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**Publishing Information For Genre Writers**

**By Jeff Colburn**

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I finally did it. I went to my first science fiction convention, LepreCon 27, in Scottsdale, Arizona, and had a great time. (To see some pictures of LepreCon 27, go to <http://www.CreativeCauldron.com/leprecon.shtml>)

I found out that the people at scifi conventions are different from people at any of the other writer's or artist's conventions that I have attended. At writer's and artist's events, the people are there mainly to learn. They treat the event like a mini-school. While at a scifi con, the main emphasis is on having fun. With a video room showing movies and TV shows, a gaming room for computer and board games, a Con Suite where people can meet, eat and have a good time. And don't forget the closing event, the Squirt Gun Fight.

Don't get me wrong, there was a lot there for writers and artists to learn, but Fun is King. The Con had many good panels, in fact, I was on three of them. It was at these panels where I learned some very interesting, and possible disturbing facts, for genre writers, and writers in general.

I gleaned this information while talking with several writers, including:

- Michael Stackpole – He's written over twenty five books, including Battle Tech and Star Wars novels, plus many original works.
- Jennifer Roberson – She's had over twenty published novels, thirteen of which were best-selling fantasy novels.
- John Vornholt – Who has over thirty published books, two of which were Star Trek: TNG.
- Emily Devenport – With over fifteen published books and numerous short stories.
- Ernest Hogan – Who has numerous published short stories, some of which have been recommended for Hugo and Nebula Awards.

While talking with them I learned some valuable information. For writers in general, I found out that:

- Publishing houses spend little or no money to market the bulk of their authors.
- About 80% of the books published never make back their advance.
- Advances are getting smaller.

## Publishing Information For Genre Writers

For genre writers, you should know that:

- Fantasy outsells science fiction 10 to 1.
- Publishers seem to have the attitude that authors who write genre books are doing it as a hobby, not a career.
- Short stories are selling better than novelettes.
- Preferred novel length for most places is between 85,000 and 100,000 words.
- You need to determine how your work is like other works out there (so that readers are familiar, and comfortable, with your work) and how it is unique (to make it special to readers, something different that they will want to read).
- Even if your book is published, it must be carried by bookstores, which only stock a fraction of the books available to them. Without aggressive promotion by the author, sales will be slow or nonexistent

and the major chains will remove your book from the shelf in two to seven days. When that happens, your book has essentially reached the end of its life. So, you spent at least a year writing your book, maybe another year finding a publisher and one to two years for the publisher to have a finished product. All the efforts you put into seeing your book in print, a minimum of four years of your life, can go down the tubes in less than a week.

And a little writing advice:

- You should have no more than five main viewpoint characters for a 100,000 word story. You can have more for longer stories.
- For a 100,000 word book one author uses the first 25,000 words to set up the story and introduce the characters, the middle 50,000 to ramp up to the ending, and the last 25,000 words to wrap up the story.

Yes, the facts appear grim, but remember, many writers do make a comfortable living in their profession. If the above facts make you want to run away and hide, then maybe you don't have what it takes to be a full time writer. Someone truly dedicated to a writing career will see these things as challenges to be overcome, and know that even though it will take a lot of hard work, they can indeed achieve their goals.

So cheer up, put your heart and soul into your work, love the process and have faith in yourself.

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### **The Publishing Business**

**By Kadence Buchanan**

Publishing is a fascinating business and the process that goes into the making of books and newspapers is an interesting one. These days, with the world of digital information and the internet upon us, the scope of publishing now also includes websites, blogs and the like.

>From the business perspective, publishing isn't just printing literature or information but also the development, marketing, distribution and even promotion of the printed works. It is not as simple as it may seem.

The publishing process begins with the written work or the copy. Many aspiring and unpublished writers often submit manuscripts to publishing houses in the hopes of seeing the light of print. These end up in a slush pile which editors sift through, and the great majority of these contributions are often rejected. Usually, book and magazine publishers commission copy from known and established writers, and unsolicited works have a slim chance of getting published. The prudent thing for a writer to do to get published is to first submit a query or a proposal. It also helps if you have a literary agent who has access to major publishers.

Once a publisher accepts a work, then negotiations with the writer or his agent begin on how much to pay the writer for "intellectual property" rights and "royalty rate."

Once commercial and legal issues are settled, the next step is the editorial stage where writers are asked to rewrite or improve their manuscripts before they get to publishing editors who do further editing on the work.

The next stage is called prepress and that's where design and artwork (including photos) are decided. Other processes are typesetting, dust jacket composition, deciding on paper quality, binding method, casing as well as proofreading. Once done, the work can now proceed to printing. It is interesting to note that most major magazine and newspaper publishers have their own printing presses, but book publishers seldom do.

The publisher's work doesn't end with the publication of the book. This is followed by advertising and other marketing tasks, including distribution. There are times when the publishing process up to the printing stage is handled by a separate company or individual before selling the same to the publishing house. This is known as book packaging.

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