

WritersNet®: Writers, Editors, Agents, Publishers <http://www.writers.net>

Reviewed by Megan Hodge, Assistant Branch Manager, Chesterfield County (VA) Public Library

Billing itself as “the place for writers to showcase their work and exchange ideas on the Web,” WritersNet promises a one-stop shop for writers to get advice from essays and each other, find an agent, and get published, while allowing for editors, agents, and publishers to find new talent (“Writers Directory and Authors Directory,” n.d.). While this sounds like a premise with potential, most librarians – academic, public, or otherwise – seeking advice on how to break into professional publishing will be disappointed.

The site is mostly geared towards fiction writers. This would not necessarily be the resource’s death knell, however, as professionals needing to publish for tenure or promotion face many of the same difficulties as fiction writers: overcoming writer’s block, improving one’s writing style, finding a good editor, crafting a query letter, etc. However, such straightforward and likely oft-needed help is strangely hard to come by with this resource. The “Resources for Writers and Resources for Authors” page provides no such guidance, instead offering lists of links on gratuitous topics such as criticism and theory, banned books, and comparative literature. Likewise, little thought or editorial oversight is given to the site’s “Writers’ books and essential reading” list; under its nonfiction section (the one most likely to be of interest to this publication’s audience, over other such sections such as romance and home & garden), the resources listed are odd titles such as *Life Support : Three Nurses on the Front Lines*, *White Death-Blizzard of '77 Millennium Edition*, and *Blacks in Colonial America*. How these books are must-reads for aspiring authors is unclear and it appears as though any member can submit a book for inclusion on the site’s essential reading list and have it accepted. The freelance writing section consists simply of a link to About.com’s freelance writing page.

More useful is the site’s discussion forums, which are only accessible to registered members (registration is free). Members can post query letters and samples for critique and trade rejection stories. The forums are pretty active, with most having at least one thread active within the last week. However, the site’s focus on creative writing is again evident as the nonfiction forum has only one thread and it’s titled “Yikes! Nobody here....really??”

New librarians looking for step-by-step advice on how to form a writers group, identify appropriate journals to submit to, or simply how to get started writing professionally would be much better served by reading one of the several excellent books published written expressly for librarians. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* has also posted some excellent personal essays on its Web site about how to start and run a successful writing group that would be useful not just for academic librarians, but all other librarians desiring or needing impetus to write as well.
Reviewed by Megan Hodge, Randolph-Macon College and Bryant & Stratton College.

Additional Resources

Crawford, W. (2003). *First have something to say: Writing for the library profession*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.

Curtis, C.P. (2011). The rules of writing group. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Rules-of-Writing-Group/126880/>

Gordon, R.S. (2004). *The Librarian's guide to writing for publication*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

Smallwood, C. (ed). (2010). *Writing and publishing: The librarian's handbook*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.