

## R154. Finding Your Home at a University Press

### *Choosing a Publisher?*

- You do not need an agent to be published by a university press. Presses will work with agents but don't require them.
- You do not have to work for a university to be published by a university press!
- University presses often publish books about their regions or by authors either from or living in those regions. Often university presses care more about an author's personal experience with and connection to a region than their current residence in it.
- University presses often publish books that the Big Five (the major commercial publishers) and their imprints may feel are too regional for them to market and sell well.
- Because a university press's definition of success is a bit different from larger traditional publishers, a press may take a chance on a book it feels is important and well written but not destined to become an instant blockbuster. For a university press, discovering a debut author, promoting a regional voice, and featuring work of high literary quality can be even more important than finding a "bestseller."
- Because university presses publish fewer books than large presses, each book has a good chance to be marketed as a front-list book rather than automatically relegated to a mid-list position. (Front-list books are the "lead" titles a publisher intends to promote most heavily.)
- University presses depend upon their backlists and often keep books in print longer than larger presses might. If a book continues to sell a small number of copies each year, even as few as twenty-five, it may very well stay in print and be kept available for interested readers.
- Research possible publishers before you start reaching out. This will save you (and the editors) time and potential frustration. Here are three good resources to begin your search for a press:
  - Your bookshelves. Take a look at the books you love or books on a topic similar to yours. Who published those?
  - The Association of University Presses website, [aupresses.org](http://aupresses.org). Under the "Resources" heading, choose "For Authors and Faculty." Then click "Finding a Publisher" in the menu on the right. You'll find a subject area grid

and links to member-press websites. The direct link is here: <http://www.aupresses.org/resources/for-authors-a-faculty/finding-a-publisher>

- Community of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP) website, [clmp.org](http://clmp.org). This is a great resource because many university presses have links on its site. Choose “Readers & Writers” from the menu on the left, then “Search Publishers.” You can narrow the search using parameters such as publication type, name, or city/state. The direct link is here: <https://www.clmp.org/readers/directory/>
- University presses are here to publish authors, not just books! While marketing an individual title is important, a press is interested in developing an ongoing, supportive relationship with you and your work as an author.

### Contracts

- When working with your editor on the contract, feel free to ask what you can expect from the marketing team.
- If you have questions about the contract, ask your editor. An editor should be willing not only to talk with you about the terms being offered but also to explain the confusing legalese in the document.

### Working with the Marketing Team

#### COMMUNICATION AND EXPECTATIONS

- You will always be the best marketer of your book! Be ready to start marketing yourself and your book well before the publication date.
- The more active and communicative you are with your publisher’s marketing team, the more they can help support you and your book.
- The marketing timeline is designed to meet external deadlines for high-profile media coverage. Many national magazines and even newspapers plan their content 4–6 months in advance. If you hope to be featured in one of them, let the marketing team know as early as possible. For the same reason, if you wait until a month before your book’s publication date to begin discussions with the marketing team, you will already have missed many promotional opportunities.
- Let the marketing team know about your comfort level with various promotional activities, like phone interviews or public readings. For example, if you’re nervous about appearing solo at a bookstore event, ask if the marketing team can pair you with another author or public figure for an “in conversation with” joint event.

- Ask the marketing team if they have available review copies to extend before telling a reviewer, editor, or producer that you can get them a free copy.
- Ask the marketing team about their policy on submitting to book awards.
- Tell the publicist(s) about any coverage your book receives. Although they monitor the media for mentions of your book, they may not catch everything, so send them links and clippings. Publicists can use any existing coverage to persuade other media venues that your book is worth talking about!

#### **THE MARKETING QUESTIONNAIRE**

- Once your manuscript has been accepted for publication, the marketing team will likely send you a marketing questionnaire, also called an author questionnaire. This is your opportunity to share your ideas for promoting your book! Questions may cover topics including your biographical information; your previous publications; your personal media contacts; your suggestions for media venues for advertising, book reviews, author interviews, etc.; and your plans for book events, literary festivals, and/or an author tour.
- The marketing questionnaire can seem overwhelming, so ask the marketing team or your editor if you have questions about filling it out. Providing as much information as you can helps the marketing team understand your book-promotion expectations and your availability for interviews and events.
- The publicist(s) will likely research media venues in your hometown and any places where you schedule book events. Still, you may be more familiar with the local radio programs, newsweeklies, and other venues for book promotion in your area. Make sure to list these in the marketing questionnaire, even if you don't have personal contacts at these venues.
- The marketing questionnaire is a helpful place to start but doesn't have to be set in stone! Plans change and additional opportunities arise in the months between submitting the questionnaire and publication. Keep the marketing team posted about additional ideas or questions.

#### **HOW YOU CAN PROMOTE YOUR BOOK**

- Start thinking as early as possible about what you can personally do to promote your book. Are you part of a writing community that might interview you for its newsletter? Does your college have a magazine that lists alumni publications? Do you know the editor of a literary journal? Reach out to these contacts several months before the publication date to see if they can feature your book in some way.

- Consider writing op-eds, essays, adapted excerpts, or similar content to promote your book. You can write about topics related to your book and pitch the pieces to relevant media outlets, ideally timed to appear around the book's publication date.
- Update your author website to feature your new book. Be sure to include links to buy the book in a variety of places (your publisher, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, and/or an independent bookstore). The marketing team may be able to provide design elements, images, and other content to feature on your website.
- Ask if the marketing team can create materials (like postcards, business cards, magnets, or flyers) to help you with promotion. Think about how and where you can distribute these materials.
- Learn which areas of promotion the marketing team will cover and where you may need to do your own outreach. For example, if the team focuses on print and radio coverage, you may wish to pursue podcasts and online venues.
- If you are already active on social media, post about your book in the months leading up to its publication, and share links to reviews and interviews as they appear.
- If you don't already have an established audience on social media, your time is best spent on other promotional opportunities. In other words, you won't reach many people if your first tweet is on the day your book comes out!

#### **EVENTS**

- Tell the marketing team about any events you have scheduled. The team can ensure copies are available at the venue in a timely manner, and they can help reach out to local media to publicize the event.
- If you would like help setting up in-person events, talk to the marketing team about your schedule and availability.

#### ***General Advice***

- Ask questions early and often.
- Everyone at the press wants your book to be successful, so work with the team to make it so!