



# Boroondara Writers Inc

Encourage, Support, Improve

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MARCH 2024

**NEXT MEETING: Saturday, 23 March at 1 pm.**

**This was previously advertised as 30 March but the library is closed!**

Publishing your manuscript or work is a big deal. It's also a lot of thankless and unpaid work that will cost you some money. It can be hard to know where to start, so in this issue of the newsletter, I'll be sharing information to help you get on your way.

Remember, *the quality of the writing is what matters the most*. That said, publishing involves three-projects-in-one:

- 1) **Building an author platform.** You need to start telling people you're an author they want to read. This includes creating a website, getting your name out there (social media can help), and writing consistently.
- 2) **Finalising your draft.** This includes everything from re-checking spelling and grammar, making sure the chapters connect, seeking constructive feedback and implementing it.
- 3) **Deciding on a publishing platform.** Do you want a traditional publisher? Are you going to need an agent? Is self-publishing for you? What is vanity publishing and is this a path to go down?

Don't be scared! You can do it and we're here to help!

*Sarah Craze*

**Are you on Facebook? Why not [join our private group!](#)**

**Chat and share your thoughts with other members in between meetings.**

## **MARCH OPTIONAL THEME**

*Need inspiration?*

*School days*

*Interpret the theme as loosely  
as you like*

## **MORE DATES FOR 2024**

**27 April, 25 May, 29 June, 27 July, 31  
August, 28 September, 26 October, 30  
November**

**Meeting Room 1,  
Ground floor, Hawthorn Library  
1 - 4.30pm**

# *Guidelines for Publishing*

Please note that this is general advice and suggested links for further reading. The dollar sign indicates an approximate level of expenditure on your part.

## BUILDING AN AUTHOR PLATFORM

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Author Platforms create a place on the internet for people to engage with your writing. The internet is the first and probably only place people will look for it. That said, you don't need to go all out on establishing a 500,000 person social media following, but it is worth investing some time into:

- **A website**, preferably with the domain name as your name [e.g. [www.sarahcraze.com](http://www.sarahcraze.com)] or a variation of it. Your site should at least contain:
  - information about you
  - where people can find your work (including Boroondara Writers anthologies)
  - how to contact you. You may wish to set up a contact form that directs to your email address.
- Online website hosting services include domains and design templates in bundled packages. If you can navigate your way around Microsoft Word, you can do it yourself. Check out [Word Press](#), [Wix](#) or [SquareSpace](#) as website hosting options. There is a cost involved.
- **Engaging in online forums**. No matter what your genre, look for online communities (on social media, Reddit, or genre-specific, e.g. [romancewriters.org](http://romancewriters.org) or [fantasy-writers.org](http://fantasy-writers.org)) and start engaging there. Many membership associations have forums as part of their membership fees.
- **Start a blog or a Substack newsletter** to act as a showcase of your writing. You can easily set up a blog from your website. Alternatively, Substack is an [online platform especially for writers](#) that connects them directly with interested readers. In your blog/newsletter, you can:
  - talk about what you're working on
  - Talk about what you're struggling with
  - Review books you've read lately
  - Talk about authors you admire
  - **Talk about whatever you like that will connect readers to your writing**
- **Get yourself published with the help of Authors Publish**. This is [an e-newsletter](#) telling you about publications currently accepting submissions. If you are a novelist, poet, short story writer in any genre, or memoirist there is bound to be a publication in the newsletter that may be interested in your writing.
- **Social media** used to be great for writers but now it's a hellscape of despair. But, it can still help. If you already have some familiarity with a social media platform, create a dedicated account (separate from your personal one). Use it to promote your blog/newsletters and start connecting with people interested in what you're writing about. Stick with what you know. If you don't use social media, don't worry about it.
- **More on author platforms:**
  - Overview of what you need for an [author's platform](#)
  - Do you really need an [author platform to get a book contract?](#)
  - [15 Best Author Websites & What They Do Well](#)
  - [Top 20 Author Websites Every Author Must See \(in 2023\)](#)
  - This article dissects the current state of using [social media to promote your writing](#)

So you think you've finished the first draft? Ask yourself if it meets all these conditions:

- You can answer the question "What is it about?" in one sentence. Two tops.
- You can answer the question "Why would someone want to read this?"
- You've sat down and read the entire story/article/manuscript through in one sitting or for as long as time allows and it all makes sense to you. Character arcs are formed and completed, narrative is consistent, chapters connect together, that kind of thing.
- You have done a final spell and grammar check and you have not ignored any of the squiggly lines or suggested corrections. There is [software to help you](#). If you're not sure, try out the software.
- You are willing to give it to a stranger to read and are keen to hear criticism of it.

A note about asking friends/family to read it at this stage. Don't. Even if they offer. Unless they're a professional editor, you probably will not get the constructive criticism you need because they like you and don't want to hurt your feelings. And they'll take ages to not give it to you.

Once you can tick all these boxes, it's time to think about **having it professionally edited, proofread or assessed**.

- [Writers Victoria](#) offers manuscript assessments and editorial services (membership required)
- [Kill Your Darlings](#) do the same (membership required)
- [Australian Writers Marketplace](#)
- You can try and find someone online through [Airtasker](#), [Reedsy](#), [Upwork](#) or [Freelancer](#)

Think about what they can help you with and what criticism you are specifically looking for before you contact them. It's going to cost you some money. Editing is hard work. If you want, you can just send the first two chapters for editing, see what the feedback is and go from there. You don't have to accept all of it but it's worth getting.

## CHOOSING A PUBLICATION METHOD: TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

It's up to you to [decide if you want to publish traditionally or self-publish](#). Traditional publishing still carries an element of prestige and there's less upfront costs from you. They will provide some cover design, editing and marketing work for your book. It's a collaborative process. However, they take a fair chunk of your earnings for this privilege. To get a publisher to take your book on, you're going to need to meet ALL these criteria:

- At least two chapters of your manuscript in the best shape it can be
- Be able to describe what your manuscript is about in one to two sentences
- Be able to identify a few comparable novels/books and why yours is different
- Write a killer query letter/pitch/book proposal that shows how well you can write AND how awesome your manuscript is
- for the publisher to be accepting new clients in your genre/field

You can find an agent to help you [but it is not essential in Australia](#):

- Writers Victoria [for more information](#) on what Agents do.
- They also talk about [why you may not need an agent](#).

- [Query Tracker](#) for direct pitches to genre, non-fiction and memoir agents. There's no guarantee of quality or success but it gives you a place to start.
- [Australian Writers Marketplace](#) for Australian-themed stories.

If you don't want an agent, research local and international publishers online and contact them directly yourself with your killer query letter and pitch/book proposal. Start with the publishers of the books that inspire you and are a similar genre to your book. Make sure you **read their submission criteria and comply with it.**

NB: if you're keen to be published by one of the big five (Penguin/Random House; Hachette Book Group; Harper Collins; Simon and Schuster; and Macmillan) you're **definitely** going to need an agent. Your book needs to be slap bang in the middle of a genre and have a global commercial appeal.

#### Further information on traditional publishing:

- Writing a pitch for your book with [Masterclass](#)
- Writing a pitch to an agent, try [Anna Davis at CBC](#)
- Writing a non-fiction book proposal, try [Jane Friedman's](#) blog; Allison Tait has advice for [memoir writers](#)
- Jane Friedman on [query letters](#); the [New York Editors](#) on them too

It's like a job application; tailor it to the audience. If you aren't getting any responses, then you need to change what you're saying. It will take time. It's also something you can workshop with us!

## SELF-PUBLISHING

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It's never been easier to self-publish than it is now. However, it will take a lot of time, will cost you money that you probably will not recoup in sales, and you need to market and promote the book yourself. Some more information on whether to self-publish:

- There's pros and cons but a big pro is you control [when your book is published](#).
- From Forbes, [don't make the mistake](#) of thinking you don't have to do all the editing work.
- Your [audience is not 'everyone'](#). You must have a niche audience for your work and a steady author platform they can find you at or you won't sell any books.
- If this is a passion project and [you're not trying to make a living](#) it's a good option.

**Beware the Vanity Press.** A [vanity press](#) is a person or organisation that offers to publish your book for a fee. It's an old-fashioned term that predates electronic publishing. At best, you may find that: your book won't be edited, it won't be well-presented, it won't be marketed, and you'll have to pay more to receive copies. It may be cheaper than doing it yourself but [it may cost you in quality and your reputation as a writer](#). At worst, it's a predatory scam. But how can you tell?

- The [Queensland Government](#) has information on what to look for
- Tiffany Hawk has also written about [spotting vanity presses and scams](#)

ANY QUESTIONS? DROP ME A LINE AT [booroondara.writers.inc@gmail.com](mailto:booroondara.writers.inc@gmail.com)

Happy Writing!