

Publishers -- A little rant ...

As writers, we know the importance of, (and the hunger for), getting our work published by reputable publishers. We pour our hearts into writing it, we polish it, edit it, and then edit some more and when that's done, we at last turn it into the finished product -- our manuscript. That's a daunting task in itself! After the manuscript is done, we spend more time, gas, and money going to the book store for our annual copy of the Writer's Digest book for our genre.

Once home, we spend days reading about all of the publishers to find EXACTLY what they're looking for: fiction, non-fiction, poetry: (rhyming or non-rhyming), memoirs, essays, short story collections, screenplays, et al. Then we narrow that list to those who accept submissions without our need of an agent. (By the way, I've noticed this list shrinking with each new edition of Writer's Market, no matter what the genre).

We study this shortened list to see whether they are accepting manuscript submissions in *precisely* what we write in the genre they accept (children, young adult, romance, fantasy, science fiction, western, erotica, religion, spiritual, new age).

Out of that group, then we have to find those who accept manuscripts NOW. Some only accept manuscripts during a specified reading period (only May 1 to July 1, for instance). The list is further narrowed down to find those that do not require "exclusive" submissions. (This means we cannot submit elsewhere, until we've heard back from them, either yea or nay). It has been my experience that publishers can take anywhere from three months to forever to notify you. So, you can see how an exclusive submission can inhibit your progress. You can't send it to a second, until you hear back from the first ... and fewer and fewer are even notifying you at all. Some even put a caveat in their Writers Digest listing, stating that if you haven't heard from them within a specified length of time, to consider your manuscript rejected.

The final list we come up with is:

- * Publishers who accept your genre.
- * Publishers who accept what you write in that genre.
- * Publishers accepting now.
- * Publishers that accept multiple submissions.
- * Publishers that don't require an agent's involvement.

Our job now is to study each of our final list of publishers and carefully follow their submission guidelines. We have to follow the instructions exactly! After all the hard work and time spent, we don't want our manuscript ending up in the waste basket because we missed some critical command. We double space the manuscript, add the extra space between paragraphs, do the Title Page precisely how they want it, paginate, follow the rule of staples vs. paper clips, write a summary, include a short bio, any publishing credits and the SASE (self-addressed stamped envelope) so they can notify you, etc.,

At last, your submission is perfect. We're sure to only send a copy, not the original, and with hope and pride, we take it to the post office. Now comes the hard part (how can it be harder than what we've already been through? you ask). With fingers crossed and with baited breath, we wait ... and wait ... and wait.

Six months later, the day finally arrives! A letter from the publisher! HUH? What is this? A form letter?

Dear Writer:

Thank you for your manuscript submission to (publishing company). While we think your manuscript, ___(your title handwritten)___ was well-written, has merit, is interesting (one is checked or underlined), it does not fit our current list.

We wish you good luck submitting your work elsewhere.

Sincerely,
(name), (title)

Is it just me, or do all writers feel a lot more than *rejected* by a rejection letter?

We've put a hell of a lot of work, prep time, waiting time, and a lot of money into our submissions. I realize publishers are busy, and they also get hundreds of submissions, but I would think if they gave us a "heads up" as to what they ARE looking for in the last sentence of a rejection letter, it would save them time -- less rejection letters to send out -- and less money. There would be less in the slush pile on the floor pushed up against a wall gathering dust and waiting to be waded through by an already overworked, underpaid staff.

What is it they ARE looking for? What MIGHT fit into their present needs? Maybe we already have something really good that's perfect ... why is it that publishers don't add one more itchy-bitsy sentence to the bottom of a rejection letter? Tell us what it is they ARE looking for that WOULD fit their current list.

I'm done ranting now. Thanks for reading ...