

This Free E-Book is brought to you by [Natural-Aging.com](http://Natural-Aging.com).

**100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment**  
**Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances**  
**Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!**

**About Writing**

**By Michael LaRocca**

**About Writing**

by: **Michael LaRocca**

In this free email course, I'll tell you everything I know about improving your writing, publishing it electronically and in print, and promoting it after the sale.

Two questions you should ask:

- (1) What will it cost me?
- (2) What does this Michael LaRocca guy know about it?

Answer #1 — It won't cost you a thing. The single most important bit of advice I can give you, and I say it often, is don't pay for publication.

My successes have come from investing time. Some of it was well spent, but most of it was wasted. It costs me nothing to share what I've learned. It costs you nothing to read it except some of your time.

Answer #2 — "Michael LaRocca has been researching the publishing field for over ten years."

This quote, from an ezine (electronic newsletter) called Authors Wordsmith, was a kind way of saying I've received a lot of rejections. Also, my "research" required 20 years.

But in my "breakout" year (2000), I finished writing four books and scheduled them all for publication in 2001. Then I spent almost a year as an editor and Author Development Specialist for one of my publishers.

After my first book was published, both my publishers closed. Two weeks and three publishers later, I was back on track. All four books were republished, and a fifth will be released in 2004. Written in 2003, no rejections.

## About Writing

See how much faster it was the second time around? That's because I learned a lot.

2004 EPPIE Award finalist. 2002 EPPIE Award finalist. Listed by Writers Digest as one of The Best 101 Websites For Writers in 2001 and 2002. Sime-Gen Readers Choice Awards for Favorite Author (Nonfiction & Writing) and Favorite Book (Nonfiction & Writing). 1982 Who's Who In American Writing.

Excuse me for bragging, but it beats having you think I'm unqualified.

Also, I found more editing jobs. That's what I do when I'm not writing, doing legal transcription, or teaching English in China (my new home). But the thing is, if I'd become an editor before learning how to write, I'd have stunk.

I'll tell you what's missing from this course. What to write about, where I get my ideas from, stuff like

that. Maybe I don't answer this question because I think you should do it your way, not mine. Or maybe because I don't know how I do it. Or maybe both.

Once you've done your writing bit, this course will help you with all the other stuff involved in being a writer. Writing involves wearing at least four different hats. Writer, editor, publication seeker, post-sale self-promoter.

Here's what I can tell you about my writing.

Sometimes a story idea just comes to me out of nowhere and refuses to leave me alone until I write it. So, I do.

And, whenever I read a book that really fires me up, I find myself thinking, "I wish I could write like that." So, I just keep trying. I'll never write the best, but I'll always write my best. And get better every time. That's the "secret" of the writing "business," same as any other business. Always deliver the goods.

I read voraciously, a habit I recommend to any author who doesn't already have it. You'll subconsciously pick up on what does and doesn't work. Characterization, dialogue, pacing, plot, story, setting, description, etc. But more importantly, someone who doesn't enjoy reading will never write something that someone else will enjoy reading.

I don't write "for the market." I know I can't, so I just write for me and then try to find readers who like what I like. I'm not trying to whip up the next bestseller and get rich. Not that I'd complain. Nope, I have to write what's in my heart, then go find a market later. It makes marketing a challenge at times, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

When you write, be a dreamer. Go nuts. Know that you're writing pure gold. That fire is why we write.

An author who I truly admire, Kurt Vonnegut, sweats out each individual sentence. He writes it, rewrites it, and doesn't leave it alone until it's perfect. Then when he's done, he's done.

## About Writing

I doubt most of write like that. I don't. I let it fly as fast as my fingers can move across the paper or keyboard, rushing to capture my ideas before they get away. Later, I change and shuffle and slice.

James Michener claims that he writes the last sentence first, then has his goal before him as he writes his way to it.

Then there's me. No outline whatsoever. I create characters and conflict, spending days and weeks on that task, until the first chapter really leaves me wondering "How will this end?" Then my characters take over, and I'm as surprised as the reader when I finish my story.

Some authors set aside a certain number of hours every day for writing, or a certain number of words. In short, a writing schedule.

Then there's me. No writing for three or six months, then a flurry of activity where I forget to eat, sleep, bathe, change the cat's litter... I'm a walking stereotype. To assuage the guilt, I tell myself that my unconscious is hard at work. As Hemingway would say, long periods of thinking and short periods of writing.

I've shown you the extremes in writing styles. I think most authors fall in the middle somewhere. But my point is, find out what works for you. You can read about how other writers do it, and if that works for you, great. But in the end, find your own way. That's what writers do.

Just don't do it halfway.

If you're doing what I do, writing a story that entertains and moves you, then you will find readers who share your tastes. For some of us that means a niche market and for others it means regular appearances on the bestseller list.

Writing is a calling, but publishing is a business. Remember that AFTER you've written your manuscript. Not during.

I've told you how I write. For me.

The next step is self-editing. Fixing all the mistakes I made, that I can identify, in my rush to write it before my Muse took a holiday. Several rewrites. Running through it repeatedly with a fine-toothed comb.

Then what?

There are stories that get rejected because the potential publisher hates them, but far more are shot down for other reasons. Stilted dialogue. Boring descriptions. Weak characters. Underdeveloped story. Unbelievable or inconsistent plot. Sloppy writing.

That's what you have to fix.

## About Writing

After my fifteen-year hiatus from writing, I started by using Free Online Creative Writing Workshops. What I needed most was input from strangers. After all, once you're published, your readers will be strangers. Every publisher you submit to will be a stranger. What will they think? I was far too close to my writing to answer that.

Whenever I got some advice, I considered it. Some I just threw out as wrong, or because I couldn't make the changes without abandoning part of what made the story special to me. Some I embraced. But the point is, I decided. It was my writing.

After a time, I didn't feel the need for the workshops anymore. I'm fortunate enough to have a wife whose advice I will always treasure, and after a while that was all I needed. But early on, it would've been unfair to ask her to read my drivel. (Not that I didn't anyway.)

I don't know how far along you are in your writing, but if you've never used a workshop, I keep a list of them at

Your goal when you self-edit is to get your book as close to "ready to read" as you possibly can. You want your editor to find what you overlooked, not what you didn't know about.

To that end, I offer two resources.

contains links to online quotations, grammar

and style guides, dictionaries, encyclopedias, thesauruses, scam warnings, writer groups, copyright stuff, etc.

contains a list of the most common

mistakes I've seen in my years as an editor. I still reread it from time to time just so I don't forget.

Your story is your story. You write it from your heart, and when it looks like something you'd enjoy reading, you set out to find a publisher who shares your tastes. What you don't want is for that first reader to lose sight of what makes your story special because you've bogged it down with silly mistakes.

Authors don't pay to be published. They are paid for publication. Always. It's just that simple. And later, I'll tell you where to get some free editing.

But there's a limit to how much editing you can get without paying for it. Do you need more than that? I don't know because I've never seen your writing. But if you evaluate it honestly, I think you'll know the answer.

As an editor, I've worked with some authors who simply couldn't self-edit. A non-native English

## About Writing

speaker, a guy who slept through English class, whatever. To them, maybe paying for editing was an option. This isn't paying for publication. This is paying for a service, training. Just like paying to take a Creative Writing class at the local community college.

By the way, I don't believe creativity can be taught. Writing, certainly. I took my Creative Writing class in high school, free, and treasure it. But I already had the creativity, or else it would've been a waste of the teacher's time and mine.

If you hire an editor worthy of the name, you should learn from that editor how to self-edit in the future. In my case it took two tries, because the first editor was a rip-off artist charging over ten times market value for incomplete advice.

That editor, incidentally, is named Edit Ink, and they're listed on many of the "scam warning" sites mentioned at Useful Links For Authors. They took kickbacks from every fake agent who sent them a client. (I'll talk about fake agents later.)

If you choose to hire an editor, check price and reputation. And consider that you might never make enough selling your books to get back what you pay that editor. Do you care? That's your decision.

The first, most important step on the road to publication is to make your writing the best it can be.

### \*\* PUBLICATION \*\*

My goal is to be published in both mediums, ebook and print. There are some readers who prefer ebooks, and some who prefer print books. The latter group is much larger, but those publishers are harder to sell your writing to. I want both, because I want all the readers I can get.

Thus, I advocate something of a stepping-stone approach. Publish electronically with a quality place, enjoy the benefits of free editing and almost instant gratification regarding publishing time.

Later, if you think you can sell your book to a traditional print publisher, you have a professionally edited manuscript to submit.

Before you epublish, check the contract to be sure you can publish the edited work in print later.

If you know your book just plain won't ever make it into traditional print, print-on-demand (POD) is an option. Some of my books fall into this category. The best epublishers will simultaneously publish your work electronically and in POD format, at no cost to you.

A lot of authors swear by self-publication, but the prospect just plain scares me. All that promo, all that self-editing, maybe driving around the countryside with a back seat full of books. I'm a writer, not a salesman. But, maybe you're different.

I self-published once, in the pre-POD days. Mom handled the sales. I had fun and broke even. With POD, at least it's cheaper to self-publish than it was in 1989.

## About Writing

If you're flying solo, POD can range anywhere from US\$99 to over \$1000. Don't pay the higher price! Price shop. Also, remember that POD places publish any author who pays, and do no marketing.

### Print Publishing vs Electronic Publishing

This site provides a comparison of the two mediums. Each has plusses and minuses. Even if you already know what epublising is, take a look.

### Electronic Publishers

A list of the ones I believe are reputable and my criteria for selecting them. Plus, a link to award-winning author Piers Anthony's totally excellent in-depth analysis of many more epublshers than I'll ever list.

### How To Break Into Print Publishing

If you're at the beginning of my stepping-stone approach, seeking an epublsher, you'll probably just want to bookmark this one for a year or two. That's fine, because it's not going anywhere. I plan to use it myself in a year or two. If, on the other hand, you're ready for traditional print, use it now and I wish you success!

### Print-On-Demand Publishing

What is it? Should you use it? If so, how? What to beware of if you do.

### \*\* PROMOTING YOUR PUBLISHED WRITING \*\*

It doesn't matter how you publish your book. Self-published, epublshed, POD, or traditional print publishing from an absolute powerhouse. Marketing falls largely on you, and the same things always work. Book signings, interviews in the local newspapers and on radio.

### Start with

. It will allow you to look up all the local media

outlets in your area that have websites.

If you write to them all, you're a spammer. Plus, it'll take ages. Look for the ones with a legitimate interest and fire away.

If you find a stale URL, and I think you will, look for the name of that media outlet at some place like Google. Spend some time looking for the right press contacts, spend some time writing your press release, and do what you can.

Most of these sites list email, snail mail, and phone calls. Since I live in China, I've only used email.

## About Writing

Book reviews, author interviews, book listing sites, and book contests are something we can all do, regardless of where we live. Again, I'm going to give you some web pages to visit. Pages where I keep my resources, so I don't lose them. Some of the sites I mention do ebooks, and some do not. The POD option can help e-authors here, but balance cost vs. likelihood of gaining enough readers to offset that.

Some are ezines and some are websites. Some are printed newsletters, some are printed magazines, and some are newspapers. This is just a starting point. If you visit them all, and you have time for more promotion, you can find many more.

Book Reviewers, Author Interviews, Book Listing Sites

Book Contests

Okay, let's get back to my overseas angle. Aside from two radio interviews and a seminar in Hong Kong, and some emailed press releases to the LOCAL media back in the US which may or may not have succeeded in anything, my marketing has come from the Internet.

I have a website. I have a newsletter. I'm giving away a free ebook, the essence of which you're reading now. You found me somehow, right?

Here's the type of message I receive often in email. To be more precise, in spam.

If a million people see your ad, and you get 1% of them, that's 10,000 readers and therefore \$15,000 profit and you only paid \$1000 for those million addresses.

NO!! It doesn't work that way. Need I use the words dot-com bust?

My website is free. My newsletter is free. I don't buy mailing lists, I don't harvest email addresses, and I don't spam. I want interested traffic, not just sheer numbers.

Do you think the Phoenicians tried to sell sails to people a thousand miles from the water?

Internet marketing isn't a replacement for the methods mentioned above, but a complement to them. And by using it, I got you here.

Your goal in marketing is this. There are certainly people in the world who like what you like. And since you like your book, they probably will too.

But you have to find those readers and make them interested, without spamming them and without just

"playing the numbers game."

If you're an e-author, let me state the obvious. Nobody buys ebooks who doesn't have Internet access. Do they? So you definitely need a website.

## About Writing

Traditional print authors need websites too. Even blockbuster authors like J.R. Rowling and Stephen King, who I doubt could garner any more name recognition, have websites. So does every long-established inescapable monstro-business like McDonalds and Coke.

Okay, those folks pay web designers. I'm not doing that. I can't generate those kinds of sales figures. And yes, I've formerly been employed as an HTML programmer. But you can write your own website without even learning HTML if you want. It's no harder than writing a manuscript with a word processor.

It won't be super-flashy like the big boys, but it'll communicate the information. Remember, you can communicate. You're an author! And that's what keeps people coming back to a website after the thrill of the flash wears off. Information. Content. Your specialty.

I consider my website and my newsletter to be successful, and I've created a free email course to analyze how they got that way. Yes, there are legitimate ways to bring traffic to your website and your newsletter. Not massive numbers overnight, but slow steady growth over the long term.

\*\* CLOSING THOUGHTS \*\*

We've been talking about soft sell.

Now, at the end of my free workshop, I'll tell you about 2 URLs that I think will help you and one that won't. You can decide if any are worth a visit.

After that, I'll get back to the lesson.

Books OnLine Directory

You've been to parts of it already and seen that it delivers something you're looking for. (I hope.) Don't forget to go back from time to time.

Mad About Books

My free weekly email newsletter will keep you up-to-date on the latest info as I find it. Plus, it has a certain goofy charm that the website lacks.

Both URLs mention my books, but in the background. I hope you'll look one day out of curiosity or because you really like my generous nature, but it's not mandatory. Soft sell.

From Watha, NC, USA to Shaoxing, Zhejiang, China

This site doesn't mention writing at all. I wrote it for my students. I teach English in China, and this is where I tell all about it. Along with a hefty helping of personal history and photos. How I got here, how I quit a job via email to marry a lovely Australian, dog and cat photos, stuff like that. Just for fun. It won't

help you a bit.

## About Writing

Now let's get back to your writing. That's why you're here.

Here's something you've heard before. When your manuscript is rejected — and it will be — remember that you aren't being rejected. Your manuscript is.

One reader took me to task for that statement, claiming he'd never been rejected in his life. I'm very happy for him. But why, if I may be so bold as to ask, would he need advice on How To Get Published? I'd rather he write some advice so I can hang up my "helper guy" hat and learn from a master.

But I digress. You aren't being rejected, I was saying. Your manuscript is.

Did you ever hang up the phone on a telemarketer, delete spam, or close the door in the face of a salesman? Of course, and yet that salesman just moves on to the next potential customer. He knows you're rejecting his product, not him.

Okay, in my case I'm rejecting both, but I'd never do that to an author. Neither will a publisher or an agent. All authors tell other authors not to take rejection personally, and yet we all do. Consider it a target to shoot for, then. Just keep submitting, and just keep writing.

The best way to cope with waiting times is to "submit and forget," writing or editing other stuff while the time passes.

And finally, feel free to send an e-mail to me anytime. [michaellarocca@yawweb.org](mailto:michaellarocca@yawweb.org). I'll gladly share what I know with you, and it won't cost you a cent.

I would wish you luck in your publishing endeavors, but I know there's no luck involved. It's all skill and diligence.

Congratulations on completing the course! No ceremonies, no degrees, and no diplomas. But on the bright side, no student loan to repay.

Best regards,

Michael LaRocca

Michael was born in North Carolina, USA. He teaches English at a university in Shaoxing, Zhejiang Province, China. Five of his books were published in 2002, and another is scheduled for publication in 2004. One of his novels is an EPPIE 2004 finalist in the Mainstream category. One of his novels was an EPPIE 2002 finalist in the Thriller category. He's also won two Sime~Gen Readers Choice Awards for nonfiction. He's proud of the fact that he rarely writes in the same genre twice. He's listed in the 1982 Who's Who In American Writing, but that impresses him even less than it impresses you. Michael has worked as an editor for the past thirteen years. For ten years he was responsible for all the tech manuals and sales literature produced by an R&D firm. He also wrote their website. Then he moved to

China in 1999 and began editing and reviewing fiction for several U.S. publishers via the Internet. He

## About Writing

has been involved with the publication of almost 200 novels. He also works as a legal transcriptionist for a Hong Kong firm. When he should be squeezing writing into his schedule, he is usually enjoying the company of his wife and their cat instead, or sweating through Chinese lessons. In July he finished obtaining his TEFL qualification, so maybe now he'll find time to write. For more information about Michael and his books, visit his website at

which was listed in Writers

Digest's The 101 Best Websites For Writers in 2001 and 2002. His email address is

### **Have You Plotted Your Story Before Writing It?**

**By Nick Vernon**

Creative Writing Tips -

The writer, who doesn't have the time to plot, always finds the time to rewrite.

Sound familiar?

I've been guilty of this too, back in the early days of my writing apprenticeship. I was so eager to get stuck into writing my story that I wouldn't bother with plotting.

Plotting gives you a sense of direction. It's your map, which will lead you to write your story. Leaping into the unknown rarely works. Without a plot several things can happen.... Our stories aren't focused

We lose our way Our characters don't come to life because we don't take the time to develop them

We get stuck The story strays from us

And all this happens when we haven't figured everything out first.

Your plot is the foundation of your story. It's the skeleton, which will hold your story together. Your plot is there to work everything out first - to see if it can be worked out, and then flesh out that skeleton with other elements that make a story.

Plotting is the difference between writing a story for yourself and writing one for an audience. Writing for ourselves doesn't require too much strain because we only have ourselves to please. It's when we have to please our readers that the hard work begins.

If you are aiming to sell your stories, plotting is a must.

Have you plotted your story before writing it?

Besides his passion for writing, Nick Vernon runs an online gift site where you will find gift information,

## About Writing

articles and readers' funny stories. Visit

Related Content:

Have You Plotted Your Story Before Writing It?

Writing about 'writing'.

The Write Habit: How to Strengthen Your Writing Muscle

Writing With A Bird's Eye View

Keeping your readers interested when writing non-fiction

Read more Content at

Related Products:

Write Around The World FREE!

How To Find A Topic For Your Ebook

Profit Pulling Reports

Carefully Crafted Sales Emails And Web Copy

Press Release E-Manual

: A genuine resource center for Quality Ebooks and Softwares



**This Free E-Book has been brought to you by [Natural-Aging.com](http://Natural-Aging.com).**

**100% Effective Natural Hormone Treatment**  
**Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances**  
**Impair Healthy Healing In People Over The Age Of 30!**