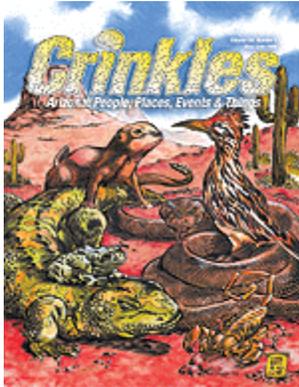


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## Publish Those Great Ideas

*By Sharon Coatney*



Before I became an acquisitions editor for Libraries Unlimited, I worked as a teacher and teacher librarian in Kansas for thirty years. The books and articles that I found helpful were always those written by excellent practitioners in the field. These were the people that really had something useful to share. Now, as acquisitions editor for Libraries Unlimited, I am looking for those people who have something useful and wonderful to share. Maybe one of those people is you!

### Begin at the Beginning

An effective way to begin to break into publishing those great ideas is to start by sending short articles, tips, lesson plans, other ideas to the magazines in the field, to the [S.O.S. for Information Literacy](#) site, or to this online publication of the S.O.S. project, *Educators' Spotlight Digest*. Check out the requirements for submitting articles in each publication. Though similar, each has particular procedures. Another great way is to write letters to the editor or become a book or media reviewer. Let your passions show. Sometimes, editors might want follow up articles.



- Knowledge Quest (AASL Journal)
- Journal of Children's Literature
- LMC
- School Library Media Activities Monthly
- Teacher Librarian
  - School Library Journal



All of the above publications are seeking articles, lesson plans, and tips of the trade. They will read your unsolicited material and give you feedback usually even if they choose not to publish that particular idea. Some of them will even pay you a little something if they use your material!! But more important, you will get some experience in writing for publication.

Similarly, magazines for children and young adults are always looking for writers. They often have themed issues and want

articles on certain topics. Contact the editors of

- Crinkles
- Boys Life
- Cobblestone
- Lady Bug

and many others to determine their current themes and procedures for submitting articles.

## Local Publication and the Web

Many people begin publishing things locally in school or organizational newsletters or web pages. Some people even start their own web page and publish their own ideas on the web.

The advantages to these types of publications are many:

1. Easy to manage and on the web, easy to revise and correct
2. Local publications always need articles
3. Immediate grassroots feedback (which is invaluable to a beginning author)

## Ready to Publish Your Work

There are several professional publishers in the school library field and many, many more in the field of education. School librarians will have things to share in both fields.

I recommend getting a recent copy of the *Writers Guide* (check out your local public library) and look for those publishers that publish in the area of interest to you. The guide will also tell you if that publisher takes unsolicited proposals or you can just write to them and ask them. Most professional publishers do, but unfortunately, publishers for children and young adult fiction and non-fiction materials do not. Be sure to check before you spend your time sending things that will never be read.

### *Selected library professional publishers*

- Scarecrow Press
- Neal Schumann
- Linworth
- ALA
- Libraries Unlimited
- LMC Source

Professional publishers are looking for hot topics, trends, and solutions to common problems. Read, attend conferences, and gather information so that you will know which one of your great ideas is best to submit. What are you passionate about?

What do you want to share or have you successfully shared (maybe through conference presentations or mentoring work)? Write about that. Don't try to write about something you don't care about or know nothing about.

Once you have your great idea, look over books by different publishers and decide which one seems to be publishing more in the area that you are interested. Look at their books. Do you like the way they look? What are the companies that you know and trust from your own experience as a school librarian? You are the expert here, pick publishers that seem to be compatible with your own views of the profession and its needs.

Look at publisher web sites or in their catalogs and find the contact information of the acquisitions editor. Contact him or her and discuss your ideas before you write them up in proposal form. If they are not looking for the type of book you want to write, try another idea or try another publisher. You will find the "write" fit and will be happier with the outcome if you are a little discriminating.

Each company has its own procedures. Just go with the flow, the acquisitions editors know what they are doing and will take you through the process of proposal, contract, writing, and finally publishing that great book. Good luck!

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