

AUTHOR WARNS OF TRAPS FOR NEW WRITERS

Writers can get published, but they have to be very careful to avoid the traps along the way... traps which can be costly both in cash and reputation. So says Western Australian writer Peggy Graham whose books have been published in Australia and in the UK and are also on sale in the USA and Canada.

It is increasingly difficult to get books, and particularly fiction, published by traditional publishers, which are decreasing in number and increasing in size, as well as being less likely to accept works sent to direct to them. Instead most now prefer to work through agents and it can be even more difficult to be accepted by an agent than it was in the past to be accepted by a publisher.

Peggy has succeeded, not in the dramatic fashion of an author such as J K Rowling, now a multi-millionaire from her Harry Potter series, but by persevering and following some basic guidelines which she has now set out in a new book, Pathway to Publication.

Subtitled "How new fiction writers can make it into print", the book also tells how to avoid the pitfalls which are explained in detail.

In her book Peggy also tells of the reactions of publishers to writers who went on to become giants in their field. For example, Rudyard Kipling was told "you just don't know how to use the English language" and John Le Carre was told that he "hasn't got any future" in writing his spy novels.

The record for getting rejection slips is said to be 223, but "Gone With the Wind" was rejected 18 times, and Peggy wonders what the reactions are now of the 14 people who rejected the first Harry Potter book -- the same number who rejected Grace Metalious's "Peyton Place".

Also used to getting rejection slips, Peggy turned as many authors do to paying to get her first book published, but warns that there are even more pitfalls in this method. Many firms are only too anxious to take substantial sums of money -- sometimes many thousands of dollars -- off authors to produce just a few copies with little hope of sales. Vanity publishing, as this is known, is to be avoided, says Peggy, but if the author is careful in checking what is being offered, it is possible to find businesses and individuals who will provide their skills at a reasonable cost along the way to getting a book published.

Peggy explains the differences in processes such as "Print On Demand" and "Publish On Demand" which use technology developed in the past few years to produce small quantities of books without huge outlays. She explains that while it is not easy to produce books by such systems at a cost that will enable books to be sold through distributors and wholesalers to bookshops, it is possible to break even on direct sales.

The benefit is that books produced by the author can help that author to become known. In Peggy's case, one such self-published book was seen by a publishing company in England, which offered Peggy a contract. Since then that firm has published four of Peggy's novels and two have also been published as audio books. That firm also ensures that her books are available not only in the UK but also in the USA -- where her books are, for example, available to the world via the Amazon.com web site.

"Pathway to Publication" is published by a firm which does not publish fiction, but specialises in books on publishing, including books for those producing magazines and newspapers. While this publisher is now based at Hastings in Victoria, it coincidentally started in Western Australia and The Worsley Press is named after the town of Worsley in the South West of WA where publisher Gordon Woolf started the business 13 years ago.

Further details on Peggy's book are available at www.worsleypress.com/pathway

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