**THE BUSINESS OF WRITING**

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Here are some factoids and tips to help you understand the business end of writing.

My first tip: be sure to join organizations like SCBWI, CANSCAIP, and CCBC FOR YA WRITERS, RWA for romance writers, etc. And writers unions (TWUC in Canada) are geared to instructing and/or supporting all writers in a variety of ways.

Make sure your social media pages are an engaging mix of personal and bookish endeavours.

There are pros and cons to self-publishing and traditional publishing. The pros of self-publishing include personal control and speed of process; the pros of traditional publishing include status and bookstore reach. If you're comfortable taking on a variety of publishing roles including marketing, self-publishing may be a good option for you.

When you're ready to submit your manuscript to an agency or publishing house, be sure to follow the submission guidelines. Your full manuscript should be ready to go because if they like your query letter, they will request the full ms.

Note that some of the bigger publishers don't accept unsolicited manuscripts, so if you wish to publish with one of the big five, you will require an agent.

Some people prefer going with bigger agencies versus boutique agencies (pros of a bigger agency include status; pros of a boutique agency include more attention), and some writers prefer bigger publishing houses over smaller publishers (pros of a bigger house include higher advances and maybe better marketing and publicity; pros of a smaller house include more attention and things happen more swiftly).

Everything takes a LOT of time in publishing--expect long waits at the querying stage, especially.

Sometimes (most of the time) an agent or editor will ask you for revisions before a contract is offered.

If an editor likes a manuscript, it will be taken to the editorial committee first and then to the acquisition team, which includes representatives from sales and marketing.

Keep your query letter brief--three paragraphs. The first should be a hook-y synopis. The second should begin with something like, 'The above describes my NUMBER-word, GENRE novel' and should go on to describe your writing qualifications. The third paragraph should explain why you're targeting this particular agent or editor.

Submissions are mostly done electronically now, on platforms like Submittable. You will likely need a one or two page synopsis in addition to your query letter.

Query letters and synopses should be single spaced.

Always write your one-two page synopsis in the present tense. Cover the book's plot lines and describe all characters, conflicts and your underlying theme.

Have a one sentence novel descriptor ready for conferences and be prepared to answer questions!

Re: contract negotiation...

Try to eliminate the option clause, but if you can't, keep it as narrow and specific as you can (e.g. 'the author's next 60,000 word YA novel' as opposed to 'the author's next novel'). Remember that even if an offer is made by the publisher with the option, you don't have to accept it. The option refers to a first look. (Try to state a reasonable time period for reading, too.)

Royalties should be on list price, not net.

Aim for a low number of payments (two versus three or four).

Try to hang on to film/tv/game/international rights.

Rights should revert back to you when sales dip under a certain level.

If you don't have an agent, you might want to retain the services of an entertainment lawyer. One of the writing organizations may be able to provide names.

And now a few tips on time management for writers:

It's generally a good idea to set aside time each day to write. Mornings are good because you get the words out of the way. But if you're not a morning person, use your lunch hour or evening hours, if they work for you.

DON't write if you aren't clear and excited about a project; let your project gel before you begin. I don't think there's any point in wasting time on writing that will be thrown out.

Minimize distractions. Turn off your phone, social media notifications, etc.

Remember that 'No' is a complete sentence!

I hope these factoids and tips prove useful!