



Library podcast

Seattle Writes: Successful Self-Publishing

[00:00:05] Welcome to the Seattle Public Libraries. Podcasts of author readings and library events, a series of readings, performances, lectures and discussions. Library podcasts are brought to you by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation. To learn more about our programs and podcasts, visit our Web site at www.spl.org to learn how you could help the Library Foundation support the Seattle Public Library. Go to Foundation.spl.org.

[00:00:40] Welcome. My name is Jared Mills, I'm the assistant managing librarian here at the Central Library, and Marcellus Turner, our city librarian, was not able to join us today because he's out of town. But he prepared a statement that I'd like to read for everyone. So I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the Seattle Public Library, particularly Saturday. Seattle writes contest participants and panelists and audience members here for the successful self publishing workshop. Thank you for being here today. Is your city librarian. I'm always looking for opportunities to support local authors and connect them with our community of readers. That's why the Seattle Rights Project is so exciting. It has included write-ins classes on digital publishing. Today's panel discussion and the writing contest, whose winners will be announced momentarily. I was thrilled to hear the contest to nearly 40 entries and look forward to seeing the library's collection of high quality self publish material grow. I understand all three of the winning works are set in Seattle, include a significant amount of Seattle culture and history. It seems very appropriate that these works will be published to the Seattle Public Library. Seattle's premier Institution for Books and Reading. I extend my congratulations to each of the winning writers and hope each of you continue to use all the resources of the library as your careers flourish. But those attending the panel discussion. Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to celebrate and honor our local writers at this time. Sincerely, Marcellus Turner City Library and the Seattle Public Library.

[00:02:06] Good afternoon. I'm David Christensen, librarian at the Central Library. The library partnered with Smashwords to develop a self publishing platform for aspiring and established Seattle writers, self publishing is becoming increasingly popular in the changing landscape of the publishing industry. The platform provides a strong community of writers, a place to self publish and connect with our large and avid community of readers. We held a writing contest from July to October. The contest selects three winners for inclusion in the library's permanent collection. Today, we recognize those winners. After a careful and passionate selection process, the judging committee has selected three winners. It is my pleasure to announce those winners. We will give a certificate to each of the winners signed by the city librarian and also include those titles in the library's collection. I will read a

description of each book and announce the winners if the author is present. Please come up to receive your certificate. Set in 1910, Seattle, when the city was attempting to shed its lawless ways and become a modern metropolis. It's a murder mystery that begins in the dead-end district. Seattle's red light district. And tells the tale of crooked politicians, suffragettes, musical performers, gamblers and ladies of the evening. *South of the Deadline* by Barbara Riegel, Templeton Jones, an elusive East Coast architect, comes to town determined to remake Seattle. He's dismayed by what he regards as tall buildings and clumsy street patterns. The city's establishment is mostly resentful. One reason he left New York was to escape what he considered a stifling domestic situation. He tends to regard his buildings as permanent and his women as temporary. It's a delicate balance. Jerome Richard for *the architect*. A hilarious and devastating journey through 50 years of American movies. And Seattle history illuminating this night, Geist of the Times from the beat years of the Cold War racer's to the flowering of the Summer of Love. The book reads more like a coming of age Nahlah novel. *All a Sallinger*. Then film critics memoir, a marvelous blend of memory, Seattle history and the history of cinema in Seattle. What a satisfying delight. Bill White *Cinema Penitentiary*.

[00:04:53] I understand Bill is working on his next novel, which he's researching in South America. So he's not able to be with us today. I'm going to now turn things over to librarian Linda Johns.

[00:05:06] Thank you, David. My name's Linda Johns. I'm a librarian and reader services here at the Central Library. And I am one of several librarians who's been working on our Seattle rights project over the past year. We've had creative writing projects are programs all over the city for National Novel Writing Month. We have a series of write ins going on Monday nights. And right now on the third floor, there is an all day right in. And we also have a novelist and residents who has a grant to write her novel in a public space with the monitor facing out so that the public is invited into the creative process. So that's going on on level three every day this month. Our panel today includes authors, editors and marketers. And I'm going to start on with the closest to me. On your left, Jenny Jay Blackburn is a part time author of Middle Grade Fiction. She published her first book, *Dragon Defender*, last October. Previous to her foray into fiction, Jenny wrote a humorous parenting blog called *Absolutely Bananas*, which was the number one parenting blog in Seattle, regularly listed as a top 10 in parenting blogs nationwide and featured in publications including the *Seattle Times*, *Nickelodeon*, *Parenting Magazine* and others.

[00:06:29] She hasn't quite yet figured out how to make writing sustainable full time, but she's working on that. That's Jenny J. Blackburn. Next is Scott Driscoll, who holds an MFA from the University of Washington and has been teaching creative writing for the University of Washington extension for 17 years. Actually, it's 20 years now, 20 years. Scott May makes his living as a writer and teacher while finishing better *You Go Home*. His literary novel, which was published in 2013 and it's it was a novel that was several years in the making in which grew out of the exploration of the Czech side of his family. In the 1990s, after Eastern Europe became liberated, Driskell kept busy freelancing stories to a variety of magazines and journals. His short stories and essays have been published in *Image* magazine *Far from Home*, a SEAL Press anthology. *X Files*. *News Stories* about old flames. *The Seattle Review*. *Crosscurrents* and others. The next is Ingrid Emerich, who is with *Girl Friday Productions*. She has been a developmental editor of both fiction and nonfiction for almost 20 years.

And she's also going to tell us a little bit about what developmental editing means. She worked as an acquiring editor at SEAL Press Avalon for over a decade before leaving to launch Girl Friday Productions with Leslie Miller.

[00:08:00] She's the editor of several anthologies, including *Gifts of The Wild Go Your Own Way* and *A Woman Alone*. And she's the author of *Seattle City Walk's Anchored*, also teaches editing at the University of Washington's continuing education program. And on your far right is Kristen Massaro. Any given day at Girl Friday, you might find Kristen meeting with a print broker, doling out dog advice or editing a zombie romance. But while she has extensive experience in both fiction and non-fiction editing, she is happiest when working on deeply complex projects that require both big picture editorial vision and attention to the smallest details, from picking paper stuck to researching images for clients. She, as a functioning nonfiction encyclopedia, she can write some pretty mean marketing copy, too. So that is our panel of experts. And Ingrid has graciously agreed to moderate us with start us off with some questions and then we'll take questions from the audience. We are podcasting this. So when you ask a question of the panel. One of them will repeat it. Paraphrase it so that it gets picked up on the podcast. So thank you very much for coming today. And thank you to our panelists.

[00:09:18] Hi, everyone. So I'm going to ask you all a question first. I'm assuming you're all writers, OK, with her show *Hands*. How many fiction writers? Non-fiction. OK, that sounds good to know. The publishing landscape is both similar and slightly different from fiction non-fiction. So I wanted to make sure I knew there was a mix to address questions that you would have, hopefully. And then, of course, she'll have the chance to ask questions as well.

[00:09:47] Ok, well, I thought it would be a great idea to start talking to the other folks here a little. About their experience as authors and as an editor. So maybe I'll start with the editor and move to the writers over here.

[00:10:02] So, Christian, can you tell the group a little bit about the kind of work that you do with authors when they come in with a manuscript? What what sort of with an eye to publish?

[00:10:14] Right. Well, so, girl, Friday we work with publisher or excuse me, authors that are both self publishing and who are seeking to publish with traditional publishing.

[00:10:22] So the main thing you do, the first thing we always do is really look at what their manuscript is and sort of what they've done to develop their their platform, which is probably a word you're gonna hear a lot today as we're talking. And, you know, that platform can really change depending on whether they're a nonfiction author or whether they're a fiction author. So we're really looking at what their goals are. You know, is that are they just trying to put together a book that they, you know, that's just sort of capturing something for their family? Or do they is their goal to, you know, get it into the hands of a really wide group of readers? There can be a lot of different facets that we look at before we we advise them on their next step. And then once we've sort of talked through all of that, we kind of have it.

[00:11:08] It doesn't really matter whether you're self publishing or going with the traditional publisher.

[00:11:12] Your process to publishing is really the same, is that you need to have it edited. You need to have a copy. And you need to have a proof read. You need to have a design. You need to get a, you know, a beautiful cover.

[00:11:24] And then, you know, depending on whether it's going to a publisher or going to a yourself publishing, you need to work out what kind of platform you want to publish.

[00:11:34] So it kind of depends, I think, what we're talking about and what their goals are. But I'm kind of in a nutshell.

[00:11:42] All right. Thank you. So, Jennifer, I would love to hear about your experience bringing your book to life in terms of the publishing part of it and the choices that you are making, because I know that you had an agent have an agent, but chose this sort of self publishing, indeed publishing route. And I'd be curious to hear kind of what went into that decision.

[00:12:04] Yes. Happy to talk about that. It's something I think about a lot and wonder if I made the right decision.

[00:12:10] I started writing *Dragon Defender*, I guess it was two years ago, and I was sort of like just consumed by the story. And so I would wake up every morning at five a.m. to write for three hours before work. And got a complete manuscript relatively quickly. And then actually started before I went and tried to find at that point I was committed to traditional publishing. And so I thought before I said this book to these agents who are probably going to immediately want to publish it, I wanted to have somebody who wasn't me and wasn't one of my friends. Look at it. I actually hired a development editor and then worked with that person to do several iterations on the manuscript and then started querying agents. And I think I set out about 30 queries to a lot of the top agents and got a lot of form letters back and realized that my query, the description that I was using of the book was really not working. And so I went to the Pacific North West Writers Association conference where you one of the perks of that conference is that you can pitch agents directly, but you have like seconds.

[00:13:19] I guess I was I did that panel.

[00:13:21] That's really crazy. It was awesome. I skipped all the sessions. I didn't go to any of the sessions. I just sat in this room with these other writers and I just kept working on my pitch. And by the end, I had the best pitch ever. And I was like, okay, I'm going to make this my query letter. So I made it my query letter. I sent it out. And within 24 hours, I had agents who were interested. And so I ended up with quite a bit of interest.

[00:13:46] I signed with Scott Laxman, who's a pretty big agent in New York City. And waited for the fame.

[00:13:55] And over the next four months, you know, one of the things they tell you about working with a top agent in particular is that you are the little fish and they may or may not care about you. And I definitely had that kind of an experience. It was just like I kept pinging him. I think every month he had a different assistant. I wasn't getting any feedback. They said they were submitting, but they weren't really telling me. And at the same time, I was subscribing to Publishers Weekly and Publishers Coffee House and I was reading about what was going on in the publishing industry. And there was this little nagging voice in the back of my head that kept saying, you already know your book is somewhat good because you got an agent like are you. Do you really want to go give them all the money? And so I one day just decide, you know what, I'm going to do it myself. And I wrote him an email and I said, You know what, Scott? I think I'm going to do my own publishing. Consider our contract null and void. And I think within two weeks I had it up on Amazon.

[00:14:52] How long did you have? How long were you working with or supposedly working with Scott? Well, it's been I think it was like four months.

[00:14:58] Yeah, it was painfully slow. And I think there was one particular article, Publishers Weekly, where I was like, oh, my God, I can't believe this is not acceptable.

[00:15:09] What it was is that it big publishing works on this annual basis and all the books that were starting to be signed were to be published in two years.

[00:15:20] And I was like, if I get a publisher right now, I'm doing two years until a reader has the option to buy it.

[00:15:26] Who knows what will happen in two years? I could probably do a lot of marketing myself in that amount of time, especially taking into account the margins.

[00:15:34] So I just felt like you touched on some really great points. And when you're kind of making that consideration between going the traditional route and going on the self publishing front, that will definitely try to circle back to. But the timeline is a really important one for folks when they're making a decision. It's something we always talk to people about traditional. I worked in traditional publishing as a Christian, and it is it still runs a slightly shorter than it used to be, but it generally still runs on a fairly long time line. So from the time a book is actually signed with a publisher, so that's that's once the agent has shopped it around for four to six months or however long it might take, then it's really a year. You're a year at the sort of minimum until you're going to see that book published. So self publishing, you're talking about a much more compressed timeline without missing steps. So that's the key part is, you know, you really want to make sure that you still go through the editorial process, but you can really cut that down to, you know, for three to four months, depending on sort of your editorial team and the length of your work and the complexity. So I think that's a great win. And I want to come back around to financials because that's another thing I think a lot of people ask us about that. OK, I'll hold that one because I want to hear about Scott's experience, because you are a seasoned writer, magazines, lots of different experience in that field.

[00:17:05] And so as a writer, what kind of went into your thinking with your book you made regarding publishing, regarding publishing itself?

[00:17:16] Once you sort of got to the place where you were like, OK, what am I going to do here? Where am I going to go? Am I going to go? Did you think about the well, did you go to agents? Did you decide to go direct to small publishing houses, etc.?

[00:17:31] I.

[00:17:32] Yeah, I always intended to just go the conventional way with an agent. I certainly had several friends who had been down that road more than a few times, and I had lots of examples to look at. But when I started checking into it, I immediately sort of ran into what you're talking about. Oh, yeah. We'll get back to you. And then time passes the five S's and it's frustrating. You've put in, you know, God knows how many years of thinking and work into your book. And you don't you don't want that indifference. Right. That in different responses. Hard to take unless you're just really a seasoned business person, which I'm not. So I can talk to somebody with an independent press where you don't have to use an agent. And they said, oh, you know, your novel sounds interesting. Why don't you give us a try? So without any further ado, I sent it to an independent press that publishes about 50 bucks a year. They have pretty good marketing presence. And the one thing I did not want to have to do is all the marketing myself or the editing. I wanted a professional editor and the you know, we signed a contract. They they liked the book. They wanted to do it for a variety of reasons. And so I just bypass the agent altogether with independent publishers. Usually there's no reason to have an agent. They're just going to take 15 percent of the money that you're not making anyway.

[00:19:02] So what was so. So why do it with with the larger publishing houses? You almost have to have an agent. There's there's really no other way to get to him.

[00:19:12] Absolutely. As someone who used to work at an independent press for many, many years, I think that and also have had. I've had experience at large houses.

[00:19:23] I think that in terms of the editorial in general, the editorial experience you happens is really, really good because you get a lot more attention. Oh, yeah. You know, you're. Yeah. You're not the little fish in the big pond. And so I think there's some real benefit to that. It usually means like the advances in quite as large. Right.

[00:19:44] From one of the big six, they can give more money, but you get a lot more attention. Huh. Bigger than mine. Yeah.

[00:19:53] Unfortunately, a lot of authors sort of had this idea in their head that you either self publish or you go with a big publisher, whereas there is all these amazing indie publishers out there that will really, especially for a first time author, are really going to, you know, put their arms around your book and really are going to, you know, do all the things that need to be done to make sure it's, you know,

quality and, you know, it goes through the process and you go through it and you're not lost in this sort of, you know, huge small, small fish in a huge pond.

[00:20:25] But also there you're not paying for it. Right.

[00:20:29] So that's a big you know, because self publishing and doing self publishing. Right. You are paying for a developmental editor and you're paying for a computer. Your all comes out of your pocket. So, you know, those are some of the really big considerations.

[00:20:44] What would you for advice to these folks here if are interested in this? I know there's many I don't even know the numbers anymore of the number of sort of independent presses out there proliferating.

[00:20:56] Yeah, there's just more and more. Just as soon as you hear it, it's dying that it's you know, there's twice as many.

[00:21:02] So can you talk a little bit about some advice that you would give for folks who are approaching some some good sort of best practices?

[00:21:11] Yeah. So you you're writing books and you want them to have a readership. You want them to have an audience. And unless you're already famous for some other reason, that means you need help. And unless you're really good at marketing, you need an editor who will actually like your book, who will be devoted to helping you out, to giving you a professional presence in the bookselling world. And so try to find an independent press, the publishers books that are like the sort of thing that you've written.

[00:21:44] And I would say it's risky to go with an independent publisher that only publishes a few books because they don't have any any marketing presence at all. No one has heard of them. It's really tough. It's better to go with somebody that's more mid-level. They'll give you the same attention. You'll get the same. You'll get even better professional editing. They have a marketing presence. They get your book distributed much more widely. They'll get it reviewed. They'll get it in libraries. Also something to consider. If you want to go out on author tours, bookstores will take you. If you go to. So one of the ones I have friends who've both self published and only published through Amazon. So strictly online publication, no hard copy. They can't get in bookstores. Bookstores will not take their books. They will not give. They will not let them be on a panel that couldn't be here.

[00:22:39] This particular one I'm thinking of. So. So your market potential is really shrunk now. On the other hand, I know somebody who self published a book who's really good at marketing and she'd she'd devoted a certain amount of resources to doing that. And very quickly, you sold something like 4000 copies of a book and made some money. And she didn't care if she went out on author tours. She just wanted people to have her book and make some money, and she accomplished that. So really, it really depends on what your goals are. If you want a presence, if you want to shop in bookstores. If you want to have a hard copy that you can flip open and read, then go to an

independent publisher, find one that will support your work, that will love you. But if not, if marketing is what your best that then you go directly online, you'll get the biggest distribution that way. Yeah.

[00:23:35] And I would also say as someone who did acquisitions for an independent publisher for many years, you want to do your research, as you alluded to. You want to make sure that the public that you're choosing an appropriate publisher, all the independent publishers are really on it, in a sense, niche publishers. So they have an area that they focus on and that's where they have their editorial prowess. That's where they have their marketing specialty. So. So your works slot into that.

[00:24:01] We got so many manuscripts every day that were come, you know, completely outside of what we were publishing.

[00:24:10] And anyone who could have looked at our website for five minutes would have known that. And that's just a big at the time they were mailing this stuff. Now it's more than just a huge waste of money. Right. On that sense in our time.

[00:24:21] So no one would be just make sure you're choosing correctly. And there's some really great resources. Now, of course, everything's online, but you can find all the different independent publishers in the whole country in the literary marketplace, right?

[00:24:35] Yes. Like the LNP is a great resource.

[00:24:38] They have that library online. The other thing to remember is no matter what big house, smaller house agent, you have to give them your very best. So the query letter really needs to have. Good, good. It has to be well done. You have to have a hook like you're talking about.

[00:24:59] Absolutely.

[00:25:00] If you're going to pay anybody to help you with anything and not just your your spouse or your neighbor or whatever, like get somebody to really look at your query letter and look at your synopsis, who knows what they're doing because that makes a big difference.

[00:25:14] That's your first impression. And then, of course, as a fiction writer, you have to have your whole manuscript done.

[00:25:22] You can't have it's not. People don't buy things on spec for fiction.

[00:25:26] So it has to be in the form that you feel is really, really ready to be shown to an editor and not like, yeah, this is kind of a rough draft. I'm expecting you to work with. You want this to feel really done to you. And you want to make sure that if you're nonfiction, that you have a really well put together book proposal, because if your query letter is as wonderful as you as I'm telling you to make it, then they're going to come back to you and they're going to ask you to see the full book proposal

and a few sample chapters if you're nonfiction writer or they're going to ask to see the whole manuscript. If you're a fiction writer and you want to have that right to send. And that's the truth.

[00:26:06] You're not want to send a query letter if you're not ready to send your proposal, because that will pretty much guarantee you never being looked up.

[00:26:14] Get back to you on that.

[00:26:16] So I think that's really, really important.

[00:26:20] And I think what you were saying about the nonfiction proposals, you need to be, although you don't need to write your entire book, if you're doing nonfiction, you need to have it very well mapped out and you have to have very, very detailed chapter summaries. And, you know, you need to know what your book is about. And I think that sometimes people thought, oh, I'll just write a chapter and then I'll have these kind of loosely.

[00:26:43] So that can be something a professional editor can help you with as well.

[00:26:47] And then one other thing I would add to that from my experience was the first 10 pages, the first page is like has to be the best page in the manuscript. And then the first 10, if you're going to I think I rewrote the first 10 pages, probably 30, like completely rewrote. And I kept testing them because I got feedback from one agent that there wasn't enough character in the first 10 pages. So then I rewrote them.

[00:27:10] And the thing that I learned through all that was that that's all really important for traditional publishing, but it's also really important for your book. No matter what way you publish it, because people read the back of the book. And if it doesn't hook them and if it doesn't sound interesting, they're not going to buy it and they flip open to the first page. And if they start reading the first page and it doesn't grab them, then they're not going to buy it. So all that work that, you know, I had to do purportedly to get an agent, I must feel like even if you're going to self publish, you should just use agents that way and query that.

[00:27:44] It's a really I mean, they're hard core.

[00:27:46] They will not pass you through unless it meets a certain bar. And that's how you know.

[00:27:50] Yeah. And Jennifer, I think that's such a good point. I actually, you know, our social media person. Who is it? She's a great example of this because she's a social media. She's our social media director. And she's also having her first novel published that she she just got a book deal. And one of the things she has talked about a lot, she talked about both with our clients and in her own experience, is that she tried to she tried to get a book published for five to 10 years, and she finally paid a professional editor, edited it, and then we sent it out and she got snapped up like that. So it

was you know, she finally took her own advice that she's always giving people that comes and she is surrounded by developmental editors all day long, which is the irony of that story.

[00:28:37] But it's you know, her whole thing is that, you know, it doesn't matter whether you're self publishing, you're gonna have to do this.

[00:28:42] So you might as well do it now, because the chances of you getting whether getting a big agent or, you know, an agent or getting an indie deal or self publishing, you're going to have to do the same work.

[00:28:56] Well, let's talk a little bit about developmental editing and then I think we should move on to some of the more. Marcus, you up some great points about bookstore and marketing, things like that. But just for some folks, I we find writers don't always know what it means, what a developmental ed is versus a carpenter.

[00:29:12] So let's clarify that a little bit and talk about sort of because developmental editing doesn't always happen at a publisher now. So now independent houses, smaller publishers, small to midsize houses, are really still pretty good about doing a fair amount of like doing a developmental pass on a manuscript.

[00:29:35] But the truth of it is that at the big houses and even some of the, you know, independent houses, they skipped that step and they just center books straight to copy at it. And that could be seen as a compliment to you. But it also can affect your writing career in general if you didn't get. An important step that could have really, you know, really sharpened your manuscript even more.

[00:29:59] So, Chris, I'm going to have you describe it a little bit. What a developmental ed it is. And then I want to talk to you guys about sort of your experience with that.

[00:30:06] Ok. So, you know, in the editing world, we sort of divide it up by sort of three edits and maybe there's a subsection as well. So there's developmental editing is really the big picture editing of your of your manuscript. So it's looking at if you're if it's fiction, it's looking at your character development, is looking at your plot.

[00:30:24] It's looking at continuity issues, which tends to be a really it's sort of the number one problem you see in in actually both fiction and non-fiction is, you know, did you know your main character, Joe? Suddenly, you know, he's driving down the street and.

[00:30:43] He's driving down the street and then 10 minutes later, he's, you know, he's driving down the street in Chicago and 10 minutes later he's, you know, in Seattle and your reader doesn't know how he got there. So. So those are, you know, sort of really big picture.

[00:30:56] And then as part of a developmental edit, you're also looking at the line. And that is looking sort of a line at it is looking at, you know, syntax and word flow. And, you know, does that sound

realistic in the dialogue work? So that's in in fiction editing. That is sort of what you're looking at. In nonfiction, it's really, you know, sort of looking at big organization is is, you know, this section flow from one to the next.

[00:31:21] Well, does it lead your reader through it? I'm sure I'm missing things.

[00:31:26] Feel, Bill. Do feel free to interject, but then.

[00:31:30] So once you do that, then we get to the copy editing, which is really looking at much more finer tuning of your of your edit of your manuscript. It's looking also at, you know, the grammar. Correct. Is punctuation. Correct is, you know, are you using comma splices, all of those sort of things. And then once it's laid out, we get into the proofread, which is really looking at whether the formatting all works and also looking at sort of a second check on the copy of it. And again, looking at the punctuation and spelling and typos and that sort of thing. So so it's sort of it's a big it's a big process, not just one thing.

[00:32:05] And can you talk a little, Jennifer, about your experience? A hiring developmental letter. Why why didn't you just edit yourself more, get your, you know, neighbor who's an English major to edit here? Yeah.

[00:32:21] I am a voracious reader, as I'm sure most of you are fit. And part of the process for me was when I was out writing, I was reading every book I could get my hands on about how to get published and how to write a good book. And I think literally every single one. Sang the praises of developmental editing. I was also very aware that you get really close to your work and you can't experience it the way that a reader does. And so I I used I had I'm writing groups that I used and I got a lot of feedback from them. But then I hit this point where I thought it was good, but I wasn't sure.

[00:32:56] And I just thought, you know, I just want somebody who's a professional who can read the whole thing and not only tell me what may not be quite working, but also who can help me fix it. And so I hired I actually use I prepared a actually printed out a resource sheet of all of the stuff that I use that you guys can take when you leave. And this is on there. But there's a freelance editors association that you can post a job to. And so I posted a job and said I wanted developmental editing. You can say how much you're willing to pay. You have to pay sort of standard rate. You can't say like five dollars. And I think I got something like 100 people within two days who were sort of bidding my project. And what was really cool is that you submit. I think the first five pages of your manuscript and most of the editors actually give you a sample edit. And so I was able to discern the type of feedback that I was going to get. And also the style person that I wanted to work with. So I chose one that I was actually really hard because I had way too many. So I picked one who had been a successful author and I taught her her feedback was more nuanced than some of the others. And so she worked with me over. I think it took her about two weeks. It's like a forty thousand word manuscript. It's a pretty quick read. And she sent me. She used it was in word and she is track changes. And she just sent me her thoughts in body.

[00:34:21] She said me, I think a two page letter was sort of her overall thoughts. And then the manuscripts marked up.

[00:34:28] And it was the kind of feedback that she was giving were things like, you know, in the opening scene. She said, I don't know what Peter looks like. I wish I knew what he looked like. So it's very just tactical. And then she also talked to me about the pace that, you know, this is a book that kind of like just takes off and keeps going really fast. And she actually felt like maybe the beginning needed to have a little bit of a slower build and not kind of take off so quickly. She suggested towards the end that some sort of a scene, there's these kids and they're chasing this dragon and they're in the jungle. And she suggested a scene to sort of slow things down and let them kind of talk to each other. And for their friendships to emerge and that, I believe now is one of the sort of most important thing. But it wasn't in there. So so those types of feedback, it was a copyediting. Did she'd catch them spelling mistake? Well, there were no spelling mistakes. Maybe, of course, that if I have spell check.

[00:35:27] But, you know, grammar and stuff. But it was mostly that kind of overall and really, really useful. And then she'll say, give me some advice around. At that time, the title was The Boy with the Dragon to Your Necklace, which is tragically bad. And I can't believe I thought that was the title.

[00:35:41] But she said, you know, I think you should play up the angle that these people are protecting the dragon.

[00:35:47] She said that's what's unique about this book and that's worth playing up. And so I ended up switching the title and working that more into my pitch. And so super, super useful for me. That's great.

[00:35:59] And Scott, did you work with an editor before sending it out? Are you are you working with it? Did you work with the editor after being accepted?

[00:36:08] Well, yes, because I am friends with a developmental editor. She very kindly we we exchange favors. So at some point, the process of writing this novel, she said, well, let me see your manuscript.

[00:36:25] And I said, oh, okay.

[00:36:27] So did tour and she read it and she had a few clipped things to say, like, I really don't like a narrator, a biggie.

[00:36:37] I don't think women are going to like this book. You know, things like that. And I know enough about writing to be able to put two and two together and to guess why she's seeing those things. So I spent a couple more years fixing the things that were obviously wrong. I mean, after she said that, I could completely see it myself, but I had to hear from her. So there's all this all happened before I ever finished the manuscript and then fu, you know, based on that. Then I did a furious

rewrite in the last six months, completely rewrote it from the beginning to the end. Fixing all the problems.

[00:37:12] And I don't know what happens with you guys, but I tend to think I've done a really good job until I actually have to show it to somebody and then I get serious. All of a sudden, I don't know why that is. But all my life I've done that and I can't seem to not do it.

[00:37:31] So I did a serious rewrite like super fast. And that's where the voice comes together. That's where that whatever it is, a voice that you hear when you read it, that makes it flow naturally. That'll happen at the last minute.

[00:37:44] And then I sent it to the press and, you know, within a month later contract.

[00:37:50] And then after that, there was no developmental editor anymore. I mean, the the editor that I worked with Shorten some of my sentences, had too many flowing sentences. And so she made small changes like that.

[00:38:06] But I just have to warn you. So this, you know, hopefully can avoid some mistake if there's any. Whether it's fiction, nonfiction, if there's any element of realism that's attached to history that people know, be really careful that you get all the facts exactly right, because you will lose a large portion of the audience if anything is wrong, anything at all.

[00:38:29] I found that out the hard way. I had to go back and do a fix and play.

[00:38:33] So your book got a little bit of line editing and then it went straight to copy. Edit? Yes. OK. Yes. Which. Which is the problem. If you submit something that's too well, wonderfully written, that's exactly what they do, is they bypassed that because they go up. That's good enough. So it's a compliment. But, you know, probably that's also the reality of publishing is that they're trying to you know, developmental editing is sort of a costly service.

[00:38:58] And so they really tend to reserve it for those that really need it.

[00:39:03] And even though I think all manuscripts. I'm sure you're wonderful in. And you did that editing round, but you can always benefit from, you know, sort of a thorough developmental edit. So let's talk a little bit about the marketing component, because I think that's sort of an interesting question.

[00:39:23] And I think you brought up a great example of if you go with self publishing or you go or you publish through Amazon publishing and there is there's some differences there. I'll just clarify a little bit.

[00:39:35] Create Spaces publishing platform that is owned and operated by Amazon. Is it have we.

[00:39:43] We've worked with them quite a bit with self publish authors because they have probably they they have a very well thought out, sort of user friendly, I would say.

[00:39:57] Right. User is only if they make it, you know, it's really like, you know, printed it principally huggin for your life.

[00:40:07] And they also they also do so there.

[00:40:12] They also have print books. So they they create print on demand. Smashwords is a great platform as well, and they are an e-book only.

[00:40:23] So with Create Space, you can do e-book and you can do print on demand, which again offers a nice option for folks who want both. Of course, with Create Space, it's Kindle Direct. So if you want to have a different reader, then you have to have those files converted by somebody to be able to go into an iPad or Nook. Or people can just download the converter on those on those devices and read Kindle books anyway.

[00:40:52] That's that's sort of how that works. And Amazon publishing is different. They are a publishing house.

[00:40:58] They're now probably one almost as large as one of the big six. It's called the big seven now. So they publish many books, both print and e-book versions, summer e-book only. But many are print any book. And they tend to publish in genres. So they have an imprint that does thrillers and mysteries. They have an imprint that does romance, have sci fi fantasy.

[00:41:22] So they but they're published by Amazon. And so, as you guys might know. There's been a little bit of a back and forth in publishing world between some of the big traditional houses and Amazon for what's going on. And so and obviously there's been some a lot of issues about Amazon in bookstores. And so.

[00:41:43] Bookstores in general do not carry self published books. So anything coming off a create space or whatnot or other publishing platforms, unless you have a relationship with a bookseller and you're like, hey, I'm publishing this book. I would love to do an event at your store. And then they could order those books via a consignment and have those books available. And many do sell self-help books. And I honestly think that they will can. I think there will only be selling more of them. It's like it's just the way things are moving.

[00:42:13] They won't, however, carry Amazon publishing books. As of right now, because of. The politics between independent publishing and Amazon.

[00:42:23] So let's say you can still publish with create space and not have an Amazon publishing ISBN number, right.

[00:42:30] Still be carried away by some brick and mortar. All you have to do is buy your own ISBN and not buy create space. That's. Yeah, that's what I did.

[00:42:38] I published this. I was a baby daddy and I bought my own eyes.

[00:42:42] Yeah, well worth it. Local bookstores are pretty. I mean, it's up to the independent person, but you don't have to walk in and say, hi, I'm self published. I want to carry my book. You know, I have a name for my publishing house.

[00:42:55] Like to then, you know, regular bystander. You wouldn't necessarily know. And I think that's important. Like, I don't lead with self published. Yeah.

[00:43:03] So you talk a little bit about sort of what some of your marketing and publicity sort of strategy has been for your book. Yeah.

[00:43:12] I come from writer, but I can share what it has been and I can also share what I would do differently, which is a lot of things. So I think one of the biggest things that I did wrong or that I would do differently is I you know, I'm so focused on getting my book out quickly that I heard Copyeditor got the cover designs, you know, like really rapidly, got everything together. And it was up on Amazon like, you know, overnight. It felt like. And that was, I think, a mistake because there's a lot of things that you can do to help your book sell right away. So one of the things I was really focused on early on was getting customer reviews because for self publishing. Amazon is where people buy books. So I was very focused on Amazon and I was trying to figure out how to get that. Those reviews Starz, you know, I did. I got a few from friends and family. But then there's a couple other things that I tried and they're all on this sheet. So I did. I paid for a blog tour, which is where you have all these different bloggers write about your book and they all write reviews of it. I did a giveaway on good reads and a lot of the people who win the giveaway will write a review.

[00:44:21] If you're really nice and benevolent, when you communicate with them. And then I posted my book on something called Net Gallie, which is actually what the traditional publishing industry uses. And that was where I think I made it sort of a critical mistake, which is that typically the books on Net Gallie are previous books, so they haven't been released yet. And so all the major publishers post books on that galley and booksellers, librarians and professional book reviewers and bloggers are downloading books and then deciding with the booksellers are deciding which ones are going to carry. The reviewers are doing early reviews of the books, but it takes like I didn't see any reviews coming through from Net Galley for at least two months after I had posted my book there. So if I had it to do over again, I would have posted my manuscript to Net Gally six months before I planned to actually publish. So I would have thought about it more as a launch event and I didn't think about it as a launch event. I thought, oh, I'm just going to get it out there and then I'm going to start doing stuff, which is how I approached blogging. And that worked really well. It's not like blogging and I think blogging is not like it used to be either.

[00:45:29] And so I think that was a mistake. I was so impatient. And I just want I mean, you know, the minute's up, it's on Amazon. It's gonna be like on the home page and then it's going to be Rick Riadh and similarity things and everyone's gonna be buying it. I just know it. And that was wrong. And I lost simit opportunity. The other thing that I have learned with Amazon is that if you have readers, even if it's just like an extended family network, if you can get all those people to buy your book on the same day, your book will climb the charts and you actually will see it on the first or second pages within year John. So, like for me, that would be fantasy and children's and I've seen that happen.

[00:46:07] But I could have done such a better job if I had gotten everybody organized and nobody buy anything. Mom, I know you're in for fifteen. You know, you're in.

[00:46:18] And then they all would have put the orders in and then my book would have shot up. I didn't do that. I wish I had. And I was also apprehensive because I didn't have any reviews yet. So that's where I think thinking about it as a launch date and saying, OK, I'm on a launch on this day and then work backwards from that.

[00:46:33] Ok. What do I need? I need customer reviews. I need people ready to buy it to shoot it up the charts.

[00:46:39] I need blah. I need little blurbs like use Scott's book as an example. He has all these wonderful people talking about how great his book is on his book cover. All I had on my book cover is that I had been a finalist in a literary contest, which is great, but it would've been also nice to have some of these and I was just too impatient.

[00:46:59] So the other things I did, I did some paid reviews. I paid for the San Francisco Book Review and the Portland Book Review, which is like twenty five dollars each, and about the quality that you paid for.

[00:47:14] Now let's be clear. It was not worth twenty five dollars.

[00:47:18] What it is, is it sounds refutable. When I hate when I write San Francisco book review, it's like, oh, like I think that's probably the San Francisco Chronicle. It's not. But it looks reputable. And so then I could get a little pull quote and put that on my cover. And that was all I wanted. And so that was fine. You have to be really careful, though. There's a lot of people out there who are preying on self publishers. And so what I would recommend these things are changing all the time. But if you're about to pay for something, I learned this. I was almost going to pull the trigger on Kirkus. Kirkus, just about to ask Mac. They're really expensive. Like six hundred dollars or something. But I was going to do it.

[00:47:54] And then something made me stop. And I typed in Kirkus Paid or Kirkus Indie Reviews, Bad Experience.

[00:48:03] And I got just this amazing search result of people who just had it was all the same story. Like Kirkus is just out there screwing people, as far as I can tell.

[00:48:14] So anything that you're about to put money on, I would I would do that query. I would take the thing you're about to spend money on and then say bad experience or that thing you're about to spend money on and say reviews, because there's people out there just preying on people. And some of these things are worth it and some of them aren't. But anyway.

[00:48:31] Yeah, I mean, I would definitely I think in the entire the self publishing your whole process, you need to be very careful with who you work with. And there's a lot of people out there putting up their shingles right now that don't actually have much experience in books. Right. Because it is you know, it's it's so much in the news and so many people are doing it and are willing to spend money on it.

[00:48:49] And so be very cautious with who you work with. Make sure you, you know, make sure you look at what their experiences look at their, you know, who's endorsing them. Talk to them.

[00:48:59] What are the projects that they've done lately from what, their designers, reviewers? Absolutely.

[00:49:05] Yeah. So, Scott, can you tell us a little bit about your publicity, marketing experience, what have you been doing?

[00:49:13] What is the press been doing for you and how's life been going?

[00:49:18] So the press in the months leading up to publication it up for reviews. And so if you're not if you're publishing yourself, you have to do all that. And it's important. But if you're going with with the press, they will do that. They want you to participate. So while they're getting a bunch of reviews, I was getting a bunch of reviews.

[00:49:38] I got it reviewed all over the place and.

[00:49:44] I I solicited the blurbs. They also solicited a few. But mostly it becomes your responsibility in that.

[00:49:52] And it does matter.

[00:49:55] It's hard to know what really sells books. But as part of the process, it makes your product just that much more professional and makes people that much more eager to buy it. They have it and read it. I certainly did author tours, but I confined it to the northwest area. I didn't want to spend the money to go beyond that, though I know I can think of two people right now who did so were within writing fiction, non-fiction. Let's say you're writing a memoir, but there is a specific topic in there that would be interesting to a genealogical society or two alpine climbers or whatever. Figure that out,

figure out what the marketing angle is and then find out where they are in the country and book yourself in for a book tour. And that's how you'll sell books because they'll post it on their email list. And those people will show up for the event and they'll start the word mouth going. But you also have to have a presence online. You have to you really have to do both. A little side benefit is people know that you've written a book and so they contact you and say, oh, would you come talk to this class or your content provider, your contact?

[00:51:07] Yeah. Yeah. You can make a whole living on it.

[00:51:10] So, you know, while you're selling, if your books are in there, you're also making money, doing appearances and you know, things, doors start to open up.

[00:51:19] First you have to have the book. So whether is self published or not, first you have to have the book and make that book as professional as you can before you get it out.

[00:51:30] You know, I'd actually say I'd even go back far further than that.

[00:51:34] Is that before you even have your book, you need to start developing your platform.

[00:51:38] And, you know, it's especially the case with nonfiction, but it's actually with fiction as well as just being you know, one of the things we always advise our authors is be be a friend to authors and editors, be a friend to booksellers, you know, be in your book at your local bookstore, buying books and in your local library, checking out books and talking to other people and being good readers.

[00:52:00] And really, you're talking to other, you know, other authors. If you meet an author that you like and you're interested in talking them, you know, a friend, then I will tweet them.

[00:52:13] You may not want to friend them on Facebook, but, you know, getting getting connected with them on social media, be out there being sort of an advocate for other writers because that will be returned to you in a huge amounts.

[00:52:27] And, you know, one of the anecdotes we always use is that. So all of us across Friday have spent a lot of our careers working on proposals. And, you know, even five, six years ago when we were writing or helping out there. Do you have proposal or do a proposal as part of a packaging company under some sort of promotional effort that the author would do? We write a little blanket statement would say something like authors willing to go on book tours, which is hilarious.

[00:52:55] I think if you were to send a proposal like that into an agent or a publisher, they would that would make everybody laugh, because now you have to be able to say, like I am on good reads and I get this many people look at I am on Twitter and I have five thousand followers.

[00:53:13] I have a relationship with this, you know, blogger and I could do guest blogs once a month. You know, you have to be very, very active out there with all of that. Not doesn't it doesn't matter whether you're self publishing, it doesn't matter whether Harper is publishing you. That expectation is across the board.

[00:53:33] All right.

[00:53:34] So I think maybe it's a we've talked to you guys a lot, and I'm hoping that we filled in a lot of gaps, but I bet there's some questions out there. And we'd love to take some. Yes, sir.

[00:53:46] Yes. What hope is there? Well, I don't think you have to be doing it full time.

[00:53:51] I think you have to be it has to be part of your job as an author is to be, you know, being active. I mean, you can be on even. I wish I was here because she's so great at answering these questions.

[00:54:01] But, you know, even if you're spending 10 minutes a day just getting on Twitter, getting on good reads, getting you know, if every week you make a point of going out to, you know, to your bookstore and talking to your local bookstore owners and clerks in your libraries is just being a presence and just making it part of, you know, most successful author, set aside a certain amount of hours a day to do the writing, set aside even fifteen minutes a day to be maintaining your blog and be maintaining your Twitter account, be maintaining your good read account.

[00:54:32] And I think you can choose. I mean, you don't have to do everything. Just choose the one that kind of appeals to you and sort of build on that. And exactly.

[00:54:39] It's more of a fifteen minute habit, you know, than it is a sort of commitment of major time. Yes. You follow it now.

[00:54:47] Now. So the one thing I would say is think about who's going to read your book. Oh. Said the question was, it seems daunting if you don't know social media to have to use it as a platform to build a platform.

[00:55:02] And the one thing I would say is like for me, you know, I'm trying to reach middle grade readers and their parents. They're not on Twitter, like for me. Twitter is not a big platform that I need to be thinking about. So I think the hard thing about being self published is that you have to sort of think as a business person. And so that is about thinking about who is your customer and where are they. And if they are like if it's teenagers, then you you're probably gonna go figure out Instagram and Snapchat because they're not on Facebook anymore.

[00:55:32] But, you know. Yeah. People are basically just as we ruined them. But depending. So I think to start with them and then just think about where are they.

[00:55:42] Where will you be able to find them and how can you engage with them?

[00:55:45] Well, Scott had such a great point when you were talking about the find find the hook in your book that will appeal to a group of people.

[00:55:52] So if you're writing a book about mountain climbing, you may be going to join the organizations that do mountain climbing and that are, you know, meetup groups, whatever it'll be out there interacting with your readers. Yeah. Yes.

[00:56:10] Oh, my gosh.

[00:56:12] Oh, that's a great idea. So she was asking for. Do you have a taffer? No. I'll like will you go? My question. Okay.

[00:56:19] And see what kind of an ivory sliding into his question.

[00:56:22] Yes, absolutely. So you'll get a lot of pressure to try and be on every possible social media.

[00:56:28] But really just figure out who you think your readers are most likely to be. And just try to appeal to them blogs. You know, most people will check in on a blog. So in this other difficult to do. So set up a blog and do it once every couple of weeks. And then when you've got a book coming out, then do it more frequently. And that's not that difficult to do. M.B on Facebook. Those, those are two things they're easy to set up. Set up a good reads account. You have to do that. That's required. But you just set it up. You don't have to constantly keep going back to it. Just set it up. Just get it started. Yeah. So and all of that you don't have to be very tech savvy. I can tell you because I'm not tech savvy and I was told how to do it. So I did it. And then. And then a sub up your time.

[00:57:18] And also a lot of blogs are looking for content. So, again, you know, kind of going back to this. You know, if you have something that you think will be appealing to a certain group of people, go to the Alpine Hiking Groups blog and say, hey, I could write a blog about you.

[00:57:33] And so thing. And they will be happy.

[00:57:37] That's a really good point. It's easy to do. And the people who are reading the blog are reading it for information. They say your name and they think, oh, he's the expert. And then they're going to check out your book. Yeah. And that's a really easy way to market. It doesn't cost any money. Yes. Let me just say one thing about blog tours. When your book is really coming out, it's probably a good idea to cough up the money for a for a really professional blog tour. It doesn't directly lead to sales, but it leads to reviews. And those reviews lead to word of mouth. Yeah, there are certain people who have created companies that do blog tours. So, for example, I just interviewed somebody recently who does blog tours and she started off just writing a blog to review books, and it became so popular that she decided to make it her business. So she now has relationships with maybe 30 or 40 or 50 blog reviewers. So as soon as she has a book that she's going to post on a

tour, she'll decide these fifteen blog reviewers are appropriate for this book. So she'll send out your promo material to those 15 or 20 reviewers and they will all write a review and posted on their blog site. And then. So anybody who's reading the blog site will see it. Plus, the person you paid for the tour will post it on her blog site and she'll send it to you. And then you can post it on your blog or your Web site or whatever you maintain.

[00:59:05] The downside that I found is that not all blogs are created equal like anybody, and their mother can put a Web page up and that doesn't mean anybody's looking at it. And so I paid for a blog for her. It was the best rated. You know, I did a lot of research, but I did find that a lot of the bloggers who posted my content were super Nikesh.

[00:59:24] They didn't I didn't get their traffic and it didn't drive traffic to me. I think what I got out of the blog tour was the reviews, not really the PR. I think for some other genres you might be able to get better quality. And the other thing I would just my other caution with blog tours is that this really irritates me. They when they write the review, they start out with, like in all caps. I'm writing this review because I got the book for free. And it sort of taints the whole review.

[00:59:54] So I put it on my sheet or something else. Like I put the pluses and minuses, but it wouldn't be at the top of my list based on my experience with it.

[01:00:05] No, no, please. So there was a comment that you can talk to famous people if you get on their blogging comment for the podcast listeners. Well, I'm one of them.

[01:00:15] I have. Just to that point.

[01:00:18] An author that I worked with on her proposal, she and her manuscript, she was getting ready to send it out to agents.

[01:00:26] And she happened to read, you know, a modern love from the Times and really liked what this writer had to say, started following her blog. She herself had a blog that she'd been just doing for fun. She's a writer and she likes writing about these different topics on her blog. So she had built up about seven or eight hundred followers.

[01:00:46] So she did it once a week and was, you know, but it was just one of the many things she did. She had a full time job and all of that.

[01:00:53] And she made friends with this author sort of on the on the blog, sort of, hey, you know, and this author started reading her blog and they started sort of corresponding with each other. And so when the time came for Kathy to send out her book to Asians, this author who had a bestselling New York Times book at this point was like, why don't I introduce you to my agent? I think she really like your book. And bam, that agent took her book, which, you know, because there's no better thing for it to bypass agent issues than to have one of their best selling authors recommend another writer.

[01:01:26] So, I mean, I'm not saying that's always going to happen, but it was just one example of building community.

[01:01:30] Right.

[01:01:32] Yes, Bill. But that is exactly what we were talking about as well. If that isn't building the community with whatever your group of readers will be and you've had your several times so.

[01:01:44] That's a great question. Now, cover art is so important even for e-books. So sort of talking about sources for that. So.

[01:01:53] Well, I'll start over here and then we'll move this way, Christine.

[01:01:56] Well, in our experience, we we work with quite a few graphic designers that do covers. And, you know, the best way I have found to find a great cover art or a designer for a cover is to go out and look at covers that you like and you will usually find the name of the designer in the in the copyright page in the book. And and contact them. They usually have a Web site. Yeah. It's very important. And it can be very expensive.

[01:02:21] That is one caveat. But, you know, going out and just kind of casting that net and seeing what you like and then and then contacting those people, finding out how much they may charge for it, you know, or you could also work with the company to do it.

[01:02:37] If you're working with a publisher, you're not going to have as much control over your cover. That's one thing that some people love with self publishing is because if you work with a publisher, mean, he's got to justify his experience. But most publishers do not give the office very much say on that.

[01:02:52] You get some choices to look at. You get general direction. You get feedback that you give feedback. But essentially, they they the cover is the domain of the publisher. I mean, they want you to be happy with it. Absolutely. Because a happy author is a good author.

[01:03:04] They want them to feel good about that book.

[01:03:06] But publishers have they have in-house design and they are they're very thoughtful about the covers that they're creating.

[01:03:15] So. Yeah. And so, Jennifer, do you have any thoughts on the cover process? Yeah, I was super lucky.

[01:03:21] My husband is a professional book cover designer. Now they go.

[01:03:24] Are you married? He has been.

[01:03:29] I would have hired if I.

[01:03:31] If he wasn't.

[01:03:31] Yeah. And remember, you wanted to. This is the one little tip I always remember. You wanted to be designed for small. Right. Because so much so many books are going to be set. Most your books are be sold on Amazon or they're gonna be sold on Smashwords or they can be sold somewhere online on a screen.

[01:03:48] And so you need to design them to look good there. And not so much what you're thinking about in the bookstore on the shelf. Yes. So. So what's the publishing timeline for independent publishing from from getting signed to getting published book, being out there?

[01:04:07] Well, it depends on the size of the independent publisher. So, for example, I had somebody come and I teach at the UW in a professional and continuing education. And I did some to come in as a guest speaker who started his own publishing and publishes maybe three or four books. Right. So if he goes something like that, it's like as soon as you want. Within a couple of months with Coffee Town Press, if they said, you know, the soonest would be about six months, but then they started to look at the publishing cycle and looked at the nature of my book and said, this is not a spring book because spring books get written in the summer. And this isn't a summer reading book. So let's wait for the more serious books come out the fall. So I had to wait almost a year, but it was strictly because they were trying to time it right in the publishing cycle. The if you get with a big house, you know, if you go with an agent, go that traditional route, you're first you're going to waste months trying to find an edge and then you finally find one. Then they send it out. Right. And that process could take a year or two if you're not lucky. Then finally, they find an editor and then maybe once you have a contract, it's two years after that. So, you know, maybe it's three and half years. One time you started to take me to see your book, and there's nothing you can do about it. You just work on the next book. So I would say six to nine months is a pretty reasonable expectation with a decent sized independent press.

[01:05:37] Oh, yeah, that's a good. The difference in platform for non-fiction versus fiction.

[01:05:41] I'm trying to do. Sorry, I interrupted the moderator. Yeah.

[01:05:46] So with with fixed I can get you actually speaking less of the platform than you are. Speaking of a following and you know, and you can develop a following not just by having books out, but by you being connected and being connected. Your books are kind of elsberry talking about, you know, being on different social media and having sort of, you know, making friends of other authors and making friends of readers. You know, a lot of fan fiction sites are actually really good for that. And I actually can't speak very well to that. But a lot of especially feel foolish by, you know, kind of first time fiction authors. They start doing a lot of their fiction first through fan fiction or just different kind of fiction sites just to kind of develop some sort of fellow writer readers. So that would be you through

what you're trying to a platform with fiction writers. But also what Scott was talking about is sort of that you write, you know, if you are doing something that's really focusing on historical events. We just recently worked with the author who's writing about the Armenian genocide, and he's really, really well connected with a lot of different organizations that are active in that in that promoting.

[01:06:57] You know that.

[01:06:59] You know the information about that history. So he's already before even finishing his book. He's already has all these sort of potential readers out there that he's connecting with. So what? But with nonfiction, you're really talking about subject matter. And you're really talking about having expertise in that subject matter and having people that will sort of vouch for you. And that can be both in having a following through social media. But it's also having you know, I speak at so-and-so, you know, every year I'm on a panel every year at the Historical Society. I volunteer at so-and-so place. So it's talking about sort of your connections and also your expertise. And it can go and, you know, it can really you know, it can also be. So you're doing a cookbook. There's you know, my restaurant gets, you know, is filled every night. And my recipes are published in my local newspaper.

[01:07:57] And, you know, it's been reviewed my restaurant's been reviewed in The New Yorker and all these other places.

[01:08:04] So it's kind of two different. It's, you know, the crossover, but it's pretty different. Oh, so do you mean that the book itself being going back and forth or do you mean being translated versions is the question whether about translations or whether I prefer the book.

[01:08:26] Oh yeah.

[01:08:27] Well I it's it's really depends on what the market is in the country you're looking towards or whether there is a big market in the United States for foreign language in that in that genre.

[01:08:43] Generally what will happen is if you were to be there, if you were to be have a deal with the publishing house, they would buy just first American or North American rights, English rights, and then you would be free to go and sell your rights to somebody else in another language.

[01:09:01] So the actual name versus pseudonym, I never even considered a pseudonym, but there are good reasons to depending on the subject matter that you're writing about.

[01:09:13] I think my primary criteria was around. My book is primarily it's for boys and girls, but it's a boy main character. And I didn't want to turn boys off by having a girl's name. So it's not a pseudonym. But I was thoughtful about that. J.K. Rowling. I did. I probably I have other books I want to write and I would use a pseudonym. And I think as you start to have a set of books that you've written, you may not want to get pigeon in a hole by what you've written before. So that would be an instance where I would use it. Or, you know, if it was something where I wanted to keep my professional and my writing life separate, I would be another reason.

[01:09:50] So the question is, how do you decide how to spend your time when you're self published in fiction between marketing and writing your next book?

[01:09:57] That's exactly what I found myself grappling with. And I have decided to spend all my time writing my next book. I just find that marketing you get you know, you get these little blips, but it's hard to get like the sustained increase. And I think one of the best strapped marketing strategies that you can have is to publish your first book and sell it really inexpensively and do the Free Kindle promotions and have a next book that readers can buy. So your first book starts to sell your second book and then your second book starts to sell your third book. I think that's superimportant. So all the advice that I've gotten is right. Your next book. And I think that's kind of where I've ended up as well. I have found that when I do the Free Kindle Promotions, I does spike my sales and I do see a sustained lift. And so I sort of do the math in my head and think, hey, what if I had multiple books that were doing that? I think that would it would be sort of a multiplier effect. So I do think that's the right advice.

[01:10:58] She's asking for recommendations about writing groups.

[01:11:02] Yes, you should. You should be in a writing group and make sure that, you know, writing group with the writers who are at least at your level of experience or a little bit above.

[01:11:13] Well, the way to find them, I guess that would be to go house is one place.

[01:11:18] Yes. Pacific Northwest Writers Conference. If you go there, you'll meet a lot of people. You know, it costs money, but you'll meet people. That's a good way to network and get a writing group going, take classes. You'll meet people and they'll be in writers groups and they'll invite you in.

[01:11:34] The Hugo House is a great resource. Locally, we're so lucky in Seattle to have an oh, this wonderful writers resource. So that's right up on Capitol Hill across from Kelly Anderson. And they have writing groups. They have workshops and readings, all kinds of things. So that's a great community center for writers.

[01:11:55] It's just going to add on to the sort of talking about whether, you know, how much time you should be spend spent, you know, working on your next book and how much time you spent marketing your current book. You know, there's a certain point that that, you know, sort of your momentum starts to die a little bit with your first book, especially if you're with a traditional publisher, actually, because there is a real process to the way they marketed something. But I just heard a story today which I thought was great. It was this a local writer who self published his first children's book. And he spent a lot of time getting his book into local libraries and local bookstores. And he kept on kind of going back to this one library and talking a lot about his book. And she, you know, bring into the library and Protea and then he was talking to her a lot about the second book he was writing. And she said, you knew why you should talk to my friend at Sasquatch. And he put her in touch with her. She put you in touch with an editor at Sasquatch. And she just bought his next book. So, you know,

and that was all really him just being out there and building that community. So, you know, he was working on this book, but talking to people he hadn't met from his first book.

[01:13:03] And by putting out there, do you mean to like agents and editors or do you mean in this sort of social media world?

[01:13:10] Ok, well, I'll say that sort of agents and editors, it's it's kind of our you know, we keep that that materials private and we we keep that confidentiality and we don't share that material.

[01:13:26] And editors sort of live under that code of conduct.

[01:13:31] I would say, as do agents.

[01:13:34] So in terms of that and, you know, something doesn't have to be published to have to be yours.

[01:13:40] And so in sort of a copyright scenario, you've created it. It's sort of it's yours.

[01:13:46] So it's it's your idea.

[01:13:50] I would say that, you know, there's really. That's a good question. I'm trying to think if there's any kind of best practice on that.

[01:14:01] I mean, I think that the best practice really is just kind of the way we work any ways within the publishing industry is that, you know, you send a query letter before you're sending out your manuscript.

[01:14:12] And so, you know, you're not you're not just sort of unsolicited sending your manuscript to lots of people. You're sending query letters and then they invite you to send your round a script generally. So I think that's one way, you know, this doesn't actually come up that often until somebody gets a bestseller. And then, you know, somebody is always going to sue them or to them. So, you know, I read it is often it does often come up with bestsellers, with nonfiction, bestsellers or something else. A very unique perspective. Yeah, that's true.

[01:14:43] I would say just do your research and make sure that, you know, the agents or the editors that you're that you're querying. You just, you know, make sure do your due diligence to make sure that they seem on the up and up most.

[01:14:54] Most of them are. But, you know, whatever it is. So I would say that. And then once. Yeah.

[01:15:00] It's pretty standard in the industry that we just keep that information, you know, confidential.

[01:15:05] It's just we don't could trust the editing.

[01:15:09] Writing relationship is based on trust. It has to be, you know.

[01:15:13] So when you're looking for an agent or you're looking for an editor and an editor is looking for you, an agent is looking for you, it's all about mutual trust.

[01:15:22] And so that's sort of the foundation of that.

[01:15:24] But that's not to say a big publisher won't you know, if you send a query, something like, oh, you know, we should do a book on, you know, some big you improve that.

[01:15:37] You know, there's always the fiftieth anniversary of so-and-so movie. And, you know, I'd like to do a book on it there. You know, it does happen that a publisher says like, oh, that's a great idea. And we're just gonna go ahead and do that happens. But, you know, I don't know if you can protect yourself.

[01:15:54] I see one burning issue question now, like burning, burning.

[01:16:00] I mean, you can do whatever you wanted. I would say the way publishers buy books as they buy almost always.

[01:16:06] Sometimes they'll buy world rights and then, you know, they would be happy for you have having done it already. Usually they just it's it's not that hard for a publisher to just have it translated.

[01:16:20] That's not a really big expense for them. So they don't you know, that's that's not something that sort of prohibits the sale of a book. Prohibits the sale of a book is really finding that market within that other countries.

[01:16:32] So, you know, a lot of, you know, very American focused books are not as interesting to see, you know, our reader in Japan or a reader in Norway. So especially when you're talking about nonfiction. So that that, you know, that is really what it depends on less about the translations. I think it only, you know, it's it's in a couple thousand dollars for a publisher to translate a book.

[01:16:58] Are you speaking for non English speaking American audience like a Spanish language version or for like a U.S. market or outside of U.S. because it's a right situation.

[01:17:11] So it's there's a differentiation there. And if you're published, your publisher usually holds they sometimes ask for world rights, which means that they would then try to sell it into other countries. But they have to go through a publisher in that country. They can't just, you know, sort of sell it. It's a little bit different with self publishing now because the you know, the worldwide web is truly worldwide in that way. But generally, it's more of a rights situation. So there's language versus rights and the rights have to be sold through a publisher in a different country. OK.

[01:17:48] So we're going to hear drumroll, please, the the to quote the before and after pitch.

[01:17:56] And I'm only going to do this because the pain that I'm going to feel when I do this is why I recommend that the best way to write your query is to read your read it aloud to people and you will shorten it.

[01:18:08] I did. And I know it will get better. I just want to say that I did this pitch session.

[01:18:13] I was on the other side of table, the same to the pitches and giving feedback.

[01:18:16] And it was I was so terrified to do it. I felt like Simon Cowell, like an American Idol, you know. And I was much nicer, though. But it was really fun because I was like, OK, here's where we've got to go. Do doo did you know by the end of the day I had it go.

[01:18:31] Yeah. And I saved all my query letters in Evernote, which is why I have it. OK. So.

[01:18:39] Dear agent, personal bubble. The only thing more surprising than finding out the Dragons are real is finding out that it's your job to protect them. Peter Clarke is not the kind of kid who believes in dragons. He believes in things he can see and explain, like the robot. He's almost finished building. Or his Gramma's gooey chocolate cake. But everything changes on Peter's 12th birthday when his uncle shows up in the middle of the night with a letter from his mother who disappeared when he was two. And the preposterous claim that dragons are real and Peter is descended from a long line of dragon defenders sworn to protect them. What starts out as an attempt to find out the truth behind his mother's disappearance turns into a high stakes adventure when Peter finds himself alone in the heart of Mexico with a dragon egg that's about to hatch with the help of his new friends, Ana and Mario. He searches for the elusive equilibrate dragon and begins to unravel the awful truth behind his mother's disappearance. Peter's journey takes him from a secret room in the basement of a cathedral to the ruins of a Mayan temple deep in the jungle as he and his friends try to outwit ruthless poachers who will stop at nothing to capture the egg and kill the dragon.

[01:19:47] And then there was some stuff about the word count and whatever.

[01:19:53] Let me find my revised. That's before. I thought it was pretty damn good for a while. All right.

[01:20:02] After Peter Clarke can build a robot from scratch and pick a lock in two minutes or less, but he can't figure out why his mother left or why is grandma refuses to talk about her. When Uncle Dominic shows up on Peter's 20th birthday with a letter that hints, it answers and an incredible story about dragons. Peter follows him, determined to find out the truth about his mother's disappearance. What he finds is a reality far different from what he ever could have imagined. Where dragons live in hiding, hunted by poachers for their magical parts and a small group of men and women work



tirelessly to protect them. These are the Dragon defenders. Peter's uncle is one. So was his mother. Now it's Peter's turn.

[01:20:45] Oh, wow. Yeah, that's a lot better. Much shorter.

[01:20:50] Claire, you focus on the main character. That was very good.

[01:20:53] Yeah. Could you give us a thumbs up, Ingrid?

[01:20:57] Being on the panel, thumbs up, I would have said your first time I got lost too long. I was, like, trying to follow you.

[01:21:05] You've got really just just a few seconds of every of, you know, any particular agent or editor's time, because they're not bad people. They just have a stack or a virtual stack of manuscripts to go through. So you really have to capture their attention is a good one.

[01:21:19] So thank you so much, Jenny, Scott, Ingrid, Kristen. I think they. You guys have been wonderful. I took a ton of notes. I'm sure others did, too. And if you didn't get the handouts, you can grab them on your way out. But thank you again. You guys were great.

[01:21:44] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.

