

Where's My Manuscript
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Whenever I conduct writing workshops, no matter what the topic is, questions about what happens when the submission is sent to the publishing house arise. I'm about to step through the general process the submission goes through. Now please note that each publishing house has its own style and timelines, but this will be enough to give you a general idea.

1. Submission Arrives At Publishing House

- a. You have sent only what the publishing house requested, usually a query letter, synopsis, and the first three chapters of the book for fiction. For non-fiction quite often they also ask for a chapter by chapter outline.
 - i. The one page query letter contains your two forms of contact information, that the manuscript is complete or incomplete, word count, what imprint you are targeting the book for, a brief blurb about the novel (like what would be on the back of the book), your writing experience/awards, why you are the best person to have written this book, who and how you plan to market the book.
 - ii. Your synopsis summarizes the plot from beginning to end. Do not leave any unanswered questions and do not forget to include some of the motivations. Also, pay attention to each publishing house's guidelines. Some want a one page synopsis, most want a three page, some will take even eight pages.
 - iii. If a publishing house asks for three sample chapters, please send them the first three chapters of the book.
 1. If you have a prologue that is short it does not count as part of the three chapters. If your prologue is as long as the chapters, then it counts as a chapter.
 2. Do not try to squeeze in as much of your book as you can by having each chapter end after thirty to forty pages. When I worked as an acquisitions editor, I knew if I wanted to request the entire book by page ten. I've found other editors have the same take. If you can't sell your book in thirty pages—total—then those extra sixty pages won't help.
- b. Your submission is logged in (1-2weeks)
 - i. Please remember the time varies drastically among publishing houses for every step. A secretary, intern or office manager type person is usually the first person to see your submission.
 - ii. From your query letter, the person who logs your submission in gets all of the information they need to direct your baby to the correct place. You have to remember that many publishing houses have several editors. Also, editors move around quite frequently. If you place the imprint you are targeting the manuscript for, the

logger can direct it to the correct place. Refer to my workshop [The Wrong Way](#) for more information about your initial submission.

- c. Your submission arrives in the correct editing department for its first look (2 weeks to a month).
 - i. An editorial intern type person weeds through the submissions and takes out the definite no's.
 1. If the submission receives a no, it is placed in the pile for rejection letters.
 2. If the submission receives further investigation, it goes to the acquisitions editor
 - ii. The acquisitions editor reads through the submission (1-2 months)
 1. If the submission receives a no, it is placed in the pile for rejection letters.
 2. If acquisitions editor sees potential, they request the entire manuscript.
2. Your requested manuscript arrives at the publishing house. (4-6 months)
 - a. You have attached copies of your original query letter, synopsis, and the letter of request along with the entire manuscript and a SHORT letter thanking the editor for this opportunity to present your work.
 - i. The manuscript is logged in and sent to the correct acquisitions editor.
 - b. The acquisitions editor sends the manuscript to readers. For example, if you sent a romance submission, every day romance readers are asked to read your manuscript and give their opinions on items such as what they liked, didn't like, if they think the manuscript should be published...
 - i. If the majority of the readers suggest the manuscript be published, then the manuscript is sent to a content editor for evaluation. This takes a HUGE chunk of time. Remember you only send in one manuscript and readers can be located anywhere in the country. So that manuscript realllly travels.
 - ii. If the majority of the readers did not suggest the book, then the reader evaluations are sent to the acquisitions editor along with the manuscript. The acquisitions editor then reads the evaluations and will decide whether to allow the book to continue in the process or give it a rejection letter.
 - c. If the manuscript makes it past the readers, it is sent to an editor for evaluation. The editor is looking to see how much work this manuscript will need to actually be published. They list major and minor issues with the manuscript and if it is worth the time (thus money) needed to be fixed and if they think the author will be capable of making the needed changes. Then the editor gives his/her recommendation to the acquisitions editor.
 - d. The acquisitions editor reads all of the evaluations. If the editor evaluation recommended not publishing a book because of technical issues, it is rare that the acquisitions editor will go against that recommendation. Either way, the acquisitions editor reads the manuscripts and decides which ones he/she wishes to publish and which ones receive a rejection letter.

3. You get the call!!!! (All I can say about time is don't rush into anything and understand anything you sign)
 - a. The acquisitions editor or your agent calls you and says such and such publishing house wants your manuscript.
 - b. After you finish screaming and jumping around, you take a few deep breaths and calm yourself.
 - c. Whether you have an agent or not, you should obtain a copy of Literary Law Guide for Authors by Tonya Marie Evans. EXCELLENT BOOK.
 - d. You agree on a contract, receive the date your manuscript is due to enter editing, and the tentative publishing date.
 - e. Production begins the cover design once you sign the contract. Some publishing houses have authors fill out a questionnaire about their book to help the cover designer, marketing...
4. Your manuscript arrives at the publishing house to be edited. If you are a self publisher, make sure you follow the below steps with your manuscript.
 - a. The assigned content/developmental editor works with you to help shape your manuscript. This editor focuses mainly on content: characterization, plot, consistency, showing vs: telling, active and passive voice, pacing...He/She also looks for word reduction, word choice, repetition elimination, grammar, spelling syntax, but this is not his/her main focus. You may go through a few rounds of developmental editing. Once you complete developmental rewrites, you will not usually see the manuscript again until after it is typeset unless there is an issue found in one of the other steps. (2-4 months)
 - b. The next step is copy editing. The manuscript is sent to at least one copy editor. This editor's main focus is word reduction, word choice, reduction of repetition...they also correct grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation type issues, but this is not their main focus. If they see an issue with the plot as they go along, they alert the developmental/content editor so the issue can be fixed. Sometimes the developmental editor can fix whatever the issue was. Other times it takes the author. (1 month)
 - c. The next step is proof reading. The manuscript goes through at least one set of proof edits. This editor's focus is grammar, punctuation, spelling and syntax type issues. If they notice any serious issues or inconsistencies in the plot, they will alert the developmental/content editor. After proof reading the manuscript is sent to production. (1 month)

SIDENOTE: I like to start asking other authors for back quotes after my manuscript has gone through developmental editing. You may want to ask the acquisitions editor if you can get a copy of the manuscript that is sent to production (it has been copy edited and proofed at least once) to send out for quotes and extra reviews. Make sure you place **UNCORRECTED PROOF** on the first page somewhere because this manuscript still need to go through two more sets of proof reading. If you have not received the list of places the publishing company requests reviews from, then ask for the list.

SELF PUBLISHED AUTHORS please do not hire one person to do all three jobs. Once someone reads your book, they no longer can see the mistakes as well. They see what should be there instead of what is actually there. You need fresh eyes for each step.

5. Your manuscript arrives at production (2-4 months).
 - a. By this point in time there are usually a few cover concepts for your novel you'll be asked for input about. Some publishing houses give the authors more say so in the cover than other publishers.
 - b. The manuscript is sent to a different proof reader
 - c. The manuscript is typeset (put into book format)
 - d. Often times characters (letters) change and spacing is altered by the typesetting program, so the manuscript is sent to yet another proof reader.
 - i. At the same time the author is given the typeset manuscript to read through and make corrections (proofing type)
 - ii. At the same time the typeset manuscript is put into galley format and sent out for review.
 - e. The proof reader and author send a proofing form (a proofing form list all of the errors in the manuscript, the page, line number, what the line says and what it is supposed to say) to production.
 - f. When you receive the typeset version of the manuscript, if the publisher has not sent you the list of places they request reviews from, ask for it. Then send your manuscript to additional places for review. Make sure that you write UNCORRECTED PROOF on the first page somewhere.
 - g. Someone in production combines the list of errors and gives them to the typesetter to correct.
 - h. The typesetter corrects the final issues, then sends the manuscript back to the production manager for printing.
6. The manuscript is sent to the printer (6-8 weeks).
 - a. The blues (the book layout using the printers program) are sent to production to look for any issues. Just as characters and alignment can be altered during typesetting, the same is true when the printer converts the manuscript into a book. Once the production manager looks through the book and gives the okay, the book is printed, then sent to the distributor and/or publisher.
7. The distributor starts trying to sell each title about six months in advance, so by the time your book arrives from the printer, there will be plenty of bookstores ready for it.
 - a. Three months before your release date, start setting up book signings.
 - b. Tell your publisher about your signings so they can speak with the distributor and ensure there are plenty of your books in the area.
8. You make your monthly trip to the book store, and though you know in your head your book is due out this month, though you received your author copies, you are shocked when you see your baby on the bookshelf!
 - a. Take a deep breath and try to remain calm. Once you gather your wits, ask the manager of the store if you can sign the copies of your book. If you

haven't arranged a signing at that particular store, arrange one. Remember that the beginning of the month is a good time for a signing (folks have more money then).

Well that's it. The whole shebang! I hope this took some of the mystery out of the process for you.

If you have any questions, you can always reach me at deatri@deewrites.com
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