ASA Professional Development Seminars

*The Business of Writing: A course for emerging authors*

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Presented by Desney King © 2009

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From manuscript to book—the ‘typical’ publishing process

- Manuscript commissioned, acquired or accepted. Publishing contract negotiated and signed.
- Format, style and recommended retail price (RRP) of the book decided.
- Costings prepared and signed off.
- Publication date established after review of market, company’s publishing plan for the year (or period of several years), and time required to edit, design and produce the book.
- Schedule established and signed off.
- Manuscript allocated to an editor, designer and production controller. The editor will usually introduce themself to the author and explain the process and timeline. Depending on the kind of book, the author might also meet design staff.
- Manuscript is edited and returned to author for checking and response to queries, comments, suggestions. THIS IS THE AUTHOR’S LAST OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE MAJOR OR SIGNIFICANT CHANGES.
- Designer develops cover options in collaboration with editor, sales and marketing and publisher/commissioning editor. The author’s wishes will be given serious consideration, but ultimately the cover design is a business decision. The editor writes cover blurb, which might include author bio.
- Editor finalises the edited manuscript and transmits it to the design department, or an external or inhouse typesetter.
- First page proofs are reviewed by the editor and second proofs prepared.
- Page proofs are read by a proofreader and the author; corrections from both are correlated by the editor, with any minor last-minute author adjustments being discussed and resolved. Final page proofs are prepared by typesetter, designer or editor.
- If the book requires an index, it is prepared at this stage.
- If the book is illustrated, colour separation and proofing occurs at this point (managed by production staff). Cover proofs are supplied for checking by editor, designer and author.
• Editor checks that all final corrections have been dealt with and that the book’s digital files are ready to send to the printer.

• Editor and/or designer transmit final digital files and a printout of the book to the production department who send them to the printer.

• If the book is illustrated, there may be a final round of corrected colour proofs for editor and designer to check at this stage. Cover proofs are finalised and signed off.

• The printer prepares ozalids (dyelines/blueprints) and sends them to the production staff who give them to the editor and designer for final checking.

• Advance copies of the book are delivered to production staff who distribute them to publisher, editor, sales and marketing, promotions staff, and author.

• Author may be required to give media interviews or undertake a promotional tour or activities. A book launch is usually a celebration party. Book launches are rarely cost-effective promotional events.
Typical editorial roles

Publisher

Responsible for the list: its vision, direction, scope and success; the number of books published per year; financial viability; the details of how the publishing division is structured and staffed.

Acquisitions/Commissioning editor

Commissions new manuscripts; acquires manuscripts that are offered via agents or unsolicited; keeps abreast of trends within relevant markets and within the publishing house’s own list (what is and is not successful); presents concepts and potential manuscripts to the acquisitions/publishing committee for consideration. Assesses market and cost viability of projects prior to presenting them for consideration. May begin structural/substantive editorial work with authors.

Managing editor

Prepares and manages budgets, schedules and staff for each book once the manuscript has been accepted for publication; allocates appropriate editor/editorial team to each book project; oversees and ensures the smooth journey of each manuscript through the editorial department; liaises with senior management, design and production staff, editorial staff, sales and marketing, accounts, and promotions/publicity staff.

Senior editor/project manager

Guides and manages a section or sections of the publishing list (for example, fiction, memoir, cookbooks, popular history, art, gardening or craft). Usually works on several books at any given time, typically editing one and managing the editing of several others. May commission, brief and work closely with inhouse and/or freelance editors. Liaises with senior editorial staff, authors, designers, accounts department, production staff, publicity and promotion staff, sales and marketing. May be responsible for the structural/substantive edit of manuscripts that pass through their section of the editorial department.

Editor

Responsible for the hands-on editing of manuscripts, often working at any given time on several titles that are at different stages in the editorial/design/production process. May undertake substantive/structural editing, and will undertake line editing/copy editing for consistency, cohesion and readability. Liaises closely with the author/s and with the book’s designer and (if used) the typesetter. Finalises the edited manuscript and transmits it to typesetter or designer. Usually commissions and briefs proofreader and indexer (if required).
Trainee editor

Assists the editorial department in practical ways such as printing out hard copy of manuscripts and proofs, sending and receiving parcels, updating contact lists, arranging meetings, making phone calls. May be set exercises like proofreading (although this will also be done by a professional proofreader); taking in proofreader’s corrections (to be checked by editor); basic copy editing (to be checked by editor).

Freelance editors

Experienced editors who may work independently for several different publishing houses. A freelance editor is contracted by an inhouse editor/senior editor/managing editor to undertake some or all aspects of an edit: substantive/structural, and line/copy editing. Liaises with author and inhouse editor during the editing process.

Picture researcher/archivist

Usually a staff member within a publishing house, this person searches photo libraries and other archival collections for required images; negotiates reproduction fees and reproduction rights, and obtains digital files for inclusion in the book or on its cover. This person may also archive the book’s files once it has been published.

Proofreader

Painstakingly proofreads page proofs once the book has been typeset, marking all corrections for the editor to approve and take in. A good proofreader also alerts the editor to any possible errors or inconsistencies that might have slipped through the editing process.

Indexer

Prepares an index from final proof pages if the book requires one.
STRUCTURE OF A ‘TYPICAL’ MEDIUM-SIZED PUBLISHING HOUSE

Managing Director
General Manager

DESIGN
Art director/Studio manager
Senior designer
Graphic artist
Typesetter
Design assistant/coordinator

EDITORIAL
Publisher
Acquisitions/Commissioning editor
Managing editor
Senior editor/project manager
Editor
Trainee editor
Freelance editors
Picture researcher/archivist
Proofreader
Indexer

PUBLICITY & PROMOTIONS
Publicity manager
Senior publicist
Assistant publicist

SALES & MARKETING
Marketing manager
Marketing assistant
Sales manager
State/territory sales managers
International sales manager
Sales representatives
Sales assistant

PUBLISHING SUPPORT
Publishing coordinator
Contracts, rights & permissions manager
Publishing assistant

PRODUCTION
Production manager
Production controller
Production assistant

FINANCE & DISTRIBUTION
Financial controller/director
Accountant
Accounts payable & receivable clerks
Royalty manager
Customer service officers
Warehouse manager
Warehouse staff