



RAIDER WRITING MONTH 2011

Workshops and Write-Ins
Oakton Community College

SPREAD THE LOVE

Tu 12/13: 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM, Oakton Community College Library Classroom 2418

In our last workshop of the 2011 NaNoWriMo season we'll share resources and tips to help you get your novel published. Whether you plan on seeking an agent, or if self-publishing is more your style, this will be a can't-miss workshop for RaiderWriMos. You just sacrificed a month of your life for this book, not to mention all the time you'll put into revising it, so you might as well spread the love and get it published. Besides, we know you'll donate a signed first edition to the Oakton library once you're a famous author, right?

AGENDA

- Reread! Revise! Repeat!
- Research the field
- The Query Letter
- Self-Publishing
- Cozy Up With Rejection
- In the Meantime

RERead! REVISE! REPEAT!

I know it may be tempting to get your work out there **as soon as possible**, but fight the temptation. Odds are, it isn't ready yet. It was only a short week ago that we discussed revision, and it's been less than two weeks since NaNoWriMo ended, so **your novel is not ready to be sent out to agents yet.**

RESEARCH THE FIELD BEFORE YOU GO OUT THERE

In traditional publishing, previously unpublished fiction writers typically go about publishing their work in this way:

1. Query agents
2. Receive agent requests for full or partial manuscript
3. Agent accepts new writer as a client
4. Agent finds a publisher
5. Contract negotiation, editing, copy editing, production, yadda yadda yadda
6. Your book is on the shelves! Woohoo! (Easy, right?)
7. Quit day job and jet off for worldwide book tour, interviews, and television appearances ☺

Some writers choose to query publishers directly, but in that case your work goes into the slush pile, and it can take between nine and twelve months to hear back. So, I'm going to assume you'll be looking for agent representation, first.

Here's the thing about agents: there are a lot of them out there. It is really important that you do your homework before you decide to query an agent. Here's how:

1. Read books that are similar to yours in style, intended audience, or general feel. Then, make a list of the agents who represent the authors who wrote these books.
2. Do a bit of reconnaissance. It's really easy to get a feel for agents these days, because they are all over the Internet. I highly recommend joining Twitter and following as many literary agents as you can find. Just a couple days of tweets will give some really interesting insights into agents' styles and personalities.
3. Develop a list of top choice agents, and research their submission guidelines, as well as the agencies for which they work.
4. Read the works your top agents' authors have most recently published.

THE QUERY LETTER

One single page. Don't even think about writing a longer query letter. Nope. I said *no*.

Three paragraphs. 1) The hook. 2) The story synopsis. 3) The writer's biography. Miniaturized. All of them.

400 words max. 250 is better. Concision is key. Think of the query letter as the anti-WriMo. In November, we write as many words as possible. In queries, we boil them down to their very essence.

Most agents accept queries via email, but some still require actual snail-mailed paper. Agents post very clear submission guidelines on their professional websites. Read the guidelines, and do not violate them.

Before you send that query—get it critiqued! Many online writing sites have entire forums dedicated to query critiques where other writers will pick your query apart line-by-line to help make it better. Don't let your favorite agents be the first people who read your query letter. Too shy to let strangers read your query letter on the Internet? Get over it! If you aren't proud enough of that letter to post it on an Internet forum, *do not* send it out to an agent!

Most agents stipulate that you send either the first five or ten pages of your manuscript with your query, and that is *it*. That letter and those first several pages better be *really good*. No, they better be *great*.

Now you can send out your queries. **No, wait!** Are you sure it's ready? Are you *really* sure? Okay, go ahead and send it.

Now, you wait. And work on your next book, of course.

SELF-PUBLISHING

Study the Success Stories. I don't know much about self-publishing, but I do know that if I were to self-publish, I'd spend a lot of time reading up on the most successful self-published authors. And then I'd follow in their footsteps.

Self-published authors are everywhere. Many of them are blogging and tweeting. Follow their blogs. Follow their tweets. Comment on them. Reach out.

COZY UP WITH REJECTION

Get used to it, because it's going to happen. We've all heard the stories about authors who sent out 217 queries to agents and received 216 rejections before they *finally* found an agent. Guess what? It's true. And it's okay. Don't give up on your book. If your first round of queries doesn't result in any partial or full manuscript requests, get back on the boards and revise it. Or take a second look at your manuscript.

IN THE MEANTIME

Keep writing! You should have your second manuscript finished by the time your first one gets accepted. What do you think this is, a vacation?

Get yourself out there. By out there, I mean the Internet, of course. Most new authors have blogs, Twitter accounts, Facebook pages, and Goodreads accounts (among other things) that they maintain in order to establish a presence and some buzz.

Join the community. Which community? Take your pick: Writers groups, professional organizations, online forums, blogs, email newsletters. You name the kind of community you're looking to join, and chances are it already exists and is waiting for your membership application.

Don't stop writing! Work on your next masterpiece while you play the waiting game.

FOR MORE INFORMATION . . .

OCC's NaNo Guide: <http://researchguides.oakton.edu/nanowrimo>

Lori Oster's RaiderWriMo page: <http://www.oakton.edu/user/0/loster/RaiderWriMo.html>

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