

Selling the same article many times—legally and properly!

Once your article has been in print, why not sell it again and again? That's a reprint. Or use the same research and rewrite it for other publications? That's a rewrite (which you can also reprint!) Both are commonly done, perfectly legal, and can increase your income remarkably.

So let me talk about reprints in this blog, and rewrites and modified rewrites in the blogs to follow in a couple days.

If your article appeared in a magazine, say, you can use the same material in newspapers or a book. And if the original publication circulates only in North America, why should the rest of the world be deprived of your rapier wit and literary charm?

Reprints are second-rights sales. (The terms "reprint rights" and "second rights" are identical.)

Almost all editors buy first rights, and you can sell those rights again the minute a first-rights sale hits the stands. You needn't ask the first editor for permission or a release. He used what he bought. First rights means "one-time (first) use," with those rights automatically reverting to you when used.

There is no exclusivity to second or reprint rights. They are simply a reprinting by anyone at any time, with your approval and their payment, of an item that's already been in print. (There are no third or fourth rights.) You needn't change a word in the original and you can offer it simultaneously to any publication you think will buy it.

When you offer second or reprint rights you must tell the potential buyer(s) (1) where the piece first appeared in

print, (2) the date of that appearance, and (3) that you are offering second or reprint rights.

We used to just cut and paste the published version of the article on a sheet of paper (or several) and make clear copies of it, then send a copy to each possible buyer with a cover letter or note. But now you can just send a computer copy of the first use, with a cover letter or note.

You can even offer the same piece to competing publications. But if both buy and use it, though they should have known that there was no exclusivity, they'll probably both be mad at you, which could close one or both markets to future sales.

What does the cover letter look like? Begin it with two lively paragraphs telling what the manuscript attached is about. The letter is a tease to get the editor to read the actual piece, so do it up right—how many will read the copy of the article unless the letter makes it sound irresistible? Then include the information in (1)-(3) above. If you have additional material that would enhance the sale, such as photos or sidebars, mention that next. Finally, offer to send the original manuscript, if interested, so it's easier for them to reproduce it.

Want to see a sample (but fictitious) reprint cover letter?

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(upper left)

Your snail mail address

Your email address

Your phone number

The date

(upper right, below the above info)

Mr. Sempre Compra

Editor, *Reprint Magazine*

3456 Pulaski Ave.

Chicago, IL 60611

Dear Mr. Compra:

Not too many years ago nobody in their right mind, including the readers of *Reprint Magazine*, went to visit Paraguay with enjoyment, peace, or comfort in mind. Its dictators kept the fiefdom unfriendly, and newcomers under constant vigilance, a throwback to the days when they even killed the locals who tried to escape.

No more. The last of the tyrants fled some years back, the gates are open, and the California-sized home of the Guaraní Indians in South America is now ready to share its seldom-seen riches.

That's where I just headed, to key in on the highlights of your readers' possible coming visit, as the enclosed article shows. The article first appeared in *Surprise Magazine* last month, and is now available to you as a reprint. I can also provide the photos shown, plus 40 more .jpegs, for your selection for use on a one-time rights basis, if interested.

Why would they want to go? To see the second oldest city in the Americas (Asunción), trek through the desolate but intriguing Jesuit missions (subject of the movie *The Mission*), swim at the hemisphere's largest hydroelectric dam, tramp through the forested interior providing most of the Americas' exported wood, and gape at the magnificent Iguassu Falls where Paraguay joins Argentina and Brazil.

I can send the original manuscript as an attachment, with some (or all) of the best photos.

Me as the author? In addition to writing the *Travel Writer's Guide* (published by Prima) and 40 other books, I've had 1,700 articles in print, most in travel. But the enclosed article tells all. If it would add to your pages, we're in business!

Gordon Burgett

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That's it. (There's a lot more about the writing and selling process in my [Travel Writer's Guide](#).) If the editor wants to use it, send the file and photos. They usually pay a half or a third as much as they do for first rights, but if you can get three or four buyers you are ahead of the game! They also are more likely to pay you on publication (when it appears in print), but they do pay: I've never been stiffed on a reprint sale.

You can find reprint buyers in the current **Writer's Market** (usually in the reference section in the library, as well as online). Go to other publications in the same genre as the one that bought the first rights. It will usually say in the description if they buy second or reprint rights.

Good luck,

Gordon Burgett