

**Getting Published:  
Notes on Small Presses in General & Hagios Press in Particular**

Hagios Press is a press that embraces the idea of small, our motto is “Excellence in the small”, and our business plan sees Hagios staying small for the foreseeable future. We publish 6 books a year and we publish books in the genres of fiction, non-fiction and poetry.

At Hagios Press we are *driven* to publish those books we are passionate about. Like many small presses, we are willing to take a chance on a book that just may not live up to our expectations in terms of sales.

It is crucial for writers to understand, that the published author has little or no control over any of the crucial choices regarding the final book.

Editor, Ted Solotaroff, said: *Until the manuscript is delivered (to a publisher), power is shared. When the manuscript enters the publishing process, power shifts to the publisher. It is the publisher who decides how the book will be presented to the public.*

The publisher makes the choice on how they will publish a book (from the cover to the interior design), it is the publisher who chooses the promotion and marketing plan for a book and it is the publisher or the publishers agent who cajoles and pitches the bookseller to stock a book.

These choices are made by all publishers small and large. The power shift is real, and writers who have gone through this with various publishers will have different experiences to relate.

At Hagios Press we try to mitigate the power shift to some degree but involving our writers, not in the decision making, but in the dialogue that leads to decisions about their books. We ask writers for their input on basic marketing decisions including the make up of cover copy and design. We feel we benefit from the insights and suggestions of the person who has lived with the work.

If you are a writer who wants to publish you should learn more about the publishing process: how books are made, marketed and sold you should read *Quill and Quire*, *BC BookWorld*, *Prairie Books Now*, you should read *The Perilous Trade: Publishing Canada's Writers* by Roy MacSkimming (M & S).

By learning more about publishing you will have a better understanding of what your options are when choosing a publisher. If you are going to give power to a publisher, do it in a way that meets with your values and preferences as a writer.

Small presses will usually have only a few staff members, if they have a staff at all. Difficult choices have to be made by small presses on how to expend limited resources. Small presses usually have to choose to use a print campaign in magazines and newspapers or send their writer on a book promotion tour.

While many presses are shying away from author tours, Hagios Press sees tours as an effective tool, particularly with first book authors and poets.

Travel is expensive and, although we have some grants to off set travel costs we are committed to the idea of touring as a way of getting books into the hands of our readers and with the independent booksellers we work with along the way.

It takes time to acquire writing skills; a caution for any writer is to not let ambition lead you into publishing before your first or second book is ready. At Hagios Press do not publish unsolicited manuscripts.

We have an open door policy at Hagios for queries. We welcome one to two page queries on manuscripts through out the year. Queries are for us crucial for discovering writers that we aren't aware of, particularly in Saskatchewan.

A query should spark our interest and, give us a sense that you are aware of our publishing program.

A query should provide a tantalizing description of the book you have written and make us want to know more.

A query should give a thumbnail sketch of who you are as a writer without giving us the every detail writing life. Magazine publications are important provide names and dates of publications.

If Hagios Press is intrigued by your query we will ask you for a sample manuscript.

Do not send queries or manuscripts that are being considered by other publishers. We don't have the time to invest in a manuscript that may not be available to us.

A sample manuscript will be 20 –30 pages of poetry or up to 40 pages of prose. At this time we will also ask to see your full literary resume and a more in-depth description of the full manuscript.

We read all sample manuscripts. If we feel that there is a very good chance that your work is a “good fit” with Hagios, we will ask to see the whole manuscript. Depending on the length and genre of the manuscript we will usually be back to writers within a few months with a final determination on their manuscript.

Hagios Press puts a lot of stock in the editorial process. About half of our books are edited by internal editors and we use freelance editors for the other half of our books.

We will often invest in a preliminary editing of a book before we actually offer a contract to a writer that we feel has great potential.

Editor Norman Cousins: “One of the things I have learned about editing over the years is that you have to edit and publish out of your own tastes, enthusiasms and concerns, and not out of notions or guesswork about what other people might like to read.”

Editing is the most mysterious part of the publishing process but at Hagios Press it is a crucial step. Editing makes all the difference in how reviewers, bookstores, and readers ultimately perceive a book. The best small presses will devote as much time as necessary to polish their books so that both the work and the author shine.