Lesson 1: Learning Publisher Speak

with award-winning author Denise Vega

- ***PowerPoint Slides***
- ***Common Publishing Terms***

PowerPoint Slides

Pub Roles You Need to Know Now

- Publisher v publishing house
- Who are all these editors and what do they do?
  - The editors who are usually the most open to submissions from new authors are those with the title of:
    - "Editor," "Assistant Editor," "Acquisitions Editor" and even "Editorial Assistant" (if they indicate they are acquiring)
- Publishers will have different titles for editors who are higher up such as editorial director, associate editor, executive editor, managing editor, senior editor. These editors either focus mostly on managing others, work mostly with existing authors/illustrators, or are best approached through an agent.

8 Terms You Need to Know Now

- Query and Cover Letters
- Self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE)
- Unsolicited Submission
- Requested Submission
- Exclusive submission
- Multiple/Simultaneous submission
- Submission Guidelines
- Synopsis/Outline

Query & Cover Letters

- **A query letter/e-mail** is an initial letter of inquiry, an introduction of your story to an editor/publisher. This letter is designed to entice the publisher to request part or all of your manuscript. (See ***Lesson 5: Writing Your Query Letter*** for detailed info and examples.)
- **A cover letter** accompanies a partial or full manuscript you are submitting to a publisher. (See ***Lesson 6: Writing Your Cover Letter*** for detailed info and examples)

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Self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE)

- Very few publishers are returning manuscripts so the SASE is basically a lost art
- For those few that do return, definitely include a self-addressed stamped envelope with *sufficient* postage for the return of your manuscript.
- For a demo of SASE, see the SASE video included with this lesson!

Unsolicited Submission

- Over-the-transom/slush pile
- This submission is one where you've done your research and are targeting a publisher or publishers without having any other connection to them.
- These are usually logged in and read as time permits, after submissions for existing authors and those submitted by agents.

Requested Submission

- Your query results in a request to send a partial or full manuscript

OR

- You meet an editor at a conference who asks you to send a partial or full manuscript when it's ready (this sometimes happens after a manuscript critique)

TIP

What do you do if you get a request like this? First, celebrate! (and let me know so I can celebrate with you via email ☺) Second, I cover that question in ***Lesson 9: Handling Responses***

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Multiple/Simultaneous Submission

- Thank goodness this is the norm now ☺.
- After careful research, you send your query or partial/full manuscript to more than one publisher at the same time.

TIP
What do you do if more than one publisher wants your rockin' story? Break out the bubbly! Then see what I say about this in ***Lesson 9: Handling Responses***

Exclusive submission

- This is when you submit to one publisher at a time.
- You may opt to do this because you feel it is a near-perfect fit for a particular editor and/or publisher.
- The publisher may require this. There are a few publishers who require that your submission be exclusive. They will usually have a specific length of time after which you will either hear from them or can assume it's a pass and submit elsewhere.

TIP
Should I follow up if I haven't heard? You guessed it. Check out my answer in ***Lesson 9: Handling Responses***

Submission Guidelines

- Instructions on how to submit to a publisher, usually found on the publisher's website
- Note whether:
  - they prefer snail mail or electronic submissions.
  - you should include a self-addressed, stamped envelope
  - they only contact you if they are interested
- Read the guidelines carefully and follow them exactly!

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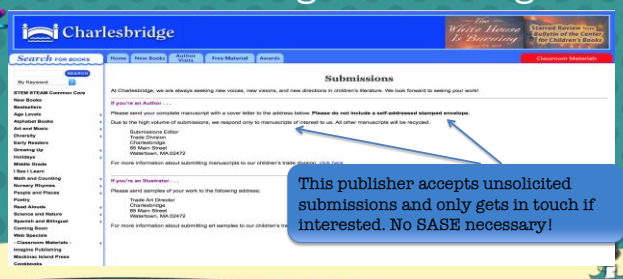
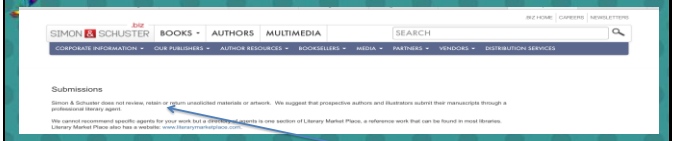
Sample Guidelines – Charlesbridge Publishing



This publisher accepts unsolicited submissions and only gets in touch if interested. No SASE necessary!

Sample Guidelines – Simon & Schuster



Bummer. This publisher only accepts submissions through an agent. However, often publishers who attend conferences will accept submissions from attendees.

Synopsis/Outline

- If you've written a longer manuscript, the publisher may require a synopsis or chapter outline. This is a concise, yet thorough overview of your entire story.
- Check out *Lesson 7: Writing Your Synopsis* for detailed information and suggestions.

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More Pub-Speak

- When (not if!) you receive an acceptance, there are more terms you'll need to know. See the now famous *Lesson 9: Handling Respons*es for terms, strategies and more.
- Check out the downloadable doc that accompanies this lesson for a more complete list of terms and other resources. Soon you'll be talking like a pro ☺.

Biggest Newbie Mistake

- Letting the terminology and newness of learning about the industry scare you into not moving forward– you don't have to know everything right away; just know these basics for submission purposes!

With this course, you're becoming a seasoned professional, so avoid this mistake!

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Common Publishing Terms

Common Publishing Terms

Advance. Money paid to you once you have signed a contract for your book, but before the book is published. Advances are paid against *royalties*, which means you do not receive further payment until the advance has been "earned out." (see the "Anatomy of an Advance" download for a more detailed explanation.)

Backlist. Books that a publisher has published in the past but remain strong sellers.

Boilerplate. A standard contract before it is negotiated.

Copyright. The legal protection granted to your manuscript, protecting it from being used without permission or payment.

Cover Letter. A letter that accompanies your manuscript when submitting to a publisher. The cover letter should be short and to the point (preferably no longer than one page) and include only the most pertinent information to introduce the enclosed manuscript and you, the author.

Exclusive Submission. A manuscript you submit to only one publisher, usually giving them a timeframe in which to respond.

Flat Fee. Also known as "work for hire," when a publisher pays you a set, one-time fee for the work. As the author, you will not receive an advance or royalties in a flat fee arrangement and, in most instances, the publisher will retain the *copyright* to the material.

Frontlist. The books that a publisher is releasing in a current year.

Hardcover or hardback. This refers to books with a hard, cloth-over-cardboard cover, which is then covered with an illustrated paper dust jacket.

Imprint. A line of books within a publishing house, usually with a distinctive tone or style. For example, Megan Tingley Books is an imprint of Little, Brown Children's Books.

Manuscript. The actual story, printed on paper in proper format which the author sends to a publisher. In casual communication, an author or editor may use "ms" for "manuscript" and "mss" for "manuscripts." However, in formal cover and query letters, you should always spell the word in its entirety (e.g. "Enclosed please find my picture book manuscript...")

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Mass Market. Books that are produced on a large scale with a wide audience, usually paperback and at lower prices. Mass-market books are sold at general retail outlets.

Midlist Books. Books that sell dependably but are not bestsellers.

Ms. or Mss- See *manuscript*.

Multiple Submission. See *Simultaneous Submission*.

Outline. Usually a more point-by-point description of your entire story, more detailed than a *synopsis*. If a publisher requires an outline, confirm the format; sometimes a synopsis will do.

Out-of-Print. A book that a publisher is no longer keeping on its list or in its inventory.

Over-the-Transom. Very old term . See *Slush Pile*.

Paperback. Soft-cover binding for a book, usually lightweight cardboard. A *trade* paperback is usually the same size as a hardcover book and printed on high quality paper. A *mass-market* paperback is usually smaller, sometimes square, so it fits easily in racks at retail outlets. Usually printed on less expensive paper so it can be priced cheaper.

Query Letter. A letter of inquiry to an editor describing a manuscript you would like to submit for consideration. Short and to the point, the query is your chance to entice the editor to ask to see your manuscript.

Rejection Letter. A "thanks, but no thanks" letter from an editor in response to a query or submission. Try to remember that the letter is a no thank you to your *work*, not to *you*.

Requested Submission. A manuscript that an editor has asked to see, either in response to a *query letter* or other contact with you or your work.

Royalties. A percentage of the proceeds from the sale of a book. Most children's book royalties range from 3%-15%, depending on the track record of the author, the type of book, and many other factors.

SASE. Shorthand for "self-addressed, stamped envelope."

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Simultaneous Submission. Also known as a "multiple submission." When an author sends out the same manuscript to more than one publisher at a time. Many publishers accept simultaneous submissions but some don't. Authors should check a publisher's *writer's guidelines* before sending a simultaneous submission and inform the publisher in a cover letter.

Slush Pile. The overflowing stack (usually stacks) of *unsolicited manuscripts* in editor's offices. Manuscripts in these piles are usually placed at the bottom of the list of manuscripts an editor reads, after manuscripts submitted by agents, recommended to them, or by authors the editor has worked with before.

Synopsis. A narrative description of your story that focuses less on detail and more on an overview of the main points, conflict(s), and character growth. A synopsis should not only provide an overview of your story, but give an example of your storytelling abilities.

Trade. A book sold in bookstores that is targeted to the general public (as opposed to the educational market or just to libraries). A *trade publisher* publishes books of this type.

Unsolicited Submission. A manuscript you submit without an invitation to do so by an editor. Many publishers are no longer accepting unsolicited submissions so check a publisher's requirements and guidelines before submitting.

Work-for-Hire. See *Flat Fee*.

Writer's Guidelines. Rules or requirements set forth by a publisher for writers wanting to submit to them. Always check writer's guidelines before submitting a manuscript or query letter.

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