Get published

GET PUBLISHED

As some of the world’s top editors and publishers descend on Abu Dhabi this month, we take this opportunity to get some top tips on getting that first novel out.

Interviews compiled by Katy Gillett
Illustrations by Zubair Latief
Growing up in a family of booksellers, I have always been surrounded by books and loved reading. Originally, I wanted to become an author of my own books. I entered my career in publishing in the early 1990s as a trainee at Vorlag Verlag in Frankfurt, Germany. I became a manager instead of an editor, but I'm an avid reader and have always stayed in the publishing business. I worked at various publishing houses before I became the director of the Frankfurt Buchmesse in 2005. Now, I am a publishing consultant and publisher for the Jrugen Boos Steward. Of course, your writing and the way you need to be clear and very good. And you need to be persistent. Nowadays, self-publishing is getting stronger, and the opportunity to take control of their own companies, they are seeking not just authors and publishers, all need to work with themselves. Nowadays, self-publishing gives writers the opportunity to take control of their own careers, whether as both author and publisher, self-publishers need to do all the work themselves.

Jürgen Boos
Steward, publisher, manager, and member of the Scientific Committee of the
Schenk Zeppli Book Award and the German Book Prize Academy

...and again when you don’t succeed at first, ask for feedbacks when you receive rejection. Listen, take it to heart and adapt. All you need is one person to say “yes!” and have a chance on you.

In publishing, content is key. In my opinion, choosing a good story and a great presentation in a wider audience should be welcomed as a valuable addition to the printed book. Interactively, digital publishing and new devices have not only enhanced reading habits, but have also given new meaning to the printed book. Elevating it from a device for reading to an object of art, to be owned and displayed.”

Favourite author: I depend on the genre. For instance, I like Kent Ove Westaby’s historical stories, J.K. Rowling, and Jo Leckie’s science fiction tales.

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My very first job was working for a newspaper, which I quit after six months. But I then realized that I loved the book world, and I have been in it ever since — for 32 years as a publisher, and now 20 as a publisher. "Despite being in a market research, I have to admit there is no magic bullet for achieving bestsellers — although you can do an immense amount to help your chances by being clear about how audiences you are targeting and then looking every aspect of your publishing to make sure that audience, the book, marketing, distribution, etc. are all the right fit. You can see us as if it was all consumer research. We are trying to predict this". The holiday season is one of the best times of the year for Christmas purchases, but there are periods in between, which I have to admit as a publisher. First, the market peaks every time a big title is published — last year was the new. Will this year’s "Harry Potter" work? "The new "Harry Potter" will. The weather will be fine. I’ve been surprised by how things we’ve shown in recent research we’ve done. One is that digital books have not taken off in the children’s market. The second has been the recent growth in audio books, which seems to be pretty much younger readers. Out of all these, the number one fiction genre is the "Harry Potter". It’s partly due to a proliferation of excellent writers, but also I think publishers are taking such a much more serious. Another genre that’s doing very well at the moment is science and fantasy works — they’ve been around for a long time, but seem to be becoming more mainstream. And the children’s market has had an excellent couple of years, not just in the UK, but in other markets around the world. "A common way of publishing an under-selling book is by ignoring your sales. And now that you’re getting it listed in industry databases such as Nielsen BookData..." I think digital publishing is terrific. To flourish, it needs to work in the right way. I see a lot more experiments with pricing, but that means you have to think of the right kind of thing you can do and not just get something that’s not selling. As an avid reader, I love reading the "Harry Potter" with me and never running out of something to read.

Favourite author: The moment I am reading Anthony Trollope. I will also read anything by Hilary Mantel, Anne Tyler, Khaled Hosseini, Noel Davis, William Boyd, and Lee Child.

Jo Hasy@kleen.com
I worked to be a journalist and needed to become a member of the highly select tribe of journalists. The easiest way was to get a job in publishing. Having earned, I couldn’t escape back into journalism! Anyway, I sent off letters to fifty publishers, was ignored by most, rejected by a few, and then hired on by a small family-owned business called George J. Hearn, mostly famous for its French dictionaries.

As for their first science fiction, publishing something from primary school students, they published the book, an anthology, with academic titulology on the title page, no less. Of course, nobody else in the company was interested in science books (they all studied English themselves), so I had to teach all aspects of the business, from commissioning to production, promotion, rights, and even accounting. It was a great apprenticeship.

“Nothing is more arduous than making the nuts and bolts of a fascinating industry, and generating a selling-catch-the-form-of-a-book. This is a day in the life of William A. Adams, New York editor of the Science Fiction Book Club. As a rule, I spend 90% of my time acquiring books rather than publishing them. Self-publishing is a non-stop job and a book’s publishing. For authors, it means one can bypass the whole display-journey: select literary agents and publishers and one can make a book to be published. And, for publishers, it means a better chance to select a book. Publishing can be a legitimate way of any author or publisher looking for the audience, so if there is a market, setting up an author’s book really stands against the vast numbers of competitive books, learning the nuts and bolts of a fascinating industry, and generating a selling-catch-the-form-of-a-book.”

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As for my own publishing business, the company, called Soft Book Press, now in financial difficulties and I’ve decided to haggle over how to keep it going. The owner left, and I’m still up talking in love with publishing.

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