

SO YOU WANT TO WRITE & PUBLISH

Women Writing the West 20th Conference • October 16, 2014

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” —Maya Angelou

We write to tell our stories, we write to raise our voice, we write to open people’s minds and hearts; we write to make people feel. To be successful, we need to make sure the writing we let out into the world is the best it can be. Which means treating our work professionally, whether we go with traditional publishing or self-publishing.

Write a proposal: Laying it out in detail will help you see your project clearly.

- One-page synopsis: NOT a summary—it should evoke the feel and flavor of your voice and your book, and include enough detail that it’s clear how it begins and ends.
- Physical details: How many pages or words, finished size of book, illustrations, etc.
- Where it fits in the genre/Why it’s unique and salable: A brief analysis of the market, who you expect will buy it, and what the competition is.
- Marketing plan: What will you do to get the word out there? What’s your platform? What can you build on to sell your book?
- Author bio: What do you bring to this project? What skills, training and resources do you have that make you perfect to write it, and what kinds of “hooks” make you a marketable author?

Write the best first draft you can. Set it aside. Pick it up again, read it through, mark the sections that lag or flag or simply don’t fit. Revise thoroughly and mercilessly. Set the new draft aside. Pick it up again. Repeat more times than you can imagine are necessary. Read the whole thing out loud at least once, editing as you go. If your attention wanders, imagine what readers will do. Be ruthless: throw out any stereotypes and cliches, avoid shortcuts and don’t cheat your story and your voice on any aspect of the story or book. Have friends or a writing group read it, but remember this: your friends know you, so they’ll love whatever you write. They’re supporters, not critics. You need critics.

Work with professionals: If you’re self-publishing, give your book an edge by hiring professional editors and designers. And then take their advice. You want your book to look polished and to suck readers in from the first word, to pull them in and leave them wanting more when they reach the end.

Write as if it matters. Because your words do.