

THE WRITER'S HANDBOOK 2005

The complete guide for all writers,
journalists, publishers, editors, agents,
screenwriters and broadcasters

A warm-toned photograph of a writer's desk. In the foreground, a pair of round-rimmed glasses and a dark pen with gold-colored accents lie on a stack of papers. To the right, a vintage typewriter is partially visible. The background is softly blurred, showing more papers and a lamp. A white rectangular box obscures a portion of the desk in the lower center.

Editor BARRY TURNER

'This is the book no writer should be without' *The Times*

THE
WRITER'S
HANDBOOK

2005

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藏书章

EDITOR

BARRY TURNER

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Credits

Editor *Barry Turner*

Editorial Assistants *Jill Fenner, Jeni Giffen, Kenneth Hadley, Daniel Smith*

Poetry Editor *Peter Finch*

Contributors *Katharine Davies*

David Hooper

Kate Pool

Kate Rowland

Tax and Finance Adviser *Ian Spring*

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THE
WRITER'S
HANDBOOK
2005

Barry Turner has worked on both sides of publishing, as an editor and marketing director and as an author. He started his career as a journalist with *The Observer* before moving on to television and radio. He has written over twenty books including *A Place in the Country*, which inspired a television series, and a best selling biography of the actor, Richard Burton.

His recent work includes a radio play, travel articles, serialising books for *The Times*, editing the magazine *Country* and writing a one-man show based on the life of the legendary theatre critic, James Agate. He has just published *Countdown to Victory*, a book about the last months of World War II. Barry has been editor of *The Writer's Handbook* for eighteen years and editor of *The Statesman's Yearbook* for seven.

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Authors Look to the Bottom Line

Barry Turner

A long time ago, when I and the world were young my dears, it was said of books that they sold themselves. Asked to define marketing, a gentleman publisher (they were all gentlemen) was liable to think first of the man at the end of his mews who sold flowers off a barrow. Books were not like other goods. They appeared, as if by some strange literary osmosis, on the shelves of a high street store where each volume was clearly marked with a price set by the publisher. A discount, typically 15–20 per cent, was the predetermined profit for the retailer. Known as the Net Book Agreement, this cosy arrangement was jealously protected by its proponents who argued that to do away with the NBA would result in dearer books, fewer titles on offer and the demise of the small independent bookshop. The counter argument relied on the appeal of the free market. Abolishing retail price maintenance on books, as it had been on every other consumer item, would, it was claimed, lead to a more competitive environment. Publishers and booksellers would be forced off their butts to do some real selling instead of leaning back to wait for the reviewers and word of mouth recommendations to bring in the orders. More titles, cheaper books and a wider choice of retailer were predicted.

When, at last, in 1995, the NBA went the way of other price fixing deals, the proof of the pudding was much to the taste of the abolitionists. The book trade had a rush of energy that brought it into the brave new world of aggressive retailing. Loss leaders and three for the price of two promotions became commonplace along with attractive window displays and customer friendly stores that made book browsing a popular pastime. The number of titles published each year continued to increase (at the last count it was 125,390) and total sales enjoyed a year on year rise to £1.98 billion in 2002. There is, of course, a downside. The elevation of marketing to senior director level in all the mainline publishers has raised the stakes on identifying titles that can justify heavyweight promotion and the ever-increasing share of turnover demanded by retailers to pay for it. This emphasis on bestsellers is said to mitigate against risk taking. The tendency is to push money at those authors who have a strong track record and thus are already familiar names to the public or at writers who are promotable by virtue of their fame in sport, politics, show business or some other area where the book of the life promises a sensationalist read. It doesn't always work, but so far no one has come up with a more certain way of making money from general publishing.

Those who lose out are the mid-list authors, who used to justify their publication by sales to the libraries (with a welcome additional income from PLR) as

much as by a modest take-up in the shops. Now, library budgets are tighter and so too is shelf space. The squeeze has put paid to some routine authors whose demise might be deemed a merciful release but there is a worry that new writers who need time to develop might now have fewer opportunities to get started. Philip Pullman and Ian Rankin have been mentioned as writers who did not find bestseller success until well into their careers.

But this is to assume that the big publishers have lost all capacity to identify promising newcomers, which is simply not true. Editors are only too happy to discover a bestseller writer in the making – that is how they measure their own career prospects. Agents too are heavily into the business of nurturing the literary lion cubs. For writers who are trying to make their names, the frustration comes in finding that competition is tough, the more so because publishers and agents need a lot of persuading that the books they take on really do have a chance breaking the sales barrier. A consolation is in knowing that publishing is led but not dominated by the conglomerates. One of the encouraging features of the contemporary book scene is the success of smaller publishers such as Profile, Fourth Estate, Mainstream and Serpent's Tail in discovering and advancing talent.

Every established author can recall the hard times with a collection of rejection slips; some even boast enough of them to paper a wall. No one ever claimed that making a living from writing is an easy option. What has to be kept in mind is that, despite all the moans and groans, the breakthrough is no harder to achieve now than it was before we were all caught up in the marketing revolution.

The other big worry of authors about the way books are sold is that before long publishers will ask for changes in the system of paying royalties. As a hang-over from the NBA, most books still have a recommended retail price printed on their jackets. This is the benchmark for the royalty share, traditionally 10 per cent on the first 2,500 copies sold, 12.5 per cent on the next 2,500 and 15 per cent thereafter. Paperbacks typically come with a royalty tag of 7.5 per cent. So far, so relatively simple. Booksellers are free to cut prices if they see this as a strategy for increasing sales while authors' income is protected by being tied to the RRP. The catch, for the bookseller, is in not being able to increase prices on some items to compensate for the loss leaders. That is how supermarkets maximise turnover and the book chains would dearly like to follow their example.

Publishers would almost certainly agree to remove printed prices from covers, thus allowing booksellers, who presumably know their market, to decide their own terms of trade, on one important condition: that authors would drop their claim to royalties in return for getting a percentage of net receipts. The proposal, still at a kite flying stage, has been greeted by authors, their agents and other representatives with a howl of anger that would do credit to the sound effects for Harry Potter. But unless the principle is accepted that any change in marketing is bound to work against the writer, it is hard to see what the fuss is all about.

There are those who worry that putting up the price of some books would make them unsaleable which is another way of saying that the bookseller is in-

capable of knowing his own best interest – an unlikely proposition. Others believe that the figures for net receipts would be massaged by less reputable publishers to the detriment of authors. Possibly so, but surely no one is suggesting that royalty statements are immune to light-fingered manipulation? Percentage deals already apply to book clubs and to overseas sales. There is no reason to think that thereby authors are treated unfairly any more than there is reason to suppose that sums earned from percentages and royalties could not be equated by simple mathematics.

The objective of booksellers is to sell more books which has to be to the advantage of everyone, including authors. If taking prices off books helps towards that end, then we should applaud the move. However, there is another factor worth more than passing consideration. Publishing is all about risk – more so than most other businesses – but it is a risk that is shared unevenly. Books go into the shops on a sale or return basis. If they hang about on the shelves for more than a few weeks, back they go to the publishers' warehouses. If booksellers want more commercial freedom it is surely time for them to take on more responsibility. Firm sales, starting with front-list books, would bring them closer in line to the supermarkets they seek to emulate. Such a change in the terms of trade would be more radical than taking prices off books but the smaller concession may accelerate the momentum for change. Moreover, if authors were to receive a percentage of net receipts instead of a royalty on a fixed price, it would be easier for publishers to negotiate firm deals on longer print runs.

The book trade has a long way to go before it reaches its optimum size but growth needs energy and energy needs incentive. Opinion formers among authors seem unable to recognise this. This is a pity because they should be leading the way, not following sulkily behind the van.

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Acquisitions Editor *Simon Mason*

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Authors' Rating Authors may be asked to contribute towards production costs.

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Authors' Rating 'A testament to the ability of smaller publishers to survive in the retail jungle' (*Publishing News*). A&B is putting its effort into marketing a streamlined list.

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ROYALTIES twice-yearly.

Authors' Rating A quality publisher that has great success with translated fiction.

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www.gowerpub.com

Chairman *Nigel Farrow*

Founded 1967. Publishes business and professional titles under the Gower imprint and humanities, social sciences, law and legal studies under the Ashgate imprint. In December 1999 acquired Lund Humphries, publisher of art books and exhibition catalogues.

DIVISIONS **Ashgate** *Sarah Davies* Social sciences; *John Smedley* History/Variorum collected studies; *Heidi May* Music; *Erika Gaffney* Literary studies; *Tom Gray* History; *Sarah Lloyd* Theology and religious studies; *Paul Coulam* Philosophy; *John Hindley* Aviation studies. **Gower** *Jo Burges*, *Jonathan Norman* Business, management and training; *John Irwin* Law and legal studies. **Lund Humphries** *Lucy Myers*. Access the websites for information on submission of material.

Ashgrove Publishing

55 Richmond Avenue, London N1 0LX

☎020 7831 5013 Fax 020 7831 5011

✉gmo73@dial.pipex.com

www.ashgrovepublishing.com

Chairman/Managing Director *Brad Thompson*

Acquired by Hollydata Publishers in 1999, Ashgrove has been publishing for over 20 years. Publishes mind, body, spirit, health, cookery, sports. 4 titles in 2003. No unsolicited mss; approach with letter and outline in the first instance.

ROYALTIES twice-yearly.

Ashmolean Museum Publications

Ashmolean Museum, Beaumont Street, Oxford OX1 2PH

☎01865 278010 Fax 01865 278018

✉publications@ashmus.ox.ac.uk

www.ashmol.ox.ac.uk

Contact *Declan McCarthy*

The Ashmolean Museum, which is wholly owned by Oxford University, was founded in 1683. The first publication appeared in 1890 but publishing did not really start in earnest until the 1960s. Publishes European and Oriental fine and applied arts, European archaeology and ancient history, Egyptology and numismatics, for both adult and children's markets. No fiction, American/African art, ethnography, modern art or post-medieval history. Most publications are based on and illustrated from the Museum's collections. About 8 titles a year. No unsolicited mss.

ROYALTIES annually.

Atlantic Books

26–27 Boswell Street, London WC1N 3JZ

☎020 7269 1617 Fax 020 7430 0916

✉enquiries@groveatlantic.co.uk

www.groveatlantic.co.uk

Chairman *Morgan Entekin*

Managing Director/Publisher *Toby Mundy*

Founded 2000. A subsidiary of **Grove/Atlantic Inc.** (see entry under **US Publishers**). New York. Publishes literary fiction, history, current affairs, autobiography, biography, politics and reference books. IMPRINT **Guardian/Observer Books** Editorial Head *Alice Hunt* TITLES *Guardian Media Directory*; *Guardian University Guide* (both annual). 70 titles in 2003. No unsolicited material.

ROYALTIES twice-yearly.

Authors' Rating The offshoot of US Grove/Atlantic has a reputation for punching above its weight. Clever marketing has a lot to do with it but it is marketing based on an instinct for what sells – still not the most common attribute in trade publishing.

Atlantic Europe Publishing Co. Ltd

Greys Court Farm, Greys Court, Nr Henley on Thames RG9 4PG

☎01491 628188 Fax 01491 628189

✉ writers@atlanticeurope.com

www.AtlanticEurope.com

www.curriculumVisions.com

Directors *Dr B.J. Knapp, D.L.R. McGrae*

Closely associated, since 1990, with Earthscape Editions packaging operation. Publishes full-colour, highly illustrated children's non-fiction in hardback for international co-editions and text books. Not interested in any other material. Main focus is on National Curriculum titles, especially in the fields of mathematics, science, technology, social history and geography. About 50 titles a year. Unsolicited synopses and ideas for non-fiction curriculum-based books welcome by e-mail only – does not accept material sent by post.

FEES paid.

Atom

See **Time Warner Books UK**

Aurum Press Ltd

25 Bedford Avenue, London WC1B 3AT

☎020 7637 3225 Fax 020 7580 2469

✉ editorial@aurumpress.co.uk

Managing Director *Bill McCreadie*

Editorial Director *Piers Burnett*

Approx. Annual Turnover £3 million

Founded 1976. Committed to producing high-quality, illustrated/non-illustrated adult non-fiction in the areas of general human interest, art and craft, lifestyle, sport and travel. IMPRINTS **Argentum** Practical photography

books; **Jacqui Small** High-quality lifestyle books. About 60 titles a year.

ROYALTIES twice-yearly.

Authentic Media

PO Box 300, Kingstown Broadway, Carlisle CA3 0QS

☎01228 554320 Fax 01228 593388

www.paternoster-publishing.com

Publishing Director *Mark Finnie*

Approx. Annual Turnover £2 million

A division of STL Ltd. IMPRINTS **Paternoster Press** Founded 1936. Editorial Coordinator

Lucy Atherton Publishes academic, religion and learned/church/life-related journals. TITLES *Relational Leadership*; *Religion & Culture* series.

Authentic Lifestyle Founded 1966. Editorial Coordinator *Charlotte Hubback* Publishes Christian books on evangelism, discipleship and mission for Evangelical Alliance, Christianity Explored, Ichthus, Spring Harvest, Operation Christmas Child. Over 40 titles a year. Unsolicited mss, synopses and ideas for books welcome.

ROYALTIES twice-yearly.

AuthorsOnline

40 Castle Street, Hertford SG14 1HR

☎0870 7500544 Fax 0870 7500544

✉ theeditor@authorsonline.co.uk

www.authorsonline.co.uk

Submissions: Wayside, Downs Road, East Studdal CT15 5BZ

☎01304 374762

Owner *AuthorsOnLine Ltd.*

Managing Director *Richard Ovenden*

Editor *Richard Fitt*

Submissions Editor *Mrs W.A. Lake*

Approx. Annual Turnover £250,000

Founded 1998. A service for authors wishing to self-publish. Publishes new and reverted rights work in both electronic format via their website and traditional hard-copy. All genres welcome. Submit mss by e-mail or post (disk or CD-ROM) to the Submissions Editor at the East Studdal address above.

Autumn Publishing Ltd

Appledram Barns, Birdham Road, Chichester PO20 7EQ

☎01243 531660 Fax 01243 774433

✉ autumn@autumnpublishing.co.uk

www.autumnpublishing.co.uk

Managing Director *Michael Hermdge*

Editorial Director *Ingrid Goldsmid*

Founded 1976, part of the Bonnier Group.

Publishes baby and toddler books, children's activity, sticker and early learning books. About 200 titles a year. No responsibility accepted for the return of unsolicited mss.

Authors' Rating The leading small publisher (along with **Little Tiger Press**) of children's books.

Award Publications Limited

1st Floor, 27 Longford Street, London NW1 3DZ

☎020 7388 7800 Fax 020 7388 7887

✉ info@awardpublications.co.uk

Founded 1958. Publishes children's books, both fiction and reference. IMPRINT **Horus Editions**. No unsolicited mss, synopses or ideas.

Azure

See **Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge**

Baillière Tindall

See **Elsevier Ltd**

Duncan Baird Publishers

Castle House, 75–76 Wells Street, London W1T 3QH

☎020 7323 2229 Fax 020 7580 5692

✉ becky@dbairdpub.co.uk

Managing Director *Duncan Baird*

Editorial Director *Bob Saxton*

Approx. Annual Turnover £5 million

Founded in 1992 to publish and package co-editions overseas and went on to launch its own publishing operation in 1998. Publishes illustrated cultural reference, world religions, health, mind, body and spirit, lifestyle, graphic design. 45 titles in 2003. No unsolicited mss. Synopses and ideas welcome; approach in writing in the first instance with s.a.e. No fiction or UK-only subjects.

ROYALTIES twice-yearly.

Bantam/Bantam Press

See **Transworld Publishers**

Barefoot Books Ltd

124 Walcot Street, Bath BA1 5BG

☎01225 322400 Fax 01225 322499

✉ sales@barefootbooks.com

www.barefootbooks.com

Publisher *Tessa Strickland*

UK Editor *Natasha Carr*

Founded in 1993. Publishes high-quality children's picture books, particularly new and

traditional stories from a wide range of cultures. 32 titles in 2003. No unsolicited mss. See website for submission guidelines.

ROYALTIES twice-yearly.

Authors' Rating Writers of children's books would do well to keep track of Barefoot which, from small beginnings, is building a quality list that must be the envy of bigger publishers.

Baring & Rogerson

See **Eland Publishing Ltd**

Barny Books

Hough on the Hill, Near Grantham NG32 2BB

☎01400 250246/01522 790009

Fax 01400 251737

Managing Director/Editorial Head *Molly Burkett*

Business Manager *Tom Cann*

Approx. Annual Turnover £10,000

Founded with the aim of encouraging new writers and illustrators. Publishes mainly children's books but also adult fiction and non-fiction. Offers schools' projects where students help to produce books. TITLES *Iron Jim* Andy Howarth; *Once Upon a Wartime* (series); *Hell, Fire and Damnation* Mario Martinez; *Trusty the Traitor* Ben Bartlett; *The Boy From Donington – Matthew Flinders* Molly Burkett and the students of Donington School; *Sutton Hoo, Bloody Mary & The Martyrs* Jenny Webb and students at Suffolk Schools. Too small a concern to have the staff/resources to deal with unsolicited mss. Writers with strong ideas should approach Molly Burkett by letter in the first instance. Also runs a readership and advisory service for new writers (£10 fee for short stories or illustrations; £25 fee for full-length stories).

ROYALTIES Division of profits 50/50.

Authors' Rating A gutsy small publisher with a sense of fun which appeals to youngsters.

Barrington Stoke

Sandeman House, Trunk's Close, 55 High Street, Edinburgh EH1 1SR

☎0131 557 2020 Fax 0131 557 6060

✉ info@barringtonstoke.co.uk

www.barringtonstoke.co.uk

Chairman *David Croom*

Managing Director *Sonia Raphael*

Editorial Head *Anna Gibbons*

Approx. Annual Turnover £400,000

Founded in 1998 to publish books for 'reluc-