

Snagging Reviews the Creative Way

Admittedly, it's rather difficult to snag a review from top industry leaders like the *New York Times Book Review* or *Publisher's Weekly*. But that doesn't mean you shouldn't try. Even though you're a first-timer just starting to write in your retirement, there is always the possibility that you may break the barrier. Others have.

However, never forget that there's a sizable world of reviewers where your chances are a good deal better, and they should not be neglected. With a little creative research, you'll find them.

Jim Cox, the principal of Midwest Book Review, has long been devoted to helping authors. In addition to the average 490 books he and his team review every month, Jim has graciously compiled an excellent list of reviewers with links to their web sites that you should carefully study

Click on to www.midwestbookreview.com and scroll down on the left side to "Other Reviews." That will bring up a lengthy list of reviewers. By clicking on the name, you will come to the reviewer's web site. . (Make certain you request a review from Midwest. Their reviews are highly respected throughout the industry.)

Another fine source, although far from as extensive, can be found on the web site of Angela Hoy, a well known author and advocate for freelancers. Angela has listed six top reviewers and included guidelines for submission and complete addresses.

www.angelahoy.com/writing/archives/001219.html These prestigious reviewers usually want review copies well in advance of publication, so be certain to check their guidelines.

Later in this article, we'll discuss Advance Review Copies (ARCs).

Broaden the Field

While it is important to target as many formal reviewers as possible, it makes a great deal of sense to reach out beyond them as well. Find magazines that deal with the subject of your book, and request a review. You may have established contacts with trade publication editors before your retirement. Or perhaps you came to know one or more editors or writers during the years you have pursued your hobby or other pastime. Reach out for them. Even if they don't agree to review your book, the query will probably result in a story or a blurb.

Newspapers have a number of specialized departments. For example, in addition to submitting your business book to appropriate magazines, consider the business pages of newspapers. The dailies run food pages every week. If your book deals with some aspect of food or nutrition, contact the Food Editor. You stand a good chance of obtaining some sort of recognition in print.

Finding Publications to Target

If you don't have a current copy of *Writer's Market*, the excellent periodical directory published by Writer's Digest Books, the reference room of your local library will have it. Hundreds of periodicals are listed and categorized by subject so it will be easy to select your targets. *Wooden Horse* (www.woodenhorsepub.com) offers an excellent directory of more than 2,000 magazines.

In addition to these general directories, there are specialized lists. A good example is the directory of 500 travel magazines and 200 newspaper sections produced by www.travelwriters.com. Look on their web site under "Writers" and click on "Travel

Publications List.” You can find many of these specialty directories on the Internet or at the library.

The Mighty Internet

Don’t overlook the power of the Internet. Using it well can uncover chat groups, ezines, blogs and web sites that are frequented by the readers you are targeting. Try to think like a person interested in the subject you are writing about. Head to the search engines and enter the kinds of key words and phrases that the searcher would use to uncover helpful leads.

Advanced Review Copies

As mentioned earlier, some of the most prestigious reviewers insist upon receipt of an ARC approximately three months prior to your formal publication date. Reviewers like *Kirkus*, *Library Journal*, *Booklist*, *Foreword* and *Publishers Weekly* do make demands, but meeting them can translate into volume sales.

Reviews in these publications are essentially geared to the publishing trade, which is why they can move a lot of books into retail stores and into libraries. Favorable reviews from the “big boys” will usually result in a much more welcoming reception from other reviewers.

If you self-publish, make certain you print an adequate number of ARCs early on. You will use these not just for reviews, but also to garner testimonials that can be printed as blurbs in the book and on the cover. After the formal publication date, you should continue to harvest as many reviews and blurbs as possible by sending out copies of the finished book.

Still Your Responsibility

Those of you who have chosen to publish through a Publishing-on-Demand house, will still be responsible for printing and distributing ARCs and other review copies. Rest assured that few, if any, review copies will be sent out by the POD company at its expense.

Traditional publishing houses will distribute review copies because, of course, it is very much in their interest to build sales as high as possible. But I recommend watching the process closely to ensure that enough potential reviewers are contacted.

The printer you choose as a self-publisher will likely be able to produce ARCs. If not, there are a number of printers who specialize in these very short runs. I recommend you order 40 to 50 copies to reach all of the early reviewers and develop as many favorable blurbs as possible.

Making Contact

Do not send your review copy “cold turkey.” Protocol requires that you send an announcement of the book that includes a request for a review. A return postcard or other form of SASE should be included, as well as a copy of your press kit. When sending your standard kit to a reviewer, make sure it contains a sheet with the detailed bibliographic information, including the ISBN, Library Cataloguing data and date of formal publication.

Anticipating the real possibility of a lazy or overworked journalist on the magazines or newspapers you contact, write a sample review yourself and include it in the press kit. Don’t write glowing praises. Restrict yourself to a description of what the book is all about and why it is important.

The alternative to this approach is to just announce the book and direct the recipient to your web site for the additional information he/she needs. However, since you are making a request of the reviewer, I suggest making response as easy as possible instead of asking him/her to locate and read your web site.

Don't be afraid to follow up your review submission with a telephone call. But be fair in the amount of time you give the reviewer before you call and don't become a nuisance. Whether your review is positive or negative, send a thank you note. You may be grateful you did when and if you submit another book.