

Authors Publish

Submit Publish Repeat

4th Edition

**How to Publish Your
Creative Writing
In Literary Journals**

Emily Harstone

S u b m i t
P u b l i s h
R e p e a t

How to Publish
Your Creative Writing
in Literary Journals

4th Edition

Emily Harstone
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Introduction

In my experience, one of the best ways to become an established author is not by sending out hundreds of query letters to agents and independent publishers. Instead, all of my professors in graduate school, including famous authors and poets, became established the same way: by publishing their work in literary journals. Some of them found their agents this way, others their publishers. This did not happen overnight. For many of them it took years, but it ultimately led to book contracts, book publication, and stable teaching jobs.

A literary journal is a magazine that specializes in publishing works of literary merit. Some focus on a particular genre, like science fiction or crime writing, and others publish poetry, short stories, or flash fiction. Most are open to work of all kinds. Many are open to visual art, as well.

There are well over 4,000 literary journals that are being published at this time. Some are printed publications that have 1-12 issues a year, others are electronic publications.

In the years since *Submit Publish Repeat* was first published, electronic publications have become even more commonplace and print journals, rarer. Many literary journals have both print and electronic versions. You can read most online journals for free, and many print journals have some sample pieces online, so you can see what kind of work they publish.

Literary journals are published all around the world. There are respected journals published in English which are based out of Singapore, Spain, Germany, and many other countries. Several are open to work by authors of any nationality.

Many literary journals are associated with an academic institution; most universities have at least one literary journal they produce. Many of these journals are well respected. A quick way to spot a respected journal is to see when it started. Some journals have been around for well over 100 years. Of course, that doesn't mean a relatively new journal cannot be well respected. There are several that started a few years ago and have gained a formidable reputation.

The majority of literary journals do not pay their writers. This is because many are registered as non-profits or are run by an individual or a small group of individuals as a passion project, not a way to make money. It is also because most online sites that publish literary journals have no ads, and thus no way to raise money, since reading the journal is free.

Most literary journals are labors of love. Most non-academic literary journals are edited by writers, and the little funding they have generally comes directly out of the editor's pocket. Academic and established journals occasionally pay their editors, but the majority work for free, volunteering their time.

Some journals do pay writers, usually between \$10 and \$75 for poems and short stories. One of the following chapters features 32 journals that pay for work. In addition, most print magazines will give you a complimentary copy of the journal your work appeared in.

In this book, I will tell you why you should submit to literary journals. I will also provide advice on how to find

reputable journals, how to submit to them, and all the other practical details involved in submitting.

I have had my work published in over 100 reputable journals, as well as in many anthologies, some of which you can find in major bookstores. My poetry has been translated and published in over 12 countries. I have also submitted for others professionally, placing many poems in prestigious journals for other people. I have done all of this in the last seven years, and before that point I had only submitted to three literary journals.

The first university I was hired to teach at chose to employ me based on my publication record, as at that point I had no experience teaching at the university level. My publication history has also helped me find publishers for my longer manuscripts.

Submitting and being published by literary journals has helped improve my writing life in so many ways. That is one of the reasons I always encourage others to get their work out there.

It is important to note that all the information here is up to date at the time of publication. However, literary journals

open and close or change their submission policies all the time, so make sure you verify information before submitting to any of the journals mentioned here.

Chapter 1: Why You Should Submit to Literary Journals

When I was first starting out as a writer, I had no desire to submit to literary journals. I did not really understand what function they served, and didn't know how many there were out there. I thought they were a small, niche marketplace.

By the time I entered graduate school, I had been published a few times. Most of the works were in journals where I knew the editor and my work was solicited. This sounds nice and easy, but it is actually less rewarding if you know the person in charge of a publication. You always wonder if they chose your work just because they knew you.

When I entered graduate school I discovered very quickly why having your work published in literary journals was important, regardless of what genre you wrote in. It was a stamp of approval, a way of making it clear that you were not a novice. It also made it easier to publish work in the future.

Establish a track record

The first reason that you should start submitting to journals is that agents and publishers are more likely to sign a contract with an author who has a track record. I wrote many query letters before I submitted to journals, and my author's bio was always depressingly empty.

Once I published my work in literary journals, I started to get the attention of agents and publishers in a way I hadn't before. I could pick and choose from various publications to put in my bio. Some of the anthologies that accepted my work had been published by major presses, including Knopf, so including this information in my bio and cover letter was certainly helpful.

Novice writers often complain to me about the expectations agents and publishers have for pre-existing publications. They tell me how complicated it makes getting the first book published. If they submitted short stories and excerpts of their novels to journals for publication, they would have a solid stepping-stone toward getting their first book published.

Attract agents and publishers

The second reason you should submit to journals is that it can actually attract agents to you, or create a direct connection with a publisher. I know several authors who have received queries from agents after getting their piece published in a prestigious journal.

For example, Heather Smith Meloche's short story was published by the literary journal *Hunger Mountain*. An established agent read that issue of *Hunger Mountain* and signed Meloche. The agent ended up placing her debut novel, *Ripple*, at Penguin Putnam.

In addition, some journals—like *Tin House* and *Rust + Moth*—have a manuscript press attached to the journal. These manuscript presses almost always end up publishing authors whose work has appeared in their journal first.

The more you publish, the more you will publish

The third reason that you should submit to journals is—as a general rule—the more you are published, the easier it is to get more work published.

When I submit my work to a respected journal, I am no longer a poet without publications, but one who has appeared in many prestigious journals. I don't know if that alters the editor's opinion, but it probably encourages them to examine my work more closely. My work certainly receives more acceptance and appears in increasingly prestigious journals every year.

Share your work, gain readership

The fourth reason is that you are able to share your work with others this way. When your work is published in a literary journal, particularly an online one, it is easy for both friends and strangers to read your work. Because I have published widely, I have been able to establish a small but important base of readers and supporters of my work.

Some were complete strangers who stumbled across my work and then looked me up online and wrote me an email. Others were acquaintances who read a piece of mine in an online literary journal (that I linked to on my Facebook page) and then made sure to buy my longer publications.

It is important to remember that publishers are not the whole picture. Even if the ideal publisher accepts your manuscript, just publishing is not enough. Reaching readers and hearing responses from them can be a rewarding part of writing, and with literary journals you do not have to publish your first book in order to get feedback from strangers and friends.

Be seen with the greats

Another reason is, some journals publish famous writers along with new and upcoming ones. In this way, this space is democratic like no other, and offers a chance to be in the same space as a cult author, or at least a very established author, maybe one whose writing you admire and enjoy.

This is a great opportunity to be published in the same journal as say Haruki Murakami, or Sharon Olds, were published in. It is also fabulous to see your name along with the more established ones in the industry, and a good way to get noticed in the literary community.

Chapter 2: How to Know Your Work is

Ready to Submit

Most writers struggle with the question of whether their work is ready to submit. They write something and for a brief moment feel it is the best thing they have ever written, then change their minds. Even after many edits, they are not always sure if something is ready. Perhaps you do not do this. If you are someone who is always sure that your work is ready for public consumption, you can skip this chapter.

I am a person who is prone to self-doubt, and rarely do I feel like a piece is ever truly done. However, I have a set of guidelines that helps me know when I am ready to submit it. Having the following guidelines in place helps me always have something to submit.

Make sure the piece is at least two weeks old

When I first write a poem or short piece of prose, I tend not to have any idea if it is good or not. I lack perspective on it. I like to take at least two weeks off before editing it—giving it space and time really helps.

Get another person's perspective

This step is not always possible for me anymore; I write and submit so often that it is hard to find someone to give me detailed feedback for all my poems. At least the first few times you submit, it is important to have someone look over the work.

If you are just looking for typos, anyone will do. However, if you want more feedback than that—and honestly, you probably should have it—look for someone whose opinion you trust, or for a writing group.

Many independent bookstores and libraries house writing groups. Writing groups are terrific, because you get feedback from a variety of people all at one time.

Know yourself

Most people make the same minor grammatical or spelling errors over and over again. Most writers also tend to overuse a favorite word or phrase.

If you know what mistakes you tend to make in terms of spelling and grammar, you can be on guard for these. For example, I have a tendency to add more commas than are needed.

In terms of words, I sometimes use the word ‘lull’ too often. If you know these sort of things about your own writing, you can avoid falling into any obvious traps.

Avoid beginners’ mistakes

Beginning prose writers do not usually pay enough attention to paragraph breaks. Chapter 10 talks in a more in-depth way about some of the other mistakes new submitters make repeatedly.

There are a lot more potential traps to catch beginning poets than prose writers—Chapter 11 is devoted to those poetry-specific traps.

Edit

Make sure that everything you submit to journals is edited. This may seem obvious but unfortunately it is not. Some people submit their first drafts to literary journals. This usually ends in rejection, but if the piece is accepted with mistakes and the mistakes are published, this reflects poorly on the author. Make sure to edit both for mistakes and for content.

Don't procrastinate

Sometimes it is hard to take that final step and submit, even if you have edited a piece a half-dozen times or more. Don't fall into that trap, even if you are a perfectionist. Start submitting after you have completed the above steps. Even if it is not perfect in your own eyes, it could well be for someone else. After all, writers are often their own worst critics.

Focus on the beginning

First impressions are important. If the first three paragraphs of your short story are bland, confusing, or riddled with errors, chances are that the editor or reader will either not read your entire piece, or not read it as carefully.

With a poem or a piece of flash fiction you only have a few lines to win over the reader or editor.

Make sure your beginning is memorable, polished, and clear. It greatly increases the odds that your piece will be published.

Make sure you have a memorable title

Many writers don't think the title of a short story or poem is very important, but it is the very first impression you make on many readers and editors. This is particularly important for poetry and flash fiction because there are fewer words involved in both these forms of writing, so more attention is placed on every word.

When I was reading for a literary journal, three people coincidentally submitted poems titled “Tabula Rasa,” which means a clean slate. As interesting as that phrase is, the whole group of readers passed on all three poems, partially because the title in every case felt like an easy choice and did not actually suit the poem. It felt too generic.

Also, while we were discussing all three poems it was very hard to distinguish one from the other, without physically pointing.

A memorable title can help intrigue an editor. It can also help them remember your piece and find it again in the pile of submissions.

Chapter 3: The Basics of Submitting

It is very easy to submit your work to literary journals. In the past, you had to submit work through the mail with a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) and it could take months or even years to hear back from the journal. Some journals still require you to submit by mail, but these are probably less than 10 percent.

Now, turnaround times are much faster. Trees are being saved, so most journals accept electronic submissions.

There are two primary ways to submit electronically. The first is through email. This used to be the most common way to submit. You can use your existing email address or create an account that you use exclusively for submitting, whichever is your personal preference. It is good to figure out which works better for you.

When you submit via email, some journals prefer the work to be attached and others prefer the work to be in the body of the email. Either way it is easy to submit via email, and rather fast.

Submission managers, largely run by third-party services, are becoming even more common. I would

say that all of the most prestigious journals now use these. Submission managers are easy to use sites that organize the information for the editors as well as writers, to an extent.

By far the most popular submission manager is Submittable (formerly Submishmash). Submittable charges the journals that use it, but not the submitting writers. It is easy and free to set up an account. You can even connect it to a pre-existing Facebook account.

Submittable saves your address and contact information, and makes it easy to insert your cover letter and upload your work. It also allows for easy withdrawals of work from some journals if your piece is accepted elsewhere, and tracks your submissions for you.

On your personal user submission page your work is listed as received (if the literary journal has the submission but hasn't opened it yet), in-progress (once they open the submission, it is listed as in-progress), and then accepted or rejected. You receive an automatic email from Submittable when a journal receives your piece and also when they accept or reject it. There is no notification when the journal opens it (and the submission status switches to in-progress).

The downside to Submittable is that while it is free for writers to use, the company that runs it charges literary journals. Because of this many journals have started to charge submission fees (a topic I have devoted an entire chapter to), and Submittable makes it very easy for journals to charge submitters a fee.

They recently added a feature that is rather confusing. Journals can now add a donation button or a subscription option at the bottom of the submit page. These options are presented under the heading 'Payment'. The issue with this is that paying for these things is entirely optional, but that might not be clear at first. I worry that writers new to submitting or even just new to Submittable could be buying subscriptions or donating not because they want to, but because they think they have to, in order to submit.

Outside of Submittable there are other smaller submission managers, but for most of these, you have to sign up on an individual basis. All of them are easy to use.

Most journals ask for a cover letter, a brief biographical statement, and the work itself. I go into the details of the cover letter and the biographical statement in the next chapter.

It is important to note that your cover letter should be brief and to the point. It should not be longer than three sentences in length, unless the journal specifically requests additional information.

Most biographical statements should be 50 words in length, or less.

All journals have specific guidelines. Some are rather detailed in terms of formatting, inclusion of contact information in a particular way, the kind of font to use, and the like. However, most guidelines are simple and easy to follow.

Always make sure you read the submission guidelines before you submit, which are there for a reason. Not following them will at least make it harder for your piece to get accepted, or, in some cases, will get your writing deleted unread. When you are submitting via email, for example, most journals have a specific subject line format they want you to use, to make sure that your work is not filtered out of their inbox.

Once you have submitted your work, all you have to do is update your submission tracker (more on that in the next chapter). Submitting really is easy and once you have

submitted a few times and know how to find good journals, you can submit to up to seven journals in one hour.

Chapter 4: Six Tips for Submitting Your Work

If you have never sent your creative writing out to a literary journal before, the experience can be intimidating. Many productive writers try to avoid submitting, or are hesitant to do so. However, there is no real way around it if you want to get your work out into the world.

This chapter contains six tips for submitting your work. Even if you have sent out work before, you may find them helpful. I have been submitting for seven years now and these tips are still a touchstone for me. They always help me keep on track.

Set a submission goal for yourself

Set it somewhere that seems reasonable to you—perhaps five submissions to different magazines per month. I often exceed my per-month goal, because once I reach that point, I want the feeling of accomplishment to linger. Soon those submissions will really start to add up.

The more experience you have submitting, the faster you will get; as you progress, it becomes easier to submit your work. I often have 40 submissions out at a time. Three of the most respected authors I know suggested that this was one of the ways that they became successful. I don't know why 40 is the magic number for me, but it seems to be the case.

Create submission packets

If you are a short story writer you don't need to do this, since most journals only consider one short story at a time. However, if you are a poet, journals generally want three to five of your poems to consider at a time. I have five packets that each contain between four and five poems.

I always reserve one packet to submit to a journal that does not accept simultaneous submissions (work that is submitted to other journals at the same time). It is becoming more common for journals to accept simultaneous submissions, though. I would say less than 5 percent of journals don't accept simultaneous submissions.

The rest of the packets, I submit to multiple places at the same time.

I go into more details about how packets work and what goes into constructing them in Chapter 5.

Keep track of what you submit and where

I keep a Word document that keeps track of which journals I have submitted to, what poems I have submitted to them, and when.

I write down which poems have been accepted and where. I document which journals have rejected certain poems. I update this ‘submission tracker’ every time I submit, otherwise I might send the same poems to the same journal twice, or submit poems that have been accepted elsewhere, or any similar minor disaster.

Make sure you regularly update this document, otherwise it will get out of control. I have included a sample of a very small submission tracker.

Sample submission tracker:

Pending:

The New Yorker, Submitted September 28th, The Living (short story).

The Adroit Review, Submitted September 28th, My Teeth, Superman, Pumpkin Bread (poems).

Acceptances:

Neon, Submitted January 14th, Ham, Companion, Uma Thurman (poems).

Conium Review, Submitted January 25th, Ready (short story).

Rejections:

Threepenny Review, Submitted January 7, 2012. Timer (short story).

The Adirondack Review, submitted January 7, Pancakes for Dinner (short story).

You can also use an Excel spread sheet to track submissions and if you have a Duotrope subscription, there is a built-in submission tracker that is fairly intuitive to use. Electronic trackers are not for everyone, though. A friend of mine does all her tracking in a grading book.

Submittable also has a built-in tracking system, but it only tracks submissions you make using Submittable. There is

no way to manually update it to include submissions you made via email or other submission managers. Because of that, it does not work as a personal submission tracker.

Just make sure you are consistent. At first tracking doesn't seem that essential, but over time it becomes more and more important.

If you don't track submissions, you could end up accidentally sending the same piece to the same publication repeatedly, which will get you remembered by the editors for the wrong reasons.

More importantly, when you are simultaneously submitting, if a piece gets accepted one place, you have to withdraw it from all the other places it is out at. If you don't do that, it can reflect poorly on you and even lead to a journal not considering your work in the future.

Create a couple of biographical statements

When you read submission guidelines—which vary from site to site—almost all of them will require that you include a brief biographical statement and a cover letter. Most

submission guidelines are quite similar, so as long as you have a biographical statement and a cover letter on standby, it should take you very little time to submit.

One of your biographical statements should be under 50 words and the other should be under 100 words in length. Once your work has been published in various literary journals, you should include some of the most recent or prestigious journals in your biographical statement. However, you should not include all of them; that would just be overwhelming and would come off as unprofessional. Below are examples of biographical statements of less than 50 words. One contains journal names, one does not.

Sample bio 1:

Maria Smith resides in the rural Pacific Northwest. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in numerous places, including: Tin House, The Liner, Echolocation, and the anthology Tidelines. Her second chapbook, *Pancakes for Dinner*, is forthcoming in 2017 from Hawthorne Press.

Sample bio 2:

Joshua Thomas is a poet, editor, and recovering New Yorker who now lives in Idaho. Joshua once wrote a sonnet every hour for 24 hours straight. He loves to hike, cook, and read.

Create a standard cover letter for all the journals you are submitting to

A cover letter should be as simple as possible; an editor does not have a lot of time and does not want to be bogged down by the details. If I am submitting to a journal I particularly like, I will include a note about why I like their journal. Sometimes journals will request that I include additional information such as titles and word count in my cover letter and I will cut and paste that information in. Otherwise, my cover letter is almost identical to the sample letter.

Sample cover letter:

Dear Editors,

The following poems are for your consideration.

Thank you for your time,

Katharine Hathaway

Sometimes, a journal's submission guidelines specify that they will not accept works that are disrespectful or disparaging of, say, minorities, or similar. Therefore, there is no reason to think that language that could be misconstrued as offensive to anyone in a cover letter will be received in a kindly way, either, even as a joke. In fact, in an extreme case, it might get you banned from the journal. Or it could make an editor unfavorably disposed towards your work before they have even read it.

For this reason too, it is best to have a form, standard cover letter.

Always read the submission guidelines

Now this might seem like common sense but many writers figure if they have read one submission guideline, they have read them all. This is not the case. For many literary journals, up to 15 percent of work is rejected because it is not what they publish, and not due to stylistic preferences.

For example, a literary journal that explicitly states they do not accept genre work will receive a fair amount of science fiction short stories. Or a journal that publishes poetry may receive hundreds of short story submissions a month.

Krishan Coupland, the editor of *Neon*, phrased it well when he said, “*Neon* publishes dark slipstream and magical realist fiction and poetry. A 600 page hard-boiled noir detective novel isn't likely to find a place in its pages. Neither is a feature-length documentary film, or any number of hobby articles or fashion pieces. And yet these are all things that I've been offered in the past year.”

You can read Krishan Coupland's full article, ‘6 Cover Letter Mistakes That Can Ruin the Chance of Publication,’ [here](#).

Also, many people who don't read the submission guidelines will end up being automatically rejected, either by a filter on the email the editor has set up, or by the editor themselves because the submitter has not followed one guideline or another.

For example, if the journal's guidelines say they only accept submissions where the work is cut and pasted into the body of the email and you send that work as an attachment, they will likely reject your work without ever reading it. That might sound callous, but many editors read hundreds of submissions every month, and they set up their submission guidelines in a certain way for a reason.

For emailed submissions, the subject line guidelines (if there are any) are particularly important to follow because many email accounts are set up so that they automatically filter out your email if the subject heading is incorrect.

Chapter 5: How to Submit Your Poetry for Publication

If you're ready to get your poetry published in literary journals, then you will need to go through the process of submitting your work. This chapter will guide you through the most important step in the process so that you can start submitting your work, and get published.

That step is putting together your submission so that it has the best chance of getting the editor's attention, and being accepted for publication.

When you submit short stories or nonfiction to a journal, it can be fairly straightforward: you just choose one well-edited story that you wrote and submit it. With poetry, things are a little tougher because you have to choose three to five poems to submit. There are several things you have to do before you submit them.

Selecting poems for packets

The first step is to choose three to five poems that go together. Some journals accept six and some only accept three. I usually gather the poems in groups of three to five, because accepting six is rare and it's easy to shave a packet of five poems down to three for one journal.

I call each grouping of three to five poems a 'submission packet.' I usually have between five to seven submission packets at one time, and each packet contains three to five different poems. I submit each of these packets to more than one place at a time, but usually to no more than eight places at one time. That way if the poems get accepted, I can easily withdraw them from consideration at the other publications.

The components of a good packet

When choosing which poems to place in which submission packet, I consider the tone. For example, say I have a number of darkly comic poems; I may group these together in a submission packet.

However, there should be variation in each submission packet. Don't make the mistake of grouping poems that all

have the same tone, theme, and subject matter. The editor who reads these poems only gets one impression of your work, and if it doesn't match with what they are looking for, too bad for you.

Having variation in your packet significantly increases the likelihood of the editor connecting with one of your poems. Still, think about order and sense of narration as well—one poem should not contradict or clash with the next. After you have chosen a group of poems, go over them one last time, reviewing for any obvious mistakes or changes in spacing during the rearranging process.

Some poets often have an urge to over explain the context of their poems in the cover letter when they submit their work to a journal. Restrain yourself from doing that. Most editors won't publish work unless the context is made clear within the poems themselves.

Choosing where to submit packets

I do try to create one to two packets of my best poems and submit these packets to just top-tier journals, ones with

really low acceptance rates. If I submitted these packets to top-tier journals and ones with higher acceptance rates at the same time, the odds go up of the poems in the packet being accepted by a lesser journal before the more prestigious one had time to consider it. Prestigious journals tend to have a slower response time because they generally have a team of editors who have to read everything, instead of just one person.

Once you have your submission packets ready, your poems should be ready to submit to any journal! Don't edit or reorder the packets for every journal, just make sure that the way your poems are formatted fits the journals' guidelines.

General considerations

Some journals require your name and contact information to be on every page. Other journals prohibit this and will discard any packet that includes the author's name or personal information. Make sure your packet is formatted correctly for the specific journal.

Once you have a couple of submission packets it is easy to submit your work. Often, it will take me no longer than 10 minutes to submit my poems to a journal I am interested in.

After I submit a piece of work, I immediately update my submission tracker so it is up to date.

Chapter 6: Print Versus Online Journals

Print journals have been around for a long time; you can submit to journals that are going into their sixth decade, and have published many famous poets, both dead and alive. Online journals are clearly a newer phenomenon.

There are advantages and disadvantages that are associated with both forms of publishing. Below I will offer my personal opinion.

I am going to add that when *Submit Publish Repeat* first came out four years ago, there were hundreds of more print publications than there are now. Electronic journals are more common now than ever. It would be difficult in this day and age to only submit to print journals if you were regularly sending out work.

Print journals

The advantage to being published in print journals is that they are generally more established, and can really help your overall reputation as a writer.

Many of the most established and respected journals are print. When the first edition of this book was published around four years ago, all but one of the most respected journals were in print. That is no longer the case. This will continue to shift over time.

Now, many print journals offer some or all of their content available online as well, often for free, so even your work is published in the print journal, most people might actually read your work online.

With print publication you often receive a free contributor's copy, so you get to see your work in print. Usually these print journals are nicely bound with an artistic cover. If a journal is well made, receiving it in the mail is a great experience. It can go on a shelf with all your other printed work, giving you an occasional ego boost. Print journals are also more likely to pay, although they do this mostly through free contributor copies or subscriptions to the journal.

Print journals that do not offer free contributor copies are usually not worth submitting to, in my experience.

The disadvantage to print journals is that less people read your work (unless they post it online as well). Some journals do have a very large circulation and a large group of consistent readers, but most do not. Many print journals cite rising costs and a decreasing list of subscribers as the reasons they now charge writers to submit their work.

Most of the time, the only place you can buy the literary journal or subscribe is through the journal's website, which means few people are just going to stumble across it.

People generally seem more open to reading poems for free online than seeking them out in print or subscribing to journals. In part this is because of the cost, but the hassle of filling out payment information every single time you subscribe to a new journal is a factor, too.

All the feedback I have received from readers that I didn't know was for poems that were published online.

Once *The New Yorker*—a magazine with an excellent circulation, which pays their poets very well—published a poem I loved by a new author. It was only in their print magazine, and they did not post it online. I loved the poem

so much that a month later I tracked the author down by looking him up on Google and sent him an email thanking him for the poem. He told me that I was the only stranger to contact him after the publication of this poem.

Another mark against print journals is that sometimes you have to pay in order to read a copy of the print journal that your work is in, and sometimes there is not even a discount for contributors. I think it is wrong that the writer should have to pay to see their own work in print.

A very rare but very real issue with print journals is that occasionally the magazine has advertisements in the journal. Now, if the advertisement is just in the back or front of the literary journal, that is fine; I have no problem with it. Occasionally they will place the advertisements on the same pages as the printed work.

Once a serious poem of mine was published with an advertisement for a sexual counselor printed on the same page, right after the poem ended.

Print journals often have slower response times. Sometimes it will take over a year to hear if your work has been

accepted or rejected. It can also take up to a year after that for the journal to be printed.

Additionally, as I touched on before, print journals are more likely to charge readers a fee in order to consider their work. I will talk more about reading fees in Chapter 15.

Online journals

There are many advantages of online journals. Sometimes they have a large established group of readers who read the journal regularly.

Since works don't tend to be hidden behind a pay wall, there are a lot of great poems that people can access for free. It is also easy to share poems published online with friends and acquaintances, because you can link to those through Facebook, Twitter, or email.

Online journals can have audio and visual options that are not as easy for print journals to offer. They also tend to respond to your submission a lot faster, and often it is posted online within months. You don't have to wait years to see your work out in the world.

Of course, publishing in online journals also has its disadvantages. Most online journals are not taken as seriously as print journals, but this is changing. Particularly within the last year, online journals have become more respected. This is mostly due to the fact that they tend to have a larger and more vocal group of readers.

Once a piece is printed online you have fewer options open to you in terms of getting a journal to reprint it. Also, you don't get to feel the joy of having a journal arrive free in the mail with your poem in it. Instead, there is a link to your work that arrives in your inbox.

One issue is that some online journals—although it is rather uncommon—do charge a fee for readers to read the issue as a whole.

It is becoming more common for online journals to have submission fees, as well. This is a new development over the last few years, but it appears to be spreading at a rapid rate.

One of the biggest issues with online journals is that it is rather easy to start one. You could start one on a blog, or on

a whim. I once knew an editor who started a journal when they were drunk. The work of maintaining one can be rather time consuming, so it is not uncommon for an online journal to only last a few years.

Be aware that once you have given the journal your first publication rights you can never get them back, even if they have long ago gone under (unless they never managed to publish your piece at all).

I have made some pretty general statements here, because when you go too far into the specifics there are often exceptions.

I have submitted my work extensively to both online and print journals, and have had good experiences and bad with both.

Chapter 7: Three Things I Wish I Knew

When I was First Submitting to Literary Journals

When I first submitted to literary journals, I spent 15 minutes or more on their websites tracking down any scrap or clue that might help my work be accepted. I read their guidelines multiple times. Every time I received a rejection, I read a lot into it.

Now, many years and at least 1,000 submissions later, I have learned so much, and have become an efficient submitter of my work. More of my work is published each year. The first year I submitted I had three publications, this year I have had well over 20. The following are things I wish I knew when I was starting out.

The difference between what journals say and what they mean

Most journals have a statement on their submission page about what they are looking for and what you should

submit. Some of these things are clear and true. If they say they are looking for poetry and flash fiction under 1,000 words in length, they most certainly mean it. Do not submit a 2,000 word story.

Also, if they say they are looking only for works of science fiction or some other genre, only submit works from that genre to them.

However, many submission guidelines list things that are not helpful. They could even be misleading and waste your time if you focus on them too much.

For example, a lot of journals indicate they are looking for experimental work, but few define what they mean by that. By reading these same journals, I have concluded that experimental work appears to cover everything from a traditional haiku to a list of unrelated words.

I spent a lot of time when I was first submitting trying to match a journal's style with my submission. I know now that this was a waste of time, as what they said they wanted and what they actually wanted were two different things.

Another example is that many journals ask for you to only submit your best work. I have no clue what they mean by

that. After all, what you think is your best work and what others think is your best work might be completely different things. The poems I often think of as my best are the ones I struggle the most to get published. The poems I think of as ok, are often the ones that get snapped up right away by literary journals. I am not alone in this. Many of my friends have had similar experiences.

As far as I can tell when they say submit only your best work, it usually means the journal is new and unestablished, or the editors have not yet figured out what they are looking for. As a general rule I do not submit my 'best work' to these journals.

Focus on what the journal is looking for in terms of concrete statements about length and genre, and ignore the other information for the most part.

Buying before submitting

Many literary journals need to sell copies to survive. Almost every single print journal I know and a lot of electronic journals try to encourage submitters to buy a copy of their journal before submitting. This is time-consuming. It is also an expensive proposition for a writer,

who might be submitting a single piece or a few pieces of work to 10 or 20 journals.

If you like the look of a journal and it is really up your alley, you should subscribe because you want to. Because you are interested in the work they are publishing, and want to support them.

If you want to get a better idea of the work they have published, many do have a few poems and short stories published online. It is worth spending a few minutes to read one or two of these.

On taking rejections seriously

Don't. When I receive a rejection email, I am not upset. I just update my submission tracker to reflect the rejection. Your work can be rejected for any number of arbitrary or legitimate reasons. If you take each rejection seriously, that will consume a lot of mental energy.

Because I had been an editor of an academic literary journal, I already understood how rejection worked. In my role as an editor I had accepted 7 poems out of the over 1,000 submitted. When I was reading submissions, sometimes I was just so overwhelmed I was not able to

give the poem the amount of time and more importantly, the mental energy it deserved. That is not even taking my personal preferences as a reader into consideration. But that experience helped me not take the rejections I received very seriously.

Instead of thinking about the rejections you have received, focus on submitting as much as possible. There are so many good journals. Take the opportunity the numbers offer. Also, it is good to keep in mind that just because a journal rejects a piece of yours once, that does not mean they are not open to later submissions.

Often, pieces of mine have been accepted by a journal that previously rejected an earlier piece.

Once I submitted to the same journal seven times before they accepted a piece of mine. But I am very glad I kept trying, because over time they have become one of my favorite journals to read. They consistently publish good and engaging work.

Chapter 8: How to Choose Where to Submit Your Work

Choosing where to submit is one of the trickiest propositions as a writer. I know some people who submit their work to a great variety of publications, others who only submit to the most prestigious, and some who only submit to journals they like. Really, where you submit is up to you.

However, there are good guidelines to keep in mind when submitting. You can personalize these as much as you like, and they can change from time to time; mine are constantly in flux. Most of the time when I submit, I do so based on at least one of the following factors:

Do they accept electronic submissions?

I am not much of a letter writer, and hate dealing with stamps. So I generally just submit to journals that accept submissions electronically. I can be much more efficient this way, and can submit to over five journals in an hour. I

also don't have to bother with including any SASE in order to get feedback.

After I started submitting electronically, I noticed several differences with submission by post. For the latter, response times were much slower. It took most journals around six months to send me a response, either by letter or email. In addition, there were a lot more journals overall that never responded. They just never got back to me about my work, even though I included an SASE.

The upside to submitting by mail is that many journals—even established, respected journals—which only accept submissions by mail generally have a much higher acceptance rate, because fewer people submit this way. So that is worth keeping in mind.

Sometimes if a literary journal charges for electronic submissions they still allow mailed submissions for free (although of course there is the cost of printing and postage). If this the case, they make it clear on their website.

Is the journal respected?

Not all journals have a great reputation. Some journals accept too much work, others don't seem to have any quality control, while others treat their writers poorly or don't try to promote their journals at all. Some just want you to pay for a print edition, and others will reflect badly on you if they appear in your biographical statement.

The more you submit, the easier it will be to tell if a journal has a good reputation or not. There are several obvious signs that will help you differentiate.

- Acceptance rate (if the journal has a very high acceptance rate, it is generally not as respected)
- Reviews
- How long it has been around
- Word of mouth
- Who they have previously published—if a lot of the writers they have previously published are names you know, that journal most likely has an excellent reputation.

I submit to many respected journals, but also to journals that aren't particularly well known. However, I would never submit to a journal with a bad reputation.

How much work does the journal accept?

Some journals accept almost everything that is submitted to them, while others accept less than one out of every 100 pieces they receive.

There are two websites that monitor acceptance rates. One is Duotrope and the other is The (Submission) Grinder. They base these acceptance rates on data that submitters give them. Links to both websites are in the additional resources section of this book. I go into more detail about the services both websites provide in Chapter 14.

Most people who use Duotrope and The (Submission) Grinder report every time a piece of work has been accepted or rejected. Because so many thousands of writers use these sites, there is a fair amount of data to work with. Not every journal has acceptance rates listed, but all of the popular ones do (particularly on Duotrope).

Some journals are notoriously hard to get into, such as Tin House, The New Yorker, AGNI, Glimmer Train, The Black Warrior Review, Fence, Gulf Stream, and The Paris Review. Other journals are easy to get into, such as Danse

Macabre, Leaves of Ink, Down in the Dirt, and The MOON magazine.

Most journals fall into the middle, accepting between 5 percent and 30 percent of the work they receive. So keep that in mind when submitting.

Do you like the journal?

If you visit the website of an electronic journal and are overwhelmed by the bad graphics and the clunky interface, don't submit. You don't want your work to be associated with something you aesthetically dislike or find frustrating. The same should be true for print journals.

Whenever you visit a website or browse a magazine, evaluate it—not just in terms of visual aesthetics but also the writing it contains. You don't have to like everything a journal publishes, but you should at least like one of the poems, or one of the stories, before submitting. If it is a print journal and they require you to buy a copy to read the contents, then you have fewer options.

I often submit to brand new journals, ones that have never published a single issue, and some of these journals have

been terrific. Most of the new journals I submitted to have gone on to have great reputations. I took a chance on them, and have seldom regretted it. Often, I will submit to these journals based entirely on website aesthetics. This might sound shallow, but so far it has been a good strategy.

Are you willing to pay submission fees?

This question is becoming more and more important. Increasingly, the most prestigious journals charge submission fees. Sometimes they will waive this fee during certain times a year. At times this fee is just for electronic submissions, but often it is across the board. They will charge a reading fee for every submission you make. This is usually \$3 but it can go as high as \$15.

I do not pay reading fees, and Chapter 15 is devoted to reading fees, so I delve into the issue in more depth there.

Chapter 9: Good Literary Journals for Unpublished Writers

There are not any hard or fast rules on where you should submit when you are starting out. Although certain journals make it clear in their guidelines that they prefer submissions from unpublished writers, this is a rare request. Most journals are happy to publish a writer for the first time, but they are not overtly trying to do so.

Every writer has different goals and ambitions. Some just want to publish their work. They want to get it out into the world and they don't care how prestigious the journal is, or how many authors it accepts. Other authors are only interested in publishers that publish genre. Some new writers just want personal feedback and others want a quick response time.

I really think you can submit your work to any journal that you want. But I do think that it is good to know what you are getting into. Below, I have listed some good places to get started if you are looking for journals that accept most

of what they receive, journals with good reputations, and journals that respond quickly to submissions.

Journals that accept most of what they receive

Some journals accept over half of what they receive.

Acceptance rates change all the time, so realize that over time these journals may become harder to get into. At the time of this publication they all had an over 40 percent acceptance rate.

These are not the only publishers that are easy to get into, but they are a good place to start if your sole goal is to get published in a literary journal.

Make sure you read the guidelines before submitting to know if your work fits. Just because they are approachable, doesn't mean that they will accept angry poetry when they only publish nature poetry!

All of the information used to ascertain if the market is approachable or not was found through research done at the websites [Duotrope](#) and [The \(Submission\) Grinder](#).

The Plum Tree Tavern

They only publish poetry about nature and ecology, and accept a little under half of the work they receive.

The MOON magazine

They publish poetry, nonfiction, and fiction online. Every issue is themed, but they read for several themes at once.

The Story Shack

This is an online journal devoted to publishing illustrated flash fiction. They publish over 60 percent of what is submitted.

Peacock Journal

They publish poetry, nonfiction and fiction.

50-Word Stories

As their name suggests, they publish only 50-word stories. They read submissions every month between the 1st and the 15th of the month. They publish over 50 percent of what is submitted to them.

Down in the Dirt

Down in the Dirt is published as a bound 6"x9" paperback book. They publish fiction and poetry. They have an acceptance rate of 70 percent.

Eskimo Pie

If you are a poet who really hates rejection, submit to this online literary journal. They accept almost 100 percent of what is submitted. They only publish poetry.

Anti-Heroin Chic

Anti-Heroin Chic publishes poetry, fiction and nonfiction.

As they put it,

"Send us your observations.

Send us your heart.

Send us your honesty."

Page & Spine

Page & Spine is an online literary journal that focuses on publishing the work of emerging authors. They accept poems, limericks, micro flash fiction (under 150 words), flash fiction (up to 1,000 words), short stories, articles,

essays, and poems. They accept approximately half of the work they receive.

Mused

An online journal of upbeat and warm fiction, poetry, art, and essays. They accept over half of their submissions.

Literary Yard

Literary Yard is an e-journal that publishes stories, poems, essays and articles. They publish well over half of what they receive.

Quail Bell

They publish a wide variety of writing and visual art. They have a well-designed website and a rather high acceptance rate.

Sick Lit

They publish a wide range of poetry and fiction. All their issues have loosely defined themes.

The most established and respected journals

These journals are very hard to get into. They are considered to be the best and most prestigious journals out there.

However, there is no reason not to start out trying to submit to these journals (as long as you are not submitting your work only there). Set aside a packet or two to submit to the most prestigious journals, and then send your other poems to less competitive journals. You don't have to necessarily send your work to the most approachable ones. Most literary journals fall somewhere in the middle of these two extremes.

Most of the journals on this list accept less than 1 percent of what is submitted to them, so don't take rejection from them personally.

[The Atlantic](#)

The Atlantic is open to submissions of poetry, nonfiction, and fiction. They pay well.

[The New Yorker](#)

The most famous (and most profitable) magazine with a literary bent, The New Yorker is very competitive to get into. However, they accept unsolicited submissions of fiction, poetry, and cartoons. They pay very well.

Poetry

This is the most famous poetry magazine there is. It is published by The Poetry Foundation. The first time you have a poem printed by them, an asterisk appears next to your name to note your appearance as a debut poet with them.

The Sun

The Sun is a fabulous ad-free magazine that has been around for over 40 years and has published so many famous writers, I have a hard time choosing even five. They publish fiction, creative nonfiction, memoir, and poetry. They only accept submissions through the mail. They even pay well.

Rattle

This prestigious print magazine also has a great weekly online feature called Poets Respond, which features poems that are responses to news articles published that week.

One Story and One Teen Story

These related publications publish one story per issue; one publication is aimed at adults, the other at teens. They pay well and have published many established, reputable, bestselling, and award-winning authors. I am counting both journals as one publication for the purpose of this list.

The Paris Review

This venerable print publication accepts only postal submissions. They publish poetry and fiction, as well as interviews, which they are rather famous for. They were founded in 1953 and have published many well-known writers since then. Some famous authors including Adrienne Rich, Philip Roth, V. S. Naipaul and Rick Moody were first published by The Paris Review.

Granta

This print and electronic literary journal publishes great straightforward fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Granta has editions in 12 languages across three continents.

The Virginia Quarterly Review (VQR)

They publish poetry, short fiction, and nonfiction by award winning writers. They pay \$200 per poem, and start at \$1,000 per fiction piece.

Harper's Magazine

Harper's considers unsolicited fiction. It is the second-oldest continuously published monthly magazine in the U.S.

Tin House

This respected print literary journal publishes some of the best contemporary writers, and has excellent distribution. They also have a regular online publication open to shorter work.

McSweeney's Quarterly

Also known as Timothy McSweeney's Quarterly Concern, this literary journal publishes nonfiction and fiction only,

and is reformatted every time it is published. Sometimes it resembles a journal, sometimes a box, sometimes something else entirely. Some of the many writers they have published include Denis Johnson, Jonathan Franzen, Joyce Carol Oates, Jonathan Lethem, and Michael Chabon. The amount they pay authors varies.

[The Threepenny Review](#)

According to Tony Kushner, "Everybody should rush right out and subscribe to The Threepenny Review". This quarterly arts magazine publishes poetry, fiction, memoir and criticism. They have very fast response times. They pay.

[The Collagist](#)

This online-only literary journal publishes fiction, excerpts, poetry, and nonfiction. They are highly respected and have published many contemporary authors that have become part of the establishment.

[The Kenyon Review](#)

They publish short fiction, essays, poetry, plays, excerpts from larger works, and translations of poetry and short

prose. When you submit to their print journal, you are also submitting to their online magazine; both have a large readership.

[A Public Space](#)

They publish great writing and work, everything from novellas to excerpts. They are respected, modern, and compelling. They have an open reading period once a year.

[Jubilat](#)

This is one of the most prestigious poetry-only journals. They are print-only, and do a fabulous job.

[AGNI](#)

This is a great print journal that publishes fiction, nonfiction and poetry. Known for publishing “important new writers early in their careers” (PEN), six of their contributors have gone on to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

[The Missouri Review](#)

This established print journal publishes some of the best nonfiction around; they also publish poetry and fiction.

They do charge for electronic submissions, but postal submissions are free.

[ZYZZYVA](#)

ZYZZYVA has some of the best distribution I have ever seen. If a bookstore sells only three different literary journals, ZYZZYVA is one of those. They have published many famous poets and writers, including Haruki Murakami and Sherman Alexie.

Journals with fast response times

It is good to start out by submitting your work to journals that have fast response times. It is rewarding to hear back from journals within a month, rather than a year, when you have forgotten all about your submission.

Submitting to journals with fast response times helps keep you motivated.

All of these journals respond to submissions within a month.

[Thrush](#)

Thrush is a highly respected poetry journal that responds to most submissions within four days.

[The Aironaut](#)

This is a journal of surrealist, absurdist, and fabulist flash fiction that responds within a week.

[After the Pause](#)

An online journal of poetry and flash fiction that regularly publishes excellent work. They respond within a week.

[The Threepenny Review](#)

The Threepenny Review is a highly revered and paying market that responds within a week—what more can you ask for? They publish poems, short fiction, and nonfiction.

[Radar Poetry](#)

This electronic poetry journal with a visual component responds within two weeks to submissions.

[Bop Dead City](#)

This publisher of short fiction, poetry, and flash fiction responds to most submissions within a week.

The Dark Magazine

The Dark Magazine publishes only dark science fiction, fantasy, and horror short stories. They try to respond to submissions within two days.

Alfie Dog

Alfie Dog is a British literary journal that responds to submissions of prose and poetry within two weeks.

Softblow

This online poetry journal responds to most submissions in less than three days.

Metaphorosis

This literary journal publishes science fiction and fantasy short stories and responds to most submissions within a week. They also pay.

Journals that read submissions blind

A blind submission is one that is submitted to the literary journal in a way that the readers and editors can read all the submissions without knowing the name or anything else about the author who submitted to the journal.

The idea is that it takes away any bias someone might have against or for a particular ethnic heritage, or any other number of things. It hopefully means that your creative work is selected based on its own merits.

Blind submissions are particularly helpful for new authors who don't have previous publications. I had been writing for over a decade by the time I started submitting. But my bio was so thin and unsubstantial that I struggled to find anywhere to place my poems, until I started submitting to journals that read blind. The first two publishers who accepted my work read blind.

If a journal does not read blind the advantage can sometimes go to authors who have published a lot more work, even if the work they submit to that literary journal is not very good.

The literary journal I was editor for read blind, and I ended up rejecting a very famous author.

[Spry](#)

This is an online literary journal that publishes poetry and prose.

[The Perch](#)

Produced by the Yale Program for Recovery and Community Health, The Perch is a non-academic literary journal dedicated to publishing poetry, prose, visual art, and music related to mental health. They see The Perch as a place from which readers can gain perspective, and then fly off to new altitudes. They are interested in work that explores mental health in all of its dimensions—physical, emotional, and spiritual—from both personal and societal vantage points.

[Burningword Literary Journal](#)

Burningword Literary Journal accepts poetry, flash fiction, and flash nonfiction submissions for publication. They have electronic and print versions. They refer to their reading process as double-blind.

POUi

They have only one agenda “to be a vehicle for new and exciting writing”. They publish a particularly international group of writers.

Fractal

Fractal is an online literary magazine founded in 2012, edited by students at the University of Southern California. They publish poetry, fiction, and nonfiction with the aim of disturbing the status quo. They like writing that keeps people awake at night, and writing that romances readers with a love for language. Though unquestionably edgy, Fractal publishes writing in various forms and aesthetics.

The Matador Review

They say their purpose is to promote alternative work from both art and literature, and to encourage the new wave of respect for online publications. This new literary journal seems to be doing a great job publishing challenging and exciting work. They publish fiction, nonfiction, flash fiction, visual art, and poetry.

Chantwood Magazine

Chantwood is an online magazine dedicated to publishing great short stories. They believe that great fiction starts with great characters, so they are looking for unforgettable heroes and anti-heroes in never-before-seen settings. They publish a wide variety of fiction: sci-fi, fantasy, speculative fiction, romance, literary fiction, historical fiction and more. And, while the magazine focuses on short stories, they also publish poetry.

[Into The Void](#)

Into The Void is a UK-based literary journal that publishes experimental literary work of poetry and prose. They publish print and online issues every couple of months.

[Toyon](#)

Toyon is a multilingual journal of literature and art that is edited and produced by Humboldt State University. They publish work in English and Spanish. They also accept reprints.

[Radar](#)

Radar is an online poetry journal that pairs art with the poetry they publish. The editors talk about how they read

all submissions blind in their interview with the Poetry Society of America [here](#).

Muzzle Magazine

Poems originally published in Muzzle have gone on to be selected for Best American Poetry, The Pushcart Prize, Best of the Net, and Verse Daily.

Chapter 10: Beginner Mistakes You Can Avoid Making

The following mistakes are not all my own. As an editor, I have seen all of these mistakes among incoming submissions. You would most likely not make many of the mistakes listed below, but these are good to keep in mind, just in case. Some of these mistakes involve specific aspects of literary journal culture and can be easy to make as a new submitter.

Overly long cover letters

The first mistake is to have overly long cover letters. I already gave you a sample letter, but I really want to stress this point. When I was an editor I received several actual job cover letters with and as poetry submissions. This information was not needed and not read, but made it clear that those submissions were from people who did not know how the system worked.

Not submitting more work when requested

Another common mistake, and an easy one to make, is to not submit your work to a journal that requests to see more of your work. If editors really like your work but are not sure about the particular poems or versions of the writing you sent in, they may send you a rejection letter requesting to see more work or to see a different edit of the submitted work. Take these personal requests very seriously. Editors do not send them out casually. You should make sure to submit your work to this journal again.

Violating the journal's rules

One of the biggest mistakes new submitters make is that after their work is accepted by a literary journal, they continue to post that accepted work online. This is considered to be impolite and also violates the informal code of conduct or the formal contract many journals have.

Once your work has been published by the journal, the rights to the poem or story return to you, sometimes

immediately and sometimes six months later. At that time, you can decide if you should or should not self-publish it on your website or submit it to journals that accept reprints. Even if you just publish it on your website, remember to give credit to the journal that originally published it.

Querying too soon or too frequently

Always remember to be patient. Most of these literary journals are run by volunteers who are unpaid and do this in their spare time. Querying an editor a couple times a month, or even a year, to find out if your work has been accepted is most likely not going to help the situation.

Making assumptions about the journal

One of the mistakes I myself have made was to assume something about the size of the journal. Once, after my work was accepted I wrote back to the editor; we had a mutual friend in common and I mentioned her in my reply. Unfortunately, that editor never saw my email.

Another editor had taken their place. The awkward reply I received from the new editor, a complete stranger, was not an experience worth repeating. Make sure that you never ignore any clear guidelines set out by the journal. If they tell you to format your work a particular way, do it. They probably have a good, legitimate reason. Many journals receive so many submissions every month that it is hard to keep track of everything properly unless these guidelines are followed. They have every right to ignore your work, and many do so if you do not follow their guidelines.

Some journals have a huge staff of readers and editors, others are just one person. Some journals, particularly ones associated with academic journals, have a high staff turnover rate, with the editors and readers changing every semester or year. Other journals have had the same main editors for over two decades. It is always safest to assume that the editorial staff do not know who you are, even if you have been published by that journal before.

Submit simultaneously respectfully

If you submit your work simultaneously to more than one journal at a time, you have to make sure to go about it in the correct manner. Most contemporary journals in the U.S. are open to simultaneous submissions. If a press does not mention simultaneous submissions, it is safe to assume that they accept them.

If a journal makes a direct statement that they do not accept simultaneously submitted work, it is up to you whether to submit simultaneously or not. Most of the established authors I know do, anyway.

The most important thing that you can do is report when your work is accepted elsewhere. Say a journal accepts one of your poems or a short story that you have submitted to 10 other places. You then have to write those 10 other places to withdraw the piece.

If you submitted through the manager Submittable, you can withdraw the piece using the same system. It is very easy to do, although a little time consuming. If you submitted more than one piece and only one was accepted by another

journal, you can tell the other publications of this situation. This is the right thing to do, and should ensure that you are on good terms with the editors whose magazines you submit to. It is the responsible way to simultaneously submit.

Be polite

You should always be polite. Since you never know who will be receiving your work, who will be reading it, or how many people will be reading it, it always pays to be polite.

The literary community is a small one, and the more you submit to journals the more you will realize that everyone knows someone who is connected to you or connects deeper into the community. Comments written in jest in emails can easily be misconstrued, so be careful with that. Also, shooting off an angry email after receiving a form submission letter will get you remembered, and not for the right reasons.

It is better to be boring and polite than to accidentally insult someone. This works both ways. Journals that

have not handled work well or have had rude editors tend to be known and avoided by the writing community at large.

Don't submit to just one journal

The worst mistake that most authors make when they first start out is that they submit to a very prestigious literary journal or magazine. My use of singular here is deliberate.

Most authors start out by submitting to only one publication. That literary journal or magazine is usually extremely prestigious and competitive. The New Yorker is a first magazine that most writers submit to. And Tin House or Rattle are common first literary journals to submit to. Even if you are a writer not familiar with literary journals or magazines, you probably know these names.

These journals accept far less than 1 percent of what is submitted to them. That does not mean that one shouldn't submit to them. There is nothing to lose and much to gain by submitting to a journal or magazine that is prestigious or well known.

The problem is this, the first-time submitter usually only submits to one well known journal. Just the one. Then they wait for a response. Some journals respond quickly, but many of the established ones take six months to a year.

These places all accept simultaneous submissions, so authors could submit the same work elsewhere during this time, or those same authors could submit other work elsewhere to increase their chances of having a piece accepted. They should probably submit other work to a lesser known journal or two (or 30, if they are really serious).

Most don't. I didn't when I first started out. What I did was wait almost a year for The New Yorker to reject the three poems that I submitted to them. That was a year's worth of potential publication that I lost, for no good reason. I could have been submitting elsewhere at the same time.

Don't take this as discouragement against submitting to The New Yorker. Take this as encouragement to submit to The New Yorker, Rattle, Tin House, and at least five other lesser known literary journals.

Don't make the same mistake I did. Start submitting today, but don't stop with one journal. Keep going.

Submit often. That is the best advice I can give any writer who is new to the world of publishing.

Chapter 11: Three Obvious Mistakes

New Poets Make

I should clarify the phrase “new poets” as used in this context. What I mean is poets new to publishing their work in literary journals.

I actually made these mistakes for the first decade I wrote poetry. I did not understand why they were mistakes. I didn't understand why they frustrated editors and fellow writers. Now I do.

When you are used to reading poetry closely, every word, every line break, each capitalization – they all count, so any mistakes within the poem distracts and throws the reader out of the poem. Whenever I guest edit a journal I try not to just dismiss poems containing these errors, but it can be hard not to. After all, these mistakes make it clear that the poet is not necessarily paying attention to detail. As a submitting poet you want to make it clear that details matter to you.

Capitalization at the beginning of every line

If you read poems by Shakespeare and Emily Dickinson, or other works by historic poets, the first letter of the first word on every line of the poem is capitalized. It was the way poems were written, historically. In the world of contemporary poetry, it is rarely done. Unfortunately, in the modern world of poetry capitalizing the first letter on the first word of every line usually means that your word processor automatically capitalized those words for you.

When a poet or an editor gets used to reading poetry closely, everything in the poem is examined and taken into consideration. All of those automatically capitalized words are distracting. They don't serve the poem, and are not something the poet intended to do, but are just there. Usually, their biggest function is to tell the poetry editor or reader that you are new to this, and did not notice.

The good news is that you can turn this function off easily. When you are in Word, go to Tools and then to AutoCorrect Options. On the AutoCorrect tab, deselect the Capitalize First Letter of Sentences check box and click OK.

Out of the three mistakes, this is the most distracting and the biggest tip-off to established poets and editors that you are new to submitting.

Punctuation at the end of every line

Line breaks are difficult. Figuring out where to make line breaks can take me hours. But a lot of people just make the line breaks after punctuation like this:

I love roses,
tulips,
and you.

It is easy to spot in this example, but this problem is often hidden by longer lines. Many poets just don't realize what they are doing. Also this is important to stress, sometimes the right place for a line break is after punctuation, just as long as you are not doing it on the end of every line. [This article](#) is a good starting place in terms of thinking about line breaks.

Sporadic punctuation

You can write a poem without any punctuation. That is not as accepted as writing poems with punctuation, but it is more accepted than writing a poem with sporadic punctuation. What do I mean by sporadic punctuation? I mean this:

All of the moons, beamed down on us
a cascade of light in the darkness

There is one comma but no periods in this example.
Sporadic punctuation can be done in many ways.
Sometimes there is one period in a poem of 25 lines.

Sometimes the poet uses line breaks instead of commas,
which only works if you are avoiding punctuation entirely.

Conclusion

If you've made these mistakes in the past, as I have, they are all relatively easy to change. Editors are often quick to make judgments, casting aside poems because of the smallest errors. By avoiding these mistakes, you are giving your poetry the chance it deserves.

Chapter 12: 32 Literary Journals that Pay Their Writers

“It is a sad fact about our culture that a poet can earn much more money writing or talking about his art than he can by practicing it.” W.H. Auden

As someone who makes their living writing about writing and publishing, I can attest to how truthful Auden's quote is. It is hard making a living as a writer, but it is even harder making a living as a poet or an author of short fiction.

Many literary journals do not pay their writers. This is because most are projects of passion, are not for profit, or are run by an individual or a small group of people who love to write and read, but do not necessarily have a lot of money. Many of these journals are run by schools with underfunded English departments. I would say that over 75 percent of literary journals do not pay their writers. I have no problem with that, but it is nice to be paid occasionally.

For your reading pleasure are 30 literary journals that do pay. They may not be the most prestigious journals

(although some of them are), and all are not open to submissions right now, but all of them do pay their authors. Some pay well and others pay a token amount.

The Threepenny Review

We have reviewed this literary journal before, so you can learn more of the details by reading that review [here](#). The Threepenny Review is one of the most respected print journals out there and they also pay their writers \$200 per poem or \$400 per short story. They are primarily interested in short stories and poems.

Escape Pod

Escape Pod publishes all of its stories in audio and text formats. They are a science fiction market but as they say in their submission guidelines, “our mandate is fun.” They allow some flexibility to exist within the genre and have published the occasional steampunk or superhero tale. But they are not interested in fantasy, magic realism, or stories that contain more than a tinge of horror. They pay \$100 for reprints and more for original work. Read our full review [here](#).

Banshee

Banshee, a print literary journal from Ireland, is accepts submissions of poetry, fiction, flash fiction, and creative nonfiction. All authors published in the journal will receive payment, as well as a copy of the magazine. Read our full review [here](#).

Frontier

Frontier Poetry accepts submissions year-round. They accept work from both new and emerging poets who have not published more than one full-length collection of poetry. Authors of any number of chapbooks and story collections may submit. Frontier pays poets \$50 for each published poem, up to \$150. To learn more, read our full review [here](#).

Clarksworld

Clarkesworld Magazine is a Hugo and World Fantasy Award-winning science fiction and fantasy magazine that publishes short stories, interviews, articles and audio fiction on a monthly basis. They pay very well. Read our full review [here](#).

The Rush

The Rush is a new online literary magazine produced by the students of Mount Saint Mary's University in Los Angeles. They pay writers, and are seeking poetry, fiction, nonfiction, visual art, and photography in all forms and styles. They hope to publish high-velocity work that captures the rush of human experience. Any topic is fair game, but they don't accept work about graphic or gratuitous violence or sex. Read our full review [here](#).

The Malahat Review

The Malahat Review is an established and respected print magazine based out of Canada. They purchase first world serial rights and, upon acceptance, pay \$40 CAD per published page, plus a one-year subscription. Copyright reverts to the author upon publication.

Shimmer

Shimmer publishes speculative fiction. We have reviewed them before [here](#). They pay their authors 5¢ a word, with a minimum payment of \$10.

Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine

This paying and competitive magazine publishes short stories and novellas in the mystery genre.

Breath and Shadow

They publish only authors who have disabilities, although they define that term broadly. The pay scale is \$5-15 for poetry, \$15-25 for fiction, and \$15-25 for nonfiction.

Contrary

Contrary publishes short stories, flash fiction, essays, and poetry. They pay \$20 per author per issue—the length of the piece does not factor into the payment.

Workers Write

They focus on publishing working class literature. They want to collect the stories and poems about jobs that define who we are as individuals and communities. They pay between \$5 and \$50, depending on length and rights.

Occult Detective Quarterly

Occult Detective Quarterly is devoted to those intrepid

investigators who investigate the weird, exotic and bizarre. They publish fiction and nonfiction and they pay.

[Upstreet](#)

A respected literary journal. They offer between \$50 and \$150 for poems, and between \$50 and \$250 for short stories or essays. If your work is accepted, you will also receive a contributor copy.

[The Sun](#)

This is a wonderful, advertisement-free magazine. They pay from \$300 to \$2,000 for essays and interviews, \$300 to \$1,500 for fiction, and \$100 to \$200 for poetry. They also give contributors a complimentary one-year subscription to *The Sun*.

[THEMA](#)

This literary journal pays \$25 for short stories and \$10 for flash fiction and poetry.

[Qu](#)

Qu, the literary journal of Queens University, pays \$100 per prose piece and \$50 per poem.

Poetry

Poetry Magazine was founded in Chicago by Harriet Monroe in 1912. The magazine established a reputation early on by publishing many important poems of T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, and many others. They pay a minimum of \$300 per poem.

Spark

Spark: A Creative Anthology offers contributors 2¢ per word or \$20 per work for unpublished writing. They publish poetry and short stories.

AGNI

This is a respected and established journal. They are published by Boston University. Pay is reportedly 1-4.9¢ per word for fiction and \$5-\$50 for poetry.

Bennington Review

Bennington Review has recently been re-founded. They publish two print issues a year and they pay their writers. Prose writers receive up to \$200, and poetry writers are paid \$20 per poem.

[Asimov's Science Fiction](#)

Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine is one of the better-paying markets there is for science fiction content. They predominantly favor character-oriented short stories and poetry. They pay 8-10¢ per word for short stories up to 7,500 words, and 8¢ for each word over 7,500.

[Cricket Media's Literary Journals](#)

Their flagship publication, billed as “The New Yorker for Kids,” publishes poetry and fiction aimed at 9-14-year-olds. Read our full review [here](#). However, they also have other magazines called Babybug (for children 6 months to 3 years), Ladybug (3-6 years), Spider (6-9 years), and Cicada (for ages 14 and up). They pay well.

[Confrontation](#)

Confrontation is an established and respected literary journal that publishes prose and poetry. They pay \$50-125

for short stories and \$25-75 for poetry. They accept very few submissions.

One Teen Story

This literary journal publishes one short story for teens a month. They have published a variety of bestselling authors and have a good subscriber base. They pay \$500. Read our full review of them [here](#).

One Story

One Story publishes one short story every three weeks. They have a print and e-versions of the story that they publish. Often, the published story is accompanied by an interview with the author of the story. They pay \$500 per story.

The New Yorker

It would be strange if such a list did not mention The New Yorker, which is legendary for how well it pays its writers, among other things. The New Yorker does not release the exact amount they pay on their website, although they pay very well. It is more a popular magazine than a literary journal, and publication in the New Yorker can

greatly help one's reputation as a writer. Often it leads to book deals and many other publications. Of course, because of this, it is very hard to get a piece accepted by the New Yorker. Many famous authors still try for years. It is easy to submit online, and a great opportunity.

The Wanderer

The Wanderer is an online poetry journal, launched in April 2016 as a weekly feature in Harlot Magazine. Now, as Harlot has evolved into a monthly e-zine, The Wanderer has also evolved into a new online magazine, distinct from Harlot. They pay \$25 per poem. Read our review [here](#).

The Forge

They pay between \$25 and \$50 for nonfiction and fiction.

Grain Magazine

Published four times per year, Grain Magazine is an internationally acclaimed literary journal that publishes engaging, surprising, eclectic, and challenging writing and art by Canadian and international writers and artists. They pay a minimum of \$25 and a maximum of \$250.

The Paris Review

This very respected print journal only accepts submissions via the post. They do not disclose the amount they pay, only say that they do.

Analog

This is a respected science fiction journal that publishes everything, from short stories to novellas. They pay well.

Chapter 13: Literary Journals That Publish Genre Writing

Most literary journals are interested in literary work, by which they mean, not genre work. The [dictionary definition](#) of genre is “a category of artistic composition, as in music or literature, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter.”

However, in the context of writing, genre can refer to poetry, prose or nonfiction in terms of form. Or it can be a subject matter classification referring to science fiction, romance, mystery, or various other established types of stories.

Most literary journals assume that you will not submit genre work to them, because many don't consider it to be literary. This leaves many genre writers with fewer options in terms of short story and poetry publication. However, there are journals that just publish genre work.

The majority of these focus on science fiction and mystery. But there are also horror, western, romance, fantasy,

thriller, and other genre publishers on this list. We tried to focus on literary journals that specialized, not ones that were open to every genre in the book.

Not all of these literary journals are currently open to submissions. A link to their website or our full review of the publisher is embedded in their name. The genres they accept are mentioned in the brief description.

Unlike most literary journals, the majority of these pay.

The Five-Two

Always open to submissions, this online journal publishes crime poetry.

Romance Magazine

They publish romance short stories, but not erotica. They are open to most subgenres of romance and they pay based on royalties.

The Western Online

The Western Online is dedicated to everything western. The type of story most likely to be published there is the traditional post-Civil War western.

Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine

This paying and competitive magazine publishes short stories and novellas in the mystery genre.

Betty Fedora

Betty Fedora is a feminist crime fiction magazine that publishes fiction and nonfiction. They publish great work in a wide variety of subgenres, from noir to thriller.

Analog

This is a respected science fiction journal that publishes everything from short stories to novellas. They pay well.

Cowboy Jamboree

They publish short fiction and flash fiction in the western genre.

Suspense Magazine

All stories must be in the suspense/thriller/mystery genre.

Apex

Apex is a beautiful publication that publishes science fiction, fantasy, and horror. They pay 6¢ a word for everything up to 7,500 words in length.

Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine

They publish every kind of mystery short story: the psychological suspense tale, the deductive puzzle, the private eye case—the gamut of crime and detection, from the realistic to the more imaginative.

Strange Horizons

They have a very low acceptance rates, pay professional rates, and most importantly, publish very good stories in the science fiction genre.

Crimson Streets

They publish various genres (such as noir) in the pulp style. They pay.

The Dark

They have a very quick response time, sometimes within a day, but often within two weeks. They focus on publishing dark science fiction, surrealism, magic realism, and fiction with elements of the fantastic mixed in.

Gamut

Gamut is an online magazine of neo-noir: speculative fiction with a literary bent. They publish fiction, nonfiction, and poetry, and pay professional rates.

Mystery Weekly Magazine

Mystery Weekly Magazine presents crime and mystery short stories by some of the world's best established and emerging mystery writers. They run the gamut from cozy to hardboiled fiction. They pay their writers.

Stinkwaves Magaizine

They publish mostly action adventure, fantasy and science fiction stories aimed at young adults.

Lightspeed

Lightspeed is an established monthly electronic publisher of science fiction and fantasy writing. Many of the works that have been published there have gone on to be nominated for prestigious genre awards, including the Hugo. They pay all of their authors.

Planetary Stories

Planetary Stories is dedicated to publishing space adventure fiction of the type a pulp magazine reader of the 1940s would find in Thrilling Wonder Stories, Astonishing Stories, Super Science—and especially in the legendary Planet Stories.

Clarkesworld Magazine

They publish science fiction and fantasy works in print and eMagazine editions. They are highly respected, and pay professional rates.

Andromeda Spaceways

They accept science fiction, fantasy and supernatural horror works up to 10,000 words in length. They accept poetry and nonfiction works as well. They pay all their authors.

Spinetingler Magazine

Spinetingler publishes stories that could, within the broadest definitions of genre possible, be categorized as crime, mystery, thriller, suspense or horror. They offer token payments.

Chapter 14: How to Find Literary

Journals

Now that you know a little more about submitting, you're probably curious about where to find listings of literary journals. There are a lot of literary journal listings out there, and some are better than others.

Authors Publish does not have a formal list of journals at this point, but we review one literary journals a week and regularly post curated lists of journals. In our longer reviews, we include submission guideline details, acceptance rates, and payment information.

The four biggest listing services all have pros and cons, but all are worth using. Below, I review all four.

Duotrope

Duotrope lists almost all the journals that are open to free submissions. They also list journals that involve a fee, but they always try to make note of that. However, journals are

making that harder for Duotrope to keep track of, by charging sometimes and not others, or charging for some ways to submit and not others.

To find journals on Duotrope you can sign up for their weekly market update, which is an email that informs you of what journals have opened and which ones have closed. You can also use their search engine and their statistics page for more detailed information.

There are many ways to find new markets on Duotrope. In my opinion their statistics page is the most helpful place to start. Here, they list the journals that have the highest and lowest acceptance rates. They also list the journals that are slowest to respond and those that are the quickest. These are all helpful statistics to know.

I also like using their advanced search features which allow you to eliminate all journals with high acceptance rates efficiently. It can also be used to find a journal with a particular aesthetic. For a while I was having much better luck submitting to UK-based journals and so I used the search feature to show me only those.

If a journal takes more than a year on average to respond, I won't submit to them. If a journal accepts over 20 percent of what is submitted to them, I will not send them my work. It is hard to determine these two things if you don't have a Duotrope subscription.

Duotrope is a wealth of information. You can monitor the journals you submit to there, and use their handy submission tracker to keep track of where you have submitted your work.

It also provides interviews with the publishers, informs you on how much they pay, and provides various other kinds of information.

Unfortunately, years ago Duotrope started charging \$5 a month (or \$50 a year) to use most of its services. You can browse a scaled back version of the site without paying, but to see the truly useful information you have to be a subscriber. They often offer free trial memberships for 30 days, so if you are curious, you can always try that option.

I pay the \$5 a month and do not regret it, but honestly it depends how much you end up submitting. I also think the

information they now have is skewed because it is primarily used by established poets in the US, whereas before, it had more variable contributors. Because all the information they provide is based on user submitted reports, the shift in users because of the paywall has affected (although it is hard to tell how much) the overall quality of the site.

The (Submission) Grinder

The (Submission) Grinder is a submission tracker that is the free alternative to Duotrope. It is run by Diabolical Plots, which is a genre zine that has been around since 2008, although The (Submission) Grinder has only been around for a few years.

They publish statistics about acceptance rates and response times just like Duotrope does, except they are a free service. However, the feedback is not at the same level as fewer people use their service at this point. Hopefully that will change over time.

Most markets listed with them have one or two reports, not dozens or hundreds. Only major journals have more than a

dozen submission reports at this point. However, that is about 10 more reports than they had at this time last year, so they do seem to be getting more contributors, and the quality of information appears to be improving.

To see response times and acceptance rates on The (Submission) Grinder, you do not even have to sign up for the service; you can just browse the website. In order to contribute to the website and help improve it, you have to sign up.

Poets & Writers

Poets & Writers is a magazine that also has a website filled with resources. All of their resources are free and easy to use. In my experience, the most helpful resource they provide is their literary magazine listing service.

They do not list as many journals as Duotrope, and most of the journals they list are based out of the U.S. However, they still list over 2,000 journals.

You can look through the listings alphabetically by title, or apply search filters. When they list a journal, they specify what kind of creative writing they accept, if they accept

simultaneous submissions, and whether they accept electronic submissions. They also tell you if they pay, even if it is only a contributor copy. They also list the dates the journal is open to submissions, as well as if it is an electronic or print journal. However, they do not list if the journal charges reading fees or not (which is important).

This is a lot of helpful information, but nothing is given about response times or acceptance statistics. You still have to visit the literary journals' individual websites to find out the details of their submission guidelines. Poets & Writers also does not update their website as frequently as Duotrope, so much of their information is out of date.

The Review Review

The Review Review is a review of literary journals. They write up thoughtful, in-depth reviews of literary journals but also have a simpler, to-the-point listing of literary journals.

The Review Review doesn't have nearly as many journals on their site as the other services I mention, but the information they do have is easy to navigate and well

organized. You can look at it alphabetically or by using a search tool. You can only look at paying markets if you like.

Submittable Discover

Submittable, the submission manager widely used by many literary journals, launched a page a few months ago where they list markets.

The new page has a very easy to use filter system so you don't even have to be tempted by the names of any journals that charge fees. You just select the large 'no submission fees' button on the top of the right side, under the search bar.

They call this service Discover, and it is still in Beta (meaning they know not all of the kinks in the system are worked out yet).

The main limitation of this new service is they just list sites that use Submittable, but that is a lot of places now. They also don't have any additional information regarding response times or acceptance rates, which would have been

nice, because they clearly have the capacity to track such things.

The other issue is that people use Submittable for all sorts of things, from literary conference panels to film festivals, so you are not just seeing calls for written submission, although the title usually makes it clear what they are looking for.

As well as by fee, you can also search by deadline, or lack of deadline. You must open a free Submittable account to access all this information, but you will need to have one anyway to submit to any of the journals listed on the site. If you have submitted to more than two journals in the last half decade, you will probably already have an account. Even The New Yorker uses Submittable now.

Chapter 15: Paying to Submit

I have submitted my work to well over 300 different journals in the past two years, and many more before that. When I first started submitting seven years ago, one or two journals charged writers a couple of dollars to submit their work for consideration.

This fee did not cover anything else. It did not ensure that the writer's work was considered more seriously, nor did it guarantee editorial feedback—all it did was allow the writer to submit their work for consideration to be published.

Most journals back then justified this choice by saying that they were charging writers only \$2-3, and it that cost writers about that much to submit via post anyway. I still took issue with that argument. After all, it is one thing to pay the post office if submitting by mail is the only way, it is another thing to pay a literary journal to open email, read it, and more often than not, reject your work with a generic email.

I am not opposed to supporting literary journals. I subscribe to a number of them, but they should not be making their money by charging authors directly without offering anything tangible in return. On that same note, I will only enter a contest in which I am rewarded with a subscription to the magazine or with a copy of the winning book.

In the last two years, there has been a solid shift toward charging authors submission fees. Most magazines that charge authors are not going to pay these authors, even if they accept their work. This is a real issue for me.

At first, only older, more established journals were charging readers to submit electronically. It was strange because most of these journals would not consider work submitted by mail, so paying was truly your only option.

Some journals said this was because submission services that save time for editors, like Submittable, charged the magazines to use them. Still, that did not make a huge difference. Many journals managed to skirt this issue by selling people copies, having Kickstarters with rewards writers actually wanted, etc. Also, they could always use email for submissions, particularly for a smaller journal.

A few months ago, I saw brand new journals with no reputation charging readers \$15 to submit poetry or short fiction and nonfiction. This issue has gotten out of hand.

The tipping point has still not been reached. You can still submit to the vast majority of journals for free. I am hoping it stays that way, but am not assuming that it will. We have gotten a lot closer to the tipping point in the last year, particularly when it comes to more established journals. Around 1/4th of them now always charge reading fees.

One of the ways that I push against this new movement of charging to submit is by not submitting to journals that do charge, and have no fee-free options (for instance, some journals have certain reading periods when they do not charge a fee to read, or postal submissions are free, or have a limited number of entries free on their submission managers each month). I also never review them. *Authors Publish* only publishes reviews of journals that do not charge for submissions.

Even though I no longer submit to Crazyhorse and many other esteemed journals, there are still hundreds of prestigious journals that I can submit to without paying a premium to have my work considered.

One of the additional factors that complicates this whole issue is solicited submissions. Many of the more prestigious journals already solicit many of their submissions from poets that they admire. These poets generally do not submit through normal avenues. They never pay to have their work considered and it is almost always accepted.

Ultimately, you will have to make your own mind up about paying to submit to journals. It is your money, after all. But in the meantime, I will continue to review excellent journals that do not charge writers a fee to have their work considered, or which have free submission alternatives.

Chapter 16: Are Contests Worth the Fee?

As an author, editor, professional submitter, and poet, I end up talking about contests a great deal. A lot of writers enter contests, but as a general rule we do not review contests on *Authors Publish*. This is because there is an entry fee attached to most contests.

Many literary journals fund their work and promote their literary journals by running contests, although small presses also host contests.

The first time I ever participated in a contest I was not entering it; instead, I was an intern for a small press that was hosting a contest. This event took place a number of years ago, and this press is no longer in business. My job as an unpaid intern was to read approximately 400 manuscripts. I had a little over two months to reduce these 400 manuscripts to 10. I was the only one to read these 400 manuscripts, even though on the official contest guidelines said that each manuscript would be reviewed by a group of

qualified readers. The submission fee was \$30 for each manuscript.

I was told that once I reached the 10 final manuscripts I was to hand them over to my boss, the head of the press, to read. After he read the final 10 he would hand over the final three to a famous writer who was the official judge (and who was being paid a large sum).

However, at the last moment, my boss specified several things he wanted to make sure would be included in the chapbook. They were very specific details about the gender of the author and the topic of the poems. One of the manuscripts I had discarded fell into this category exactly, so I removed one other manuscript from the pile of 10 and put this one in instead, even though it was not particularly good.

This was the manuscript that ended up winning.

All contests are not like this. Many first book contests are highly regulated and have large teams of readers. These contests are usually very prestigious and highly competitive. I have entered a number of these contests

because I understand that as a poet, the best way to land a good publisher for your first book is by winning a contest. Don't assume the judge of the contest will ever see your work, as most judges only read what the readers deem to be the top manuscripts or pieces. This means the readers have a great deal of control over who wins.

There are a number of scams aimed at writers trying to publish manuscripts. Many presses will agree to publish your book even if it is not a winner, but only if you presell a large number of copies. Finishing Line Press is particularly notorious for this.

Many literary journal contests are expensive, but the competition is less steep. Sometimes they have so few entries in the contest that they struggle to find a winner they can print. When academic journals, and particularly student-run journals are involved, the roles of the readers become a little murkier. Often close friends of the editor end up winning, because theirs is the work that reaches the judge. However, you should not dismiss contests out of hand, but take the following factors into consideration.

How prestigious is it?

Make sure that if you're willing to pay to enter the contest, the payoff is worth it. If it is run by a journal that publishes everyone, even if they have a well-known judge attached, you don't particularly want to be associated with that contest. In addition, contests from less established presses are not necessarily regulated in any way. The more famous the journal, is the more they have to lose if their contest is discovered as being run incorrectly.

How expensive is it?

Short story and poem contests can cost up to \$50 to enter; book contests can be over \$100. The competition for contests with this big of an entry fee is less steep; however, they also tend to be associated with less established organizations that know they will have fewer submitters.

Most short story and poem contests cost less than \$20 and most full-length contests cost between \$25 and \$35.

As a general rule I never spend over \$35 to submit to a manuscript contest, and never over \$15 to submit to a short story or poetry contest. Most established and reputable contests would never charge a fee higher than the numbers I have listed.

What is the prize?

Make sure you really want to win the first prize. It is also even better if you would be happy with the second or third prize, or a runner-up status. If all those rewards look good to you, then it may be worthwhile submitting.

Do you get anything for the entry fee?

Of course it would be nice to win, but you cannot assume that you will win, or even be placed. Therefore, in the ideal world you will receive something for just entering the contest. Some literary journals that have contests have an option: if you pay for a subscription to the literary journal, you will be able to enter the contest for free, or vice versa. Either way, you get a year's worth of a journal you probably would want to subscribe to anyway. Some small presses give you a copy of the winning book as compensation.

What about your rights?

The guidelines to the contest should make it very clear what rights they are expecting. If it is a contest for short fiction or poetry, first publication rights if you win are par for the course. However they should make it clear that they

only take rights if you win or place in the contest. They should also make it clear how long they expect to have the sole rights to your piece. One anthology I saw recently asked for sole rights to the story for five years after publishing your work, which is a long time, particularly if you want to include that piece in a longer collection. With manuscript publishers it gets trickier, because after the contest, there is still the matter of the actual contract for your book and so on, unless they have asked for your rights automatically, and that can be a clear warning sign.

It comes down to knowing what you are comfortable with, and knowing what you are not. Also you should always read what they are asking for in terms of rights very carefully.

Chapter 17: Anthologies – Another Publication Option

Anthologies are books that collect work by a variety of authors. Usually the glue that sticks anthologies together is theme. Most anthologies have one. The theme could be very broad and open to interpretation like ‘Beer,’ or very precise, like ‘Poems about meeting Bob Dylan in the 1980s.’ Sometimes the subject matter is not what ties together the poems, but something about the author. There are anthologies of female-only poets, for example, and anthologies of short fiction written only by first-generation Americans.

Some anthologies include a variety of writing, including poems, flash fiction and nonfiction. Others are only open to one kind of writing, such as flash fiction or epistolary essays.

Many major publishers put together anthologies, but so do a number of small presses. Two of the anthologies I have been published in had editors attached, but no presses

initially. After the editors had gathered a certain amount of work on the subject, they found a publisher who was interested in publishing the subject matter. One of the anthologies I was published in this way was picked up by the biggest publishing company on the planet. So don't dismiss an anthology just because it does not have a publisher attached, particularly if the editors involved are well known.

It is great to get your work published in anthologies for a variety of reasons. One is that most journals publish at least two issues a year, so even if a journal that publishes you has good distribution in bookstores or a steady following online, your work will only be featured in an issue for a small window of time. If an anthology is picked up by bookstores or libraries, it will be held and featured for a longer period of time. The first anthology I was ever published in came out over five years ago, and I still see it regularly in stores.

The second reason is that anthologies are much more likely to be in brick and mortar bookstores in the first place. Some bookstores carry literary journals, but usually only a select few. They carry a lot more anthologies. Libraries also love

to buy anthologies. They are also more likely to be used as teaching material in schools.

Anthologies look great in your publication history. They show that you are not just published in literary journals, that your work is likely to be on a bookshelf somewhere in an anthology. Manuscript publishers tend to take them more seriously.

So why isn't this book all about anthologies? For one thing, far fewer anthologies are published a year than literary journals. This means that there are a lot fewer opportunities for writers to be published in anthologies. That does not mean anthologies are necessarily more competitive, though. Because anthologies are usually about one theme, they do not generally receive as many submissions as a journal that is open to writing on any theme. The more specific the theme, the fewer submissions they receive.

Also, because journals are published on a regular basis and there are thousands of them, there are a lot of different listing services for them. Because anthologies tend to be open to submissions for only a short period of time (between four months and a year, generally) and are

then closed to new submissions forever, they are harder to list and harder for potential submitters to find in time.

Some websites listed in the additional resources section of this book, like Duotrope and The (Submission) Grinder, routinely list upcoming anthologies.

If you check them regularly, you should see a couple of opportunities every month.

The other main issue is the theme of the anthology.

Sometimes you have a poem or short story that fits the theme perfectly, sometimes you have to write one from scratch (although unless you really like the theme, this is not the most practical option). Finding the right anthology for your work can take a fair amount of time, but it can certainly pay off.

Chapter 18: The Next Step

In the early chapters of *Submit Publish Repeat* I talk about how submitting to literary journals creates a history of publication, and how important that is for getting longer work published.

In this chapter, I outline some of the next steps you can take after publishing your work in literary journals. The great thing about publishing your work in literary journals is that the rights return to you, and literary journals and magazine editors hope that you go on to publish your poems, short stories, and nonfiction and part of a larger body of work. If you do go on to publish a book or a chapbook there will be a page in the back, usually called Acknowledgments that will credit all the journals and anthologies which previously published your work.

Most publishers of poetry and short stories are not interested in publishing books if some of the poems and stories they contain were not published elsewhere earlier.

Often, parts of novels have been published in literary journals and magazines before they are published as a

book. This is true of *A Prayer for Owen Meany* and *The Catcher in the Rye*, and others.

Once you have published your chapbook or full-length book, it is easy to get in contact with the journals that originally published your work. Most are eager to promote your published book or chapbook on their Facebook page and website, and many are even up for reviewing that collection. Make sure you get in touch with all of the literary journals that published your work previously right around the time your collection is released.

Because the focus of this book is very much on the process of submitting to literary journals, this chapter is more of an overview than an in-depth look at what is next. The three sections are chapbooks, poetry and short story collection publishing, and literary journals that accept novel excerpts.

Chapbooks

Chapbooks are very small books, usually no more than 30 pages in length, 50 at the most. They frequently have no spine and are often bound with staples. They have been around for a long time, at least since the 16th century, when

they were associated with fiction, but now they almost always function as a vehicle for poetry.

There are a number of presses and literary journals that publish chapbooks either through open submissions or through social contacts. Many poets self-publish chapbooks. Self-publishing your chapbook is not considered to be the same as self-publishing a book, as in it does not have the same stigmas surrounding it. In the poetry world, a writer is often looked down upon if they have self-published a manuscript of their poems for sale, because it is seen as an act of vanity. Yet self-publishing a chapbook is seen as a positive thing, a way to share your poems with others.

One of the reasons this distinction is made between books and chapbooks is that all the material that you put in a chapbook can be re-published later on as part of a larger collection, as long as you publish no more than 500 copies of the chapbook. Another reason is that a chapbook is simple and cheap to make. You can almost give them away for free, and most chapbooks are sold for between \$3 and \$7.

Poets that start writing outside of an established community, like I did, do not always see the need for chapbooks. When I was in my second year of graduate studies, my fourth or fifth year as a serious writer of poems, I finally started to understand the function and purpose of chapbooks. I realized that a lot of the writers I enjoyed, I had initially discovered through their chapbooks. Many of these were purchased on a whim, before I later committed to buying a whole book (or two).

A famous poet later explained it to me as this: a chapbook is your calling card, it is a way for someone to get a much better feel for the poetry that you write, and is also a stepping stone, a way to get that much closer to publishing a full manuscript. Because most poets' first books take over a decade to get published, if you are working within the traditional system of contests and open reading periods, it is good to publish a chapbook or three while refining that manuscript and submitting it. A chapbook is a great way to get your name out.

I have published three chapbooks now, all through chapbook publishers. Two of the three publishers solicited my work. My first chapbook opened many doors for me. I ended up selling a fair number of copies and doing several

important interviews because of it. A copy of my chapbook is at Poet's House in New York and another is at a local library. Those are small steps of course, but they are steps forward that have led to other greater opportunities.

My advice to most poets who are interested in publishing a chapbook is to gather up a small number of poems that are thematically linked, say between 10 and 30, and put them together as a chapbook manuscript. Then find a few chapbook publishers with open reading periods that do not charge, and submit the manuscript. If no one accepts your manuscript you can easily self-publish it, then you will have something to give to your friends and sell at readings.

There are also a number of chapbook publishers that publish short fiction and short nonfiction, but the majority of chapbook publishers focus on poetry.

Poetry and short fiction manuscript publishers

Novelists and nonfiction writers face a lot of hurdles on their road to publication, but these are very different than the ones faced by poets and writers of short fiction.

The major hurdle that poets and short fiction writers face is the reading and contest fees that most literary presses charge.

I always tell writers looking to publish novels or nonfiction that they should never pay a traditional publisher. I tell them a traditional publisher of any standing will not charge their writers. This is true for fiction and for nonfiction and indeed, for most genres.

Unfortunately it is no longer true for many literary presses that focus on shorter work. This is more of a problem for poets than short story writers, but it does affect both of them.

I am not saying that there are not good, reliable, traditional literary presses, just that there are few that don't charge a reading fee for authors without a significant track record (i.e., a book or two).

That does not mean that the publisher should charge you anything beyond the reading fee. A legitimate publisher will not. But the reading fee has become standard for manuscript contests and even for open reading periods. Reading fees usually range in price from \$25 to \$50.

If you are serious about publishing your book of poetry or short stories, the truth is that you will most likely end up paying a fee. Most publishers are open to first books and unsolicited manuscripts only through open reading periods (with a fee attached) and contests.

Most of the best publishers only select one book of poetry to be published a year by a poet without a previous book. These books are always selected via reading periods or more commonly, contests. Winning one of these big contests is a great thing but it isn't easy.

There are other options out there and there are a number of good presses that don't charge poets. New presses and very small presses often do not. If you want to take a look at some of the presses that do not charge to read poetry manuscripts, this list of [62 Poetry Manuscript Publishers](#) is very helpful. Some of the publishers on it are also open to short story collections.

Literary journals that accept novel excerpts

Most literary journals publish short stories, poems, nonfiction, and flash fiction, but not novel excerpts.

Finding literary journals that do publish excerpts can really be helpful when promoting your novel. If a reader stumbles across your novel excerpt in a literary journal, they may go ahead and buy your novel.

When choosing an excerpt to submit, do keep in mind that the editor and any future readers will not have any background information about that piece, so the excerpt you choose should be as self-contained as possible.

It is important to note that many of the journals have additional guidelines regarding the novel excerpt, which you can read in their submission guidelines.

Joyland

An online literary journal that has published a number of great and established writers, Joyland publishes a variety of fiction, including novel excerpts. They also pay well.

The Iowa Review

This is a respected print journal that publishes novel excerpts. They charge \$4 for electronic submissions, so we instead encourage you to submit by post.

Cosmonaut Avenue

Cosmonaut Avenue is a Canadian publication interested in publishing a wider variety of writing, including novel excerpts.

The Capra Review

This literary journal publishes short stories, novel excerpts, and a variety of nonfiction (including memoir).

Boston Accent Lit

This is a literary journal that not only publishes excerpts from unpublished novels, but also accepts and encourages submissions of excerpts from already published novels.

Compose

Compose is a great online literary journal focused on publishing work by emerging authors. They publish excerpts from novels that are traditionally published.

Filling Station

This Canadian literary journal publishes a variety of work, including stand-alone novel excerpts.

Fifth Wednesday Journal

This respected journal publishes poetry, fiction, including novel excerpts, creative nonfiction and photography.

Litbreak

They publish a wide variety of written work, including novel excerpts, online. Novel excerpts should be between 1,500 and 10,000 words.

Chapter 19: Your Publishing Journey

It is always tricky to start something new. Every time you submit to a new publication, it can feel like a big event. Initially, each acceptance is a celebration and each rejection is a reason to mourn. But things change over time.

When I first became serious about submitting my work, it would take me almost an hour to submit to one publication. Now I can submit to seven journals in one hour. It is just a matter of time. Get started, and you will become more confident over time.

My most important word of advice is to not give up. One of the tricks to not giving up is to submit to journals that are not *The New Yorker* or *Tin House*. I am not saying don't submit to the most prestigious journals right away. You should. I am telling you to submit to *Tin House*, a community college publication, and a new journal that you know little about. Just make sure that you are submitting different work to each publisher.

This way you will hear from journals on a regular basis, and will most likely get acceptances in the first six months. This will feel wonderful and keep you motivated to continue submitting.

You have to remember that you never know where a piece will end up. Just because a brand new journal accepts your story it doesn't mean that it ends there. Perhaps your story will be nominated for an award, or an anthology editor will read it in the journal and want it for their anthology. Both of those have happened to me.

Some writers think of publishing poems or short stories as giving them away, but you are not. The rights return to you for reprints and once your work is out in the world, much more exciting things are likely to happen.

One of my favorite things is when I receive emails from complete strangers because my poems affected them. This would never happen if my work was not published widely.

Submitting can seem like an uphill battle at first, but the more you submit, the easier and more rewarding it can become. I am much happier in my personal life and much

more successful in my professional life because of literary journals.

Additional Resources

This section is organized in alphabetical order. Some of the websites listed here are covered in more depth in Chapter 14.

[Creative Writers Opportunities List](#)

Creative Writers Opportunities List is a Yahoo group that regularly posts new calls for journal submissions, for anthology submissions, as well as contest information, and teaching positions. You can either subscribe to the emails or regularly check the website for postings.

[Duotrope](#)

Duotrope is a comprehensive listing of literary journals and magazines that has a submission tracker and information about submission times and acceptance rates.

Unfortunately, they now charge users \$5 a month or \$50 a year.

[Entropy](#)

Entropy has a good monthly list of who is open for submissions (although it is far from error-free). They also mention if a journal charges to submit or not.

Poets & Writers

Their listings are easy to navigate, but they are not very comprehensive and more importantly do not make it clear if a journal charges writers a reading fee to submit. I do like their [in-depth search feature](#), which allows you to search by paying markets, percentage of unsolicited submissions published, and circulation, among other things.

New Pages

A website devoted to information about literary journals. They have a lot of good information, but they can be hard to navigate and are not always up-front about submission fees. They are one of the best sites to find calls for anthology submissions.

The Review Review

A site that reviews literary journals. They have reviewed hundreds of literary journals, largely from a reader's standpoint. They have a good search function that makes it easy to eliminate journals that charge fees.

The (Submission) Grinder

The free alternative to Duotrope. The feedback is not at the same level and the organization leaves something to be desired, but it is free.

Glossary of Terms

These are helpful words to know in the context of writing and submitting, and are organized alphabetically.

Anthology

A published collection of poems or other pieces writing, usually on a theme.

Chapbook

A 10-30 page collection of poetry, or less commonly, of fiction or creative nonfiction, by one author.

Editor

The person or people who run the literary journal and consider your work for publication.

First Publication Rights

Most publications will not publish work that has previously appeared in a different literary journal, print or online.

Because of this, most publishers require First Rights. These can also be called First North American Serial Rights or First Serial Rights. No matter what they are called, it

usually means that you are giving that publication the exclusive rights to publish your poem or story first. After they publish the work, the rights revert to you, sometimes right away, sometimes after six months.

Anytime specified over six months is not standard and that should be taken into consideration because if a literary journal retains the rights for a longer period, you may not be able to include that poem or short story as part of a longer book.

Genre

A category of artistic composition, characterized by similarities in form, style, or subject matter. Genre can refer to poetry, prose or nonfiction in terms of form. Or it can be a subject matter classification referring to science fiction, mysteries, or various other established types of stories. If a journal says they are not interested in genre work, they are using it as a subject matter classification.

Literary journal

A magazine that publishes primarily poetry, fiction, and/or creative nonfiction.

Reader

Large journals and contests generally have volunteer readers. These individuals read a large chunk of the work submitted and decide what part of that work they are going to pass on to the editors.

Reading fee

Also known as a submission fee, it is a fee journals charge writers (usually \$3) in order for the writer's work to be considered.

Manuscript

An unpublished book length work of fiction, nonfiction, or poetry.

Multiple submissions

Multiple submissions is when you submit work that belongs to different genres (for example, a piece of flash fiction and packet of poetry), or even to the same genre (say two short stories), to the same journal at the same time. Some journals allow multiple submissions, others do not.

Proof copy

For most journals and anthologies, the proof copy is purely digital. It is a version of the journal sent out to contributors to proof-read and check for any errors. Some literary journals do this, some do not.

Self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) If you submit to a publisher, a contest, or a literary journal via the mail, most publishers require that you include a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) so that they can respond to your work with a rejection or acceptance letter.

Simultaneous submissions

When you submit the same piece or pieces of writing to multiple journals at the same time. Most literary journals now allow and some even encourage simultaneous submissions.

Solicited submissions

Submissions from authors that a publisher directly requests. Most journals publish a mix of solicited and unsolicited submissions. Editors can solicit the work of friends or of famous or emerging writers. Most of the time when your work is solicited, it is published.

Submission deadline

The date at which a journal temporarily closes to submissions or closes to submissions of a particular theme. For anthologies this is a permanent closing deadline, unless they extend it for any reason – say they have not got enough quality submissions.

Submission manager

An online program that handles submissions electronically. The most common one is Submittable.

Themed submissions

When a journal or anthology is only open to poems, stories or nonfiction (or all three) along a certain topic or theme. The theme could be quite specific, such as stories by mothers of twins, or very general, such as food.

Unsolicited submissions

The bulk of submissions to most journals are unsolicited. They are the submissions sent through submission managers, post, or emails to literary journals.

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About Emily Harstone

Emily Harstone is the pen name of an author whose work has been published internationally by a number of respected journals. She is a professional submissions adviser and spends much of her time researching manuscript publishers. You can follow her on Facebook here:

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