enderle>**

More Advice from the Promo Ho

**<http://www.smartwriters.com/index.2ts?page=swjfeb2004#enderle>**

**Peni Griffin's Writing Page**

<http://www.txdirect.net/users/griffin/0writing.htm>

Includes resources and tips for children's writers, advice about school visits.

**The Horn Book**

<http://www.hbook.com>

Publishers of *The Horn Book Magazine* and *The Horn Book Guide* and other books and materials about children's literature. The best bet at this site is the page for Authors & Illustrators. You'll also find articles and useful information such as awards, conferences, and reviews.

**The Purple Crayon**

<http://www.underdown.org>

A Children's Book Editor's Site by Harold Underdown. As an editor for Charlesbridge Publishing, Underdown shares information and links related to children's book publishing. The best bet at this site is the Trends in Children's Books page, and there is also plenty of current insider information on the children's book biz.

**Raab Associates**

<http://www.raabassociates.com/books.htm>

Marketing/public relations for children's and parenting book authors. Site has archives of Susan Raab's SCBWI "To Market" column as well as useful writing-related links.

**Smart Writers.com**

<http://www.smartwriters.com>

For everyone who reads, writes, or teaches literature for kids.

**"So, You Want to Write A Children's Book?"**

<http://members.aol.com/cwpbooks/writers/sywwacb.html>

Great tips and resources for getting your children's book published. Part of the Children's Writers Place

**Suite 101: Children's Writing Resources**

[http://www.suite101.com/welcome.cfm/childrens\\_writing](http://www.suite101.com/welcome.cfm/childrens_writing)

Maintained by Sue Reichard. Articles, resource links, discussion forums.

**Wee Ones**

<http://www.weeonesmag.com>

Online magazine for kids.

**The Word Pool**

<http://www.wordpool.co.uk/>

Provides news and information about children's writing in general and the UK market in particular.

**Write4kids.com**

<http://www.write4kids.com/index.html>

"The Children's Writing Super site." Includes the **Children's Book Insider** newsletter.

**Writing-World.com**

<http://www.writing-world.com>

Comprehensive site for all writers, offering information for beginners and market strategies for professionals, and covering a wide range of genres and categories for fiction and

nonfiction writers. The site will offer breaking news, international resources, polls, columns, and more.



Peggy Tibbetts has worked as an associate producer of educational videos for Upper Midwest Films, contributing editor for Children's Magic Window magazine, and Children's Writing Resource Editor at Inkspot.com. Currently she is Managing Editor for Writing World. She lives with her family in Silt, Colorado.

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Read her monthly column, Advice from a Caterpillar and author interviews at: **<http://www.writing-world.com>**