

March 7, 2022

## Getting Published – A journey into the world of book publishing

**Introduction:** A brief history of White Mountain Publications and why you might want to listen to me.

Although the corporation was formed in 1982 and started with a number of other contracts and occupations, in 1992 we published our first book, and have followed this passion ever since. We have now done over 400 books—everything from 4 page chapbooks to 500 page hardcovers. Our average book size is about 200 pages. Our websites have been selling books online since 1997, and there certainly have been many changes in that regard as well. Yes before amazon, before Google, we were online. We continue to ship books world-wide. We have worked with about 110 authors, mostly from Canada, and the United States.

As for myself, I was born in southwestern Ontario, Canada. I moved to St. Catharines (ON) to attend and eventually graduate from Brock University (B.A.) I served on the National Executive for the *Canadian Authors Association* from 1991 to 2005, serving as CAA National Treasurer 1998-2005. In July 2003 I had the honour of becoming the 36th recipient of the [Canadian Authors Association's Alan Sangster Award](#) for service. Member of the Bahá'í Faith since 1980, I served on the St. Catharines (ON) Spiritual Assembly for 13 of those years before moving to New Liskeard in 1995 and brought White Mountain Publications north. We established and ran the *Northern Ontario Poetry Competition* for 24 years. I serve on the boards for the *Little Claybelt Homesteaders Museum* (since 2007) and the *Cobalt Historical Society* (since 2015). The move to open the book store in Cobalt in 2014 was a way to further share my love of books and continue to publish amazing histories.

Every publishing house has a specific area of interest and expertise. We have done a couple of fiction books, more than a few poetry books, but primarily publish non-fiction, mostly local histories and biographies. We'll come back to this later.

### The Publishing Process:

As in all creative processes, it all begins with the thought, then the process of expressing that thought. In publishing, we step in half way into that process. The thoughts become words, then sentences, paragraphs, pages and finally a manuscript.

Let's focus on that process first.

You gather thoughts, research, maybe photos, and you need to have them in one place where you can find them again. I have seen far too many authors come in with USB keys and have a hard time finding the latest version of their work. Or worse, think they have left the correct file and call me in a panic later when they find the real one.

### Organizing Your Files

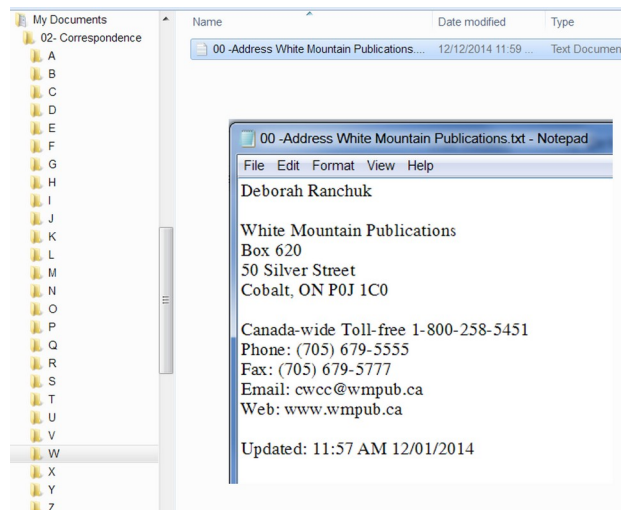
A quick reference and some tips on how to tame those files into an order you can remember and actually find again.

For those newer to computer systems, think of your hard drive as a filing cabinet- you know, the big metal ones with drawers. In that filing 'cabinet' are drawers—only in computer language they are called Folders. In those drawers, or Folders, are smaller filing units. These are more Folders or to be more accurate Sub-Folders. So, under My Documents (on a Windows system, but the advice is applicable to any system) a new Folder named, say Correspondence, is made. I have mine numbered

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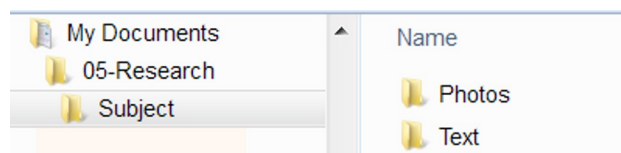
“02-Correspondence”, to put the major file divisions in a specific order—much longer story and reason that I can actually find files among the million or more of them we have here.

Inside that file folder, I have 26 other folders, you guessed it, A through Z. Under W, there is a folder “White Mountain Publications” and in that folder there is what I call a 00-A text file. This is the contact address file for each person, place or thing in each section. Starting that file name with 00 insures that it floats to the top of the list.

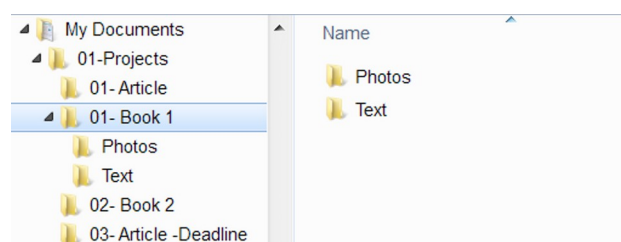


Using Notepad text files means that the files take up very little room as far as memory goes, and you can copy and paste the information from them as needed into just about any other program. If you have typed it correctly once, the theory is that you should never need to type it again. Of course that assumes you can remember where you typed it the first time. This system helps you remember.

Writers doing research usually gather bits of it over a long period of time. So do another directory folder for ‘Research’, then the sub-folders by topic. It will be waiting for you when you need it.



For multiple projects, a projects directory will keep them in line. If you add the deadline date to the folder name, you can see at a glance which ones are due first.



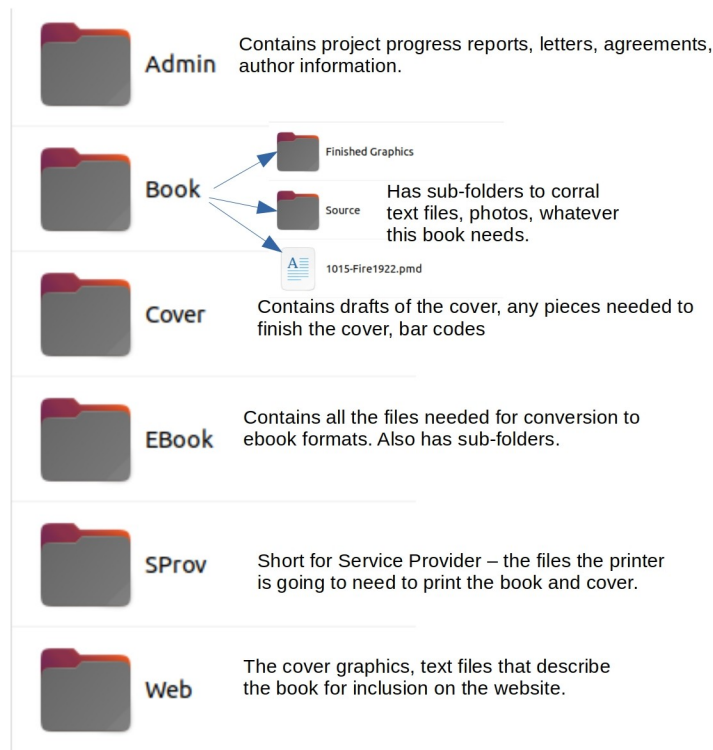
An added note for saving your files is to use this format:

YEAR-MONTH-DAY\_subject it will look like this:

2022-03-07 organizing.odt

the file extension will depend on what program you are using. I have decades of correspondence that line up nicely with this system. I add an 'r' after the date for my response to any given letter or email saved. Sometimes r1, r2.

For a book, my file structure looks like this:



(This doesn't look like your Windows directory because we have moved over to Linux. )

**Typing vs. typesetting** is one of the most common places people run into trouble, and it can be costly! With the increased ownership of home computers more and more people are professing to be desktop publishers and typesetters, when in fact, they are typists. Don't be misled to believe that the skills producing newsletters, flyers or business cards means having the skills necessary to producing your book.

Here I'm also going to point out that a **printer is NOT the same as a publisher**. A printer will take you files and print them as you give it to them. They will not proofread, edit, and sometimes a not-so-good one will not point out any large glaring errors. They just print, and they do it in a hurry.

A publisher will aid you along the process of putting the book together, edit, give valuable feedback, and that's before the book goes to press. Once the first draft is typeset, the author usually has a chance to go through looking for errors, omissions, blurry pictures, whatever can be fixed.

I break here for my favourite piece of advice:

**Only God gets it right the first time; the rest of us edit and edit again.**

You cannot have too many eyes on a book. And proofreading on the screen is still going to require a print copy to scribble on, because it is absolutely amazing how many things you will miss on a screen, and yet pick out on a paper copy. And vice versa. The cover has to be developed, and a publisher will usually know the people who can do the best job for your book.

After the book goes off to be printed, many times even before, the publisher will set the publicity going to get attention for your book. Sometimes book signings are arranged, press parties; there are quite a few options. A printer will deliver your books, and you are on your own. And they will want payment in advance of delivery.

Once the book comes back from the printer, the publisher is involved in an ongoing promotion, sales, distribution for a long time. That's why they want a great book.

So now you have a manuscript. Deciding to do it yourself or send it out to major publishers for them to do the rest is the next call. Self-publishing is another whole session. Advice is on our website at: <https://wmpub.ca/05-services.html>

## **Guidelines For Submitting Manuscripts**

**NEVER send your only copy of your manuscript anywhere.** Keep your original, and either print another from your computer, or photocopy your clean original.

Even before you query, go to the internet, or better still a book store, and research who is publishing other books in your genre. They will be the most likely to look at another book in the same vein. There are far too many horror stories about manuscripts showing up in publishing houses or magazines, that are not even close to the target audience.

**Query first.** If ours, or any publisher's, publishing schedule is full, sending your manuscript is not going to help it get published. Also, please include your full name and address, so they'll have an idea it is a serious query, and not some kind of spam. If this information is not provided, the query will not usually be considered. A good query letter, or email takes time and thought, but well worth it.

If they tell you to send it in for consideration, **send them what they want, not what you think they want.** If they want the complete manuscript, that's what you send. If they want a few chapters and an outline, just send that much. They have their reasons for their requests; don't try to second-guess them. A covering letter mentioning when they told you to send it in, and maybe a small précis to remind them why they wanted it would help. And politely ask how long it might be before a response is given.

**Advice:**

Please know that out of every 10 would-be writers that tell me they are writing a book, only 3 will actually finish writing it.

Of that 3, only 1 may get to send it out to see if it is worthy of publication. Of that group, 1 in 5 will actually be published by a major house. The other 2 may decide to self-publish, depending on the goal and target group of the book.

The fact is, if you don't finish it, you'll never know which group you will fit into.

**Translation:**

Of special interest to this group, translating books and documents is a daunting task, and I commend you for undertaking this field of study. With all the nuances of language it is important to keep the tone of the original. There are associations for translators that will give ongoing workshops and advice. Reach out to them.

**Publishing industry:** Amazon, KOBO, and ebook formats.

**Links for information:**

**Advice for self-publishing:** <https://wmpub.ca/05-services.html>

Gives detailed information on self-publishing concerns, decisions to be made.

**Writer's Links and Resources:** <https://www.cwj.ca/05-writer.html>

Very long list of resources for Canadian writers, including national and regional associations and general writing-related references. Includes link for manuscript format, and email queries if you missed it here. [Manuscript format](#), [email submission form template](#).

**Canadian Writing Contests:** <https://wmpub.ca/cwcc.html>

The **Canadian Writer's Contest Calendar** is updated annually and available in both print and in ebook formats. Testing your writing skills in competitions is a good way to help you become known, and to see where you are in skill levels.