

**The Business of Publishing - What Every Author Needs to Know**  
San Francisco Writers Conference  
February 2009

**I. The State of the Industry**

*Trends in nonfiction*

- Narrative - history, biography, journalism, memoir - character, story: imagine the movie
- Practical - self-help, pursuit of happiness, news you can use
- Concept history (i.e. a noun, preferably one that changed the world) - *Cod, Salt, Secrets of Saffron, The Victorian Internet, The Turk, Zero, Longitude, Uncommon Grounds, The Devil's Cup, A Mind of Its Own, A History of the Breast, The Pencil, The Potato, Walking...*

*Trends in fiction*

- Great storytelling is timeless

*Trends in memoir*

- Truth, not just truthiness, matters

*Structural changes in the book business*

- Retailer concentration: B&N, Borders, Amazon vs. independents
- Publisher concentration
  - Bertelsmann: Random House (Knopf, RH/Ballantine, Bantam, Crown, Doubleday...)
  - Pearson: Penguin (Dutton, Gotham, Putnam, Riverhead, Tarcher, Viking...)
  - News Corp: HarperCollins (Collins, Harper, Morrow...)
  - Viacom: Simon & Schuster (Free Press, Touchstone, Scribner...)
  - Hachette: Grand Central Books, Little Brown, Bulfinch...
  - Holtzbrinck: Macmillan (FSG, Henry Holt, St. Martin's Press, Palgrave-Macmillan...)
  - Perseus: Basic, DaCapo, Running Press, Seal, Public Affairs...
- Changes in the academic presses
- Small publishers always exist
- New modes of self-publishing and electronic publishing - POD, online

*Changing roles of authors, editors and agents*

- Acquisitions vs. editing
- Hollywood model
- Everyone wants "platform" and "synergy"

**II. Implications for Authors**

*Build your brand*

- Resume, credentials, other writing, domain name

*Recruit a great management team*

- "Board of Directors"
- Editorial resources - writing group, copy editor, consulting editor, book doctor
- Lawyer, accountant, literary agent
- Booksellers

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### III. From Idea to Book Tour

*Fiction/Memoir: "Missouri Rules"*

*Non-fiction: Book proposal = Business Plan*

- Substance
    - Idea - What is the book about? What is your thesis or argument? Book or article?
    - Table of contents - Detailed, narrative road map for the book you want to write
    - Sample chapter(s) - Representative, polished to a high gloss
  - Style
    - Author credentials - Expertise, exposure: "brand"
    - Target audience - Size, composition, accessibility
    - Competition
    - Marketing and promotion - Blurbs, media, speaking, serialization
  - Synopsis
    - Write the back cover, inside flaps
- Selling your book*
- Pitch, wait, negotiate
  - Key contract terms
    - Advance and royalties
    - Territories, subsidiary rights
    - Schedule, deliverables, acceptance, cancellation and revisions
    - Indemnification
    - Reversion of rights

*Writing your book*

### IV. Further Resources

*Good books on publishing*

- Michael Korda, *Making the List*
- Jason Epstein, *Book Business: Publishing Past, Present, and Future*
- Andre Schiffrin, *The Business of Books: How the International Conglomerates Took Over Publishing and Changed the Way We Read*
- 826 Valencia, *The Autobiographers' Handbook, The Secret Miracle*
- Michael Larsen, *How to Write a Book Proposal*
- Jeff & Deborah Herman, *Write the Perfect Book Proposal: 10 That Sold and Why*
- Jacqueline Deval, *Publicize Your Book!*
- Lissa Warren, *The Savvy Author's Guide to Book Publicity*

*On-line resources*

- Publishers Marketplace - [www.publishersmarketplace.com](http://www.publishersmarketplace.com)
- Publishers Weekly - [www.publishersweekly.com](http://www.publishersweekly.com)
- Association of Authors' Representatives - [www.aar-online.org](http://www.aar-online.org)