



How to Publish Your Non-fiction Book: A Complete Guide to Making the Right Publisher Say Yes

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Best-selling authors must lead a wonderful life. Sharing their vision with a worldwide audience, working at their own pace and under their own roof, and getting paid a lot of money besides—who hasn't dreamed of that life? For those ready to make that dream a reality, this book is an excellent jumping-off point. Though the target audience is primarily nonfiction writers, that shouldn't deter any beginning author from taking advantage of the advice herein.

Shur has worked in several different capacities, including as an editor, a publishing company owner, lecturer and teacher; his knowledge of the publishing process shows throughout his book. It is also enjoyable to read, written in a friendly, encouraging and step-by-step way. The eight chapters show how to systematically put together a submission package, choose the right publishing house, and get the package in the hands of the right people. Of course, this doesn't guarantee a published best-seller, but, claims Shur, "the rules for increasing your success are very clear. All you have to do is know the rules and understand how to use them."

The most helpful aspect of the book may be the advice on what not to do. Shur includes anecdotes in every chapter that illustrate the many ways writers shoot themselves in the foot. Sending a manuscript on teaching math to a house that does not publish math books, including phrases like "this book has never been done before" or "this book will appeal to everyone" and even forwarding a fully completed manuscript are all mistakes that will very likely send a submission straight to the "kill pile."

Ample advice on what to do is included as well. In addition to information and references on how to access traditional publishing houses, Shur includes information on alternative sources, such as vanity presses and Internet publishing. He also spends a chapter reviewing a standard publishing contract in anticipation of the happy day a publisher does accept that submission package. If that doesn't happen, and the pile of rejection slips mounts higher than the page count in the proposal, a chapter on troubleshooting provides guidance on staying in the game.

While it is clear this book offers a wealth of information to a budding author, what is perhaps not as clear is its value to anyone who simply enjoys reading. With an insider's view into the publishing world, it makes compelling reading for everyone who has wondered how a Grisham or Steele was born. A particularly amusing table late in the book shows parts of the rejection letters received by such renowned authors as Julia Child, John Le Carre, and Dr. Seuss. Either as a guidebook, an inspiration, or as a peephole, this book delivers.

VICKI GERVICKAS (May / June 2001)

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