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Book review

Get Your Book Off The Ground

What you need to know to write and publish your book

Anthony Santoro & Suzanne Male
The Writers' Resource Centre
ISBN 9780980615807 127 pp. \$27.95.

There are many good books out there about writing, and getting books published.

This one is excellent!

Several features make this book stand out from the crowd.

It's not written by an academic whose outdated ideas no longer belong in the 21st Century.

It's not a book full of useless exercises that are set in the hope that readers will become writers by simply correcting 'mistakes' in grammar.

It is written by two authors who bring their experience to their readers. The first, Anthony Santoro, is a successful writer who has been through all aspects of the publishing experience. He has dealt with rejection slips, and negativism, and the lack of enthusiasm some people take delight in telling potential writers, and shows us how to overcome all that side of writing. He shows that courage sometimes pays off.

And the other author, Suzanne Male, is a writer, publisher and editor who draws on her marketing experience and shows us how to take our work from the finished copy to the real world that's hopefully going to buy lots and lots of copies of our creation.

The authors believe (and I think rightfully so) that just about anything in the writing and

publishing world is possible, despite what some would tell us. They encourage us to throw caution aside and just write – write because we feel passionate about our craft; write because we feel so inspired by what we want to tell our readers that we just get on with our task.

All good artists have to start somewhere. In the words of Pablo Sarasate, who once claimed that 'A Genius! For thirty-seven years I've practised fourteen hours a day, and now they call me a genius!'. So too with writing. We write a lot because that's what we want to do, not because we feel we have to. And this is the difference between a writer and a really good writer. The authors' enthusiasm in this regard is paramount.

This book goes much further than most books about writing and publishing I have read in recent years. It aims to remove those barriers that prevent us from writing, and stop us from achieving our goal of becoming a good writer.

What is writing? It's about communicating. And what is success? Success to a writer is many things – you decide on your level of success you want to achieve in your craft. What level of success do you strive for? And by writing what we feel passionate about, we are less obliged to write only what's going to make us heaps of money. We are therefore more likely to do it because we want to write, and will do it better.

This book helps the reader to be realistic about their writing. It's about experiencing the pleasures of writing, and perhaps even making writing a way of life, giving hopefully some readers the means to make the craft a lifestyle.

This book is also a bit about your level of professionalism in your craft. Write something that's put together in a sloppy manner, and submit your manuscript in a

sloppy manner, and you will know the results before you hear it officially. It doesn't have to be like that.

I like this book because it dispels some of the myths about the publishing industry. Many publishing opportunities have disappeared over recent years. The smaller publishers have been gobbled up by the bigger publishing houses. Many have disappeared, leaving the writer with fewer of the conventional opportunities. Most publishers will only accept manuscripts submitted through literary agents – and many of those don't take on new writers.

This book is up to date and is ready to meet writers of the 21st Century.

We all know that publishers often get it wrong. Many have published books that have flopped. Others have turned away best-selling authors. And the general shelf life of many books is six months. Even magazines are turning away many of their traditional freelance writers in favour of staff writers.

The last part of this book is about using the services of print-on-demand book publishers. While the rest of the publishing market is disappearing, new doors are opening that provide writers with publishing opportunities not even thought possible ten years ago. Through the use of personal computers, and easy-to-use software, not only is writing

possible and made easier, but so has book publishing come into the kingdom of many writers. Do the desktop publishing – the layout or typography – yourself to the highest possible standard, design a cover using modern software, and you have become so much closer to getting your book off the ground.

While I feel many publishers have let down their writers through lack of sufficient marketing, through the Internet and personal web pages and social networks, marketing is effectively carried out by the person who knows your book better than anyone else – you. Your book breaks through that six-month barrier and can stay in print for as long as you decide.

But to be successful, you need to believe in yourself. This book will help you over those hurdles so you can realistically believe in yourself, and in your ability to become not just a writer, but a good, the best, published writer.

I'll be recommending this book to all my students, because I want them to be successful writers, and to see them get their book off the ground.

Graham Andrews
Flairnet Online Writing Courses