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## Everyone has a book to unleash, Part II

In my last column, I talked about the fact that it's been said that within each one of us is at least one book dying to come out so that others may share in our life experiences. I truly agree with that philosophy. What's more, I'll share with you a bit of advice I received from a trained therapist who charged me \$95 an hour close to 20 years ago to help me get out of a funky time in my life: writing is one of the best ways to ease stress, heartache, a troubled existence and memories of a not-so-wonderful past.

Call it a catharsis, a purging of your soul to beat the blues or simply a remedy to free you of thoughts or memories that you just can't shake. Putting them down in a journal, a diary or a composition book will bring you so much more peace than dwelling on the past, present or future.

That being said, for those of you who are determined to share your developed manuscript with the world, your next step is to find an agent unless you want to take a chance and try and sell it as an electronic book or "e-book."

E-book publishers will take you on as a client, edit your manuscript and offer it on their Web sites via a compact disk that can be inserted into an e-book reader such as the Rocket Reader, MS-Reader, Palm or Hiebook Reader. Publishers will also offer it as a computer download in an Adobe .PDF file.

Electronic publishing is the wave of the future — but the VERY distant future because it just can't compete with the good, old-fashioned print media that caters to fiction readers. E-book publishers know that they must struggle to stay afloat because they believe that eventually, fiction readers will catch on and the demand will increase.

In other areas, however, imagine what e-books could do for education. A high school student would simply carry around an e-book reader and a case of compact disks rather than a heavy backpack overloaded with textbooks. He or she would simply insert the CD into the reader and presto! His or her history book would come alive with text, pictures, motion and sound. Or imagine a whole law library on a compact disk or medical journals within reach. This is the beauty of the e-book. It's exciting, but stalled because fiction readers still prefer paper. Why? Well, think of it this way: it's hard to curl up in bed with a copy of "Gone with the Wind" on an electronic gadget, but so easy to pull out that same book in paperback or hardcover.

However, e-publishers have given new authors something that paper publishers haven't: an opportunity to get published as long as their work has merit. E-publishing is economical for publishers, so they can take on many more authors at a fraction of the cost that paper publishers can.

Those of you still determined to conquer paper publishing might want to

start by getting a copy of Jeff Herman's "Guide to Book Publishers, Editors and



**As I  
see it**

Peg DeMarco

Literary Agents." His 2004 updated book is available on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), new, for \$20.96 or you can purchase a used copy. His book lists names, addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses,

contact names, Web sites and tips on how to approach agents, publishers and editors.

Once you've narrowed down your agents to those interested in your topic or genre, pay a visit to [www.anotherealm.com/preeditors](http://www.anotherealm.com/preeditors). This Web site has the skinny on which agents and publishers are reputable and which should be avoided. The number one red flag that should go up is when someone asks you for a "reading fee." No reputable agent or publisher will charge you to read your work. I'm not talking about

postage fees, but rather reading fees.

Too many first-time authors are thrilled when someone takes an interest in their work that they're willing to pay money to get their foot in the door. Take it from this author, whose foot was squashed several times by a slammed door and one who was bilked out of \$3,000 many, many years ago — it just doesn't work once you send in that check.

After you figure out which agents are reputable, most will require a query letter first. This is an introduction on your part, so make it as appealing as you can.

Tell a little bit about yourself, the plot of your book and the audience you believe it would appeal to.

Always include a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a reply on anything you send. Some agents will ask for the first three chapters of your book, so you should include enough postage on your return envelope to receive it back since many agents will critique it as they read it. Make sure those chapters are error free as far as grammar and spelling.

Last of all, have patience. Publishing is a slow, at times torturous, business for new authors. Some agents have a turn around time of six months, others, six weeks. Usually, an agent will know right away if a book is salable and at that point will ask for the entire manuscript. Should you be offered a contract, have a lawyer look it over first before you sign it or purchase a book on the legal aspects of the agent/publisher/author relationship.

Sounds like a lot of work to get published, doesn't it? It is. Ever wonder why so many best selling authors are in their 40s or 50s or older? It's the waiting game of the publishing world.

But those authors who you clamor to read every time a new book comes out started exactly where you're starting! So, with a little patience, a lot of work and always, an overflow of believing in yourself, you too, might someday be walking in a mall and see yourself staring back at you from a bookstore.

**PEG DEMARCO** is a local columnist for The News Herald.