

Why was your article query rejected again?

Who writes **articles** in 2015?

At least **1,486,000** writers had a journal article published in 2010. Some were written by two or three authors. And that's just journals. And that was five years ago.

2,000,000 blog posts will be written today. **Today**. Another 2,000,000 tomorrow, and so on...

The difference is that articles must be accepted by someone to see light, while blogs can be your own and there's no stopping them. But if it's somebody else's blog you want to be a guest in, ugly acceptance (the kind side of rejection) rises again.

I've had about a zillion articles in print (I tell my grandkids) and I've been rejected .5 zillion times (I don't tell them). Mostly, from 40+ years, much as an editor, let me tell you why the editor wants you to go away.

1. 85 people contacted the editor wanting to be in the next issue of their publication. Only **one** will make it that day, or **8** in a magazine that month. For starters, the editor really wishes you'd just disappear.

2. But you probably won't. You think you're useless if you're not on those pages, and damnit... At least **contact the editor the way she/he wants to be approached**. If they want an old-fashioned query letter ("would you be interested in an article about...") sent by snail mail, half the war may be won by finding a stamp and a mailbox.

3. **Don't think the editor will make an exception for you** if you send a query by email. You have to get his email address for starters (you can't just send it to info@publication), and

if he/she doesn't want emails from the unwashed, getting that address will be harder to find that Harry Truman's middle name.

4. **Have you even read the publication** you are hounding? Did you wonder why the editor says (Read our publication first to see...) Read it to see what they use, how many words they want, do they use humor (if not, the joke's on you)...

5. **When was the last time the editor ran an article about the very topic you want to hawk?** See if there's an index you can find through Google telling what they've published. (Whenever I used a travel piece about Montana I got 10 queries in 10 days about Montana. We included Montana once a year because we had six subscribers from there. Did you wonder why there were almost no Montana articles in the index?)

6. If you **did read the last three issues**, did you get a sense of what the editor probably needed and wasn't in the index? Make that topic leap off the query letter for two paragraphs like an O'Henry short story (but give the ending). Just don't tell the editor that you know he/she needs that topic.

7. **Rejections come from these things:** no query, a query longer than one tight page, the editor has no idea what you will write about...or how you know that...or which three "experts" you will interview...if you've ever been in print anywhere...profanity and bad sex on their pages upset the advertisers...you forgot periods and commas...you signed, from your buddy!...there is clear evidence that you are insane...there is not a *got a* of appreciation for the editor giving your rantings full consideration...threats don't work before (or after) lunch...and the editor doesn't care (in fact, quietly applauds) that you will quit journalism forever if he/she doesn't give you a go-ahead.

Just in case you were wondering.

But don't give up—where will journalism be? There are still

1,485,999 article slots to be filled. (Also, spell the editor's name right and if you don't know about their gender, call them by their last name preceded by Editor... Editors need at least one laugh a day.)

Keep at it,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. You wonder what a legitimate professional query letter looks like? For \$5 we'll let you [download](#) 20+5 of them. Please at least rewrite these queries before you try to reuse them again!

[A paid speech you can book at every association any year...](#)

I call it **the "state of the art" speech**, but it could have lots of similar names. And if you do it right, the sponsor is very likely to ask (perhaps even beg) you to give it again and again! (You can even build your own empire around it.)

An example helps here. Let's say there is a Lighthouse Management Association, there are 50,000 lighthouses, and twice as many members who are involved in keeping the light lit and the coal stacked. (You can see what I know about lighthouses, born in suburban Chicago!)

The core of your "state of the art" lighthouse management presentation would **answer these three questions**:

(1) How did lighthouses and their management get to where they

are now? That's mostly quick history, some "march of time" visuals, problems along the way, and their solutions. Call this **IN THE PAST**.

(2) It's 2015. How are the managers and lighthouses doing today? Numbers, budgets, the most common or most serious 5 or 10 current problems, plus visuals of several model lighthouses. Maybe a summary of the best and worst job requirements for the chief honchos. A look at salary ranges, lighthouse-related courses in colleges, anything they want to know more about across the country (or is it shore to shore?) This is **RIGHT NOW**.

(3) **IN THE FUTURE** might be at set dates (5, 10, 15, 50 years from 2015), or in the near future and the far future (provide realistic time spans like 2020-30 and after 2030...). Here you focus on changes afoot now, possible need solutions likely implemented in the future, long-range needs decades away and how they might be met... If possible, maybe even some sketched visuals of how lighthouses might look in 50 or 150 years.

Compiling (1) is pretty much a history dig, some search tools, lighthouse history accounts and books, a few retellings of relevant "as it was" stories by the pioneers. Humor helps here, as does brevity. (Summarize it in the speech, but you might do full research and write "the" or "a" key book about it in the future. That's another foundational brick in your empire.)

The association may be your biggest helper in **composing and organizing (2)**. It's always amazing how little most practitioners know about the larger field they serve. (They are busy doing what they do where they are at. To know more is probably why they are at the convention you would address.) Gathering the present-day facts is another blog. Lists are good: lighthouses and managers (or how to find them quickly), money in and out (global to wee beamers), personnel job descriptions, most common local and national problems

(financial, political, directional, technical), equipment (present, problems, solutions), and so on. The listeners should know in 20 minutes the current state of the lighthouse art (where they are, why, how they are the same and different—you fill it in.)

Number (3), probably the last 10-15 minutes, **is the testiest** because it's "maybe" stuff and usually anybody's guess. Of course the listeners will wonder if you are just pulling the guesswork out of the air—or their leg. One way to handle that is to say that you contacted 100 scattered lighthouse managers with a questionnaire, plus of course you asked the associationfolk and a dozen recommended "big names" in this field (you actually have to do it!) and here are the 10 trends or innovations or areas of most likely change they saw in the future. List the 10. You might place them on a horizontal "future line" with dates every 5 or 15 or 25 years when they would most likely be started or implemented. Then you discuss all 10, most in some depth (with source links, if available), a few shorter "who really knows but..." comments.

Why would associations or related sponsors jump at the chance to book this speech or seminar? Because it's exactly what the members want to know. And in a small part because you are objective and aren't likely to be pumping some company line. (The questionnaire will help you see what they do want to know. Just ask, "What do you really want to know the most about..." and "How will your lighthouse look in 50 (or 100) years?—or "ideally, how might your lighthouse (or your job) look in 50 (or 100) years?"

Why would they hire you to speak if you can't tell a lighthouse from a farm house? Because if you present yourself and the topic right, they need to share that information. It would be easier if you were a 40-year lighthouse manager, or at least a manager, knew lighthouses, were an association soul, were a federal officer dealing with lighthouses, were a futurist and you did "state of the art" speeches (preferably

about lighthouse management), taught lighthouse history, and so on. But an experienced speaker with a long interest in lighthouses might be plenty. (Long might be relative. Perhaps long vertically, with book jamming your new passion.)

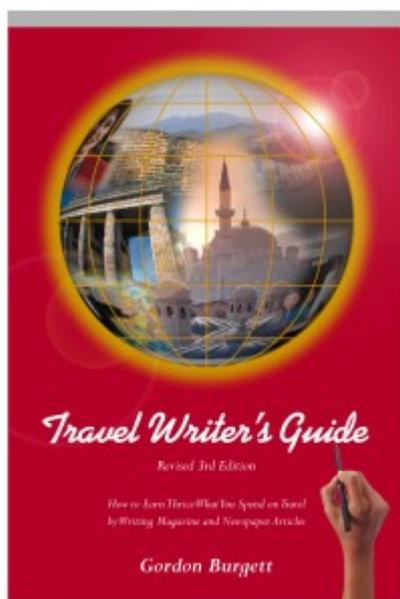
Where does the empire fit in for you? If what you say on speech day is a resounding (or even moderate with clapping) success; it was honest, instructive, and even (heavens) enjoyable; it made huge sense to all listening, and they want a follow-up in two or three years (with more emphasis on (2) and (3), that's a warm roar telling you to write a book in the general lighthouse management area. And from that book you spread out with more books, more speeches (why not a next-year follow-up about technology, management, and lighthouses, another related need the following year, and on the third year, "state of the art" again?) By that time you're an "expert" in your defined ("state of the art in...") area and attendees eagerly fill your hall to hear about themselves again. Emperors or empresses open the door with expertise, then expand it (and add other information dissemination means to sell more of it, like books, a newsletter, blogs, workshops, public speeches (at lighthouses?), videos, and so on...) An excellent way to begin the financial fiefdom is by starting with "a paid speech you can book at every association any year..." (Just pick one you at least really care about!)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. I'm half done with a how-to "state of the art" book. I will run an occasional blog on this topic too. If you want to know more or know a "state of the art" speaker whom I might interview, send an email (gburgett@gmail.com) or get on my free, every-two-month, easy-to-escape [newsletter](#) and I will add you to the "state of the art" elist and tell you when the book has seen light. You'll get a discount too!

How you can sell your articles 150% of the time...



I know, **150% of the time?**

Yes, it could be much, much higher, but it seems imprudent to scare you in the title.

Let's focus on magazines here, where the pay is higher and acceptances are harder to get.

(Selling newspaper travel is easier and the possible sales ratio is higher too, but the pay is very modest. The process? Find a fetching location with something new, write a 1200-word "second" article, don't send to the nationals, and keep the submissions 100 miles from each other. A photo or two sometimes helps. Write it once and submit it simultaneously, and since you wrote it once and if you sell it, say, four times, that's 400%. My [Travel Writer's Guide](#), available only as an ebook now, at \$10, tells all.)

With magazines there are no grapeshot submissions, the competition is tougher, the article space rarer, and you must change hats to earn that extra 50%—but often you can stick with the same topic!

Getting on their pages depends very much on how you ask. (If you don't ask the editor in advance—you just write something and send it in—your selling percentage plummets, or you're selling wee items now and then for wee pay.) For a full article you must ask the editor if you can send your masterpiece (but don't call it a masterpiece). You need a "go-ahead," a positive response to get through the buying gate. A go-ahead isn't acceptance—yet. It says that the editor agrees to give your idea and its preparation full consideration for one of the 4-8 article slots still open for a coming issue. (The copy will probably be in print several or many months away). In other words, you write it and in the "let me see it" response the editor is saying "I'm interested enough to give it full consideration." Not an assignment but if you do it right it's almost a sale.

What is "doing it right"?

1. Probably half of your selling time is spent pre-query, the other half is sending on time what you promised in the query. (A day late, the ship probably hasn't sailed. No apologies, but scold yourself. Late a week or more, wave goodbye—and stay out of that editor's sight for 18 months or longer.)
2. Find a topic that is irresistible for that readership. Study earlier issues to 4-6 months back. What is the editor buying? Write down six topics. Find the cutting edge, new facts, new studies, trends about to break, laws changing, a look-back 100 years, celebrities or leaders the reader must know, what fits the season 4-6 months ahead? (Check to see that your choice wasn't on those pages in the past two years.)
3. Don't know much about it? Learn. You need facts, quotes,

and anecdotes. See what others are saying—and aren't. Think like a reporter. Build a fact base, list people who are leaders in the field or are current bright lights.

4. Then write a one-page query letter that asks the editor, in essence, "Would you be interested in an article about?" Make the topic jump off the page, cite the experts you will quote or interview, tell what's new or different or what excites you as a reader, include a short paragraph about your credits (if none, say nothing) and that you can have the piece in their hands 2-3 weeks after a go-ahead. (Check my blog "**Nothing sells more articles than a great query letter**" from 3/14/2011—write the date or "query letters" in the search box at the top of this blog.)

5. One precaution before querying: see if the editor ever printed humor. If so and it's your style of writing, inject something funny in the query and in the final copy. If they don't, don't.

6. Write other query letters to other editors about other things while you await a reply.

7. If/when the editor writes back an eager response, study the last two issues, pulling apart at least one article in each. (The blog "**How to study a printed magazine article**" will help here. It appeared on 3/31/2011.) Get the idea and words together and write your piece like the authors wrote to be in print in the target magazine issue you studied. Stay in the same ballpark. If the editor gives you specific instructions or suggestions, do them. Edit and edit again: make it as light and tight as a drum. Then mail it off, as clean as a Dutch stoop. (If photos are an issue, get them off too. Ask the photo/art editor if there's a submission protocol, and follow it.)

8. Then if that editor just can't or won't say yes, don't worry about it. They can have 100 legitimate or ridiculous

reasons. Find a similar magazine, remold your query to its readership, and query again. (But only one query at a time.) That's why you don't fully research and write the article until the editor gives you a go-ahead.)

But if you score a bulls eye, super. You go the gilded nod. Write and rejoice. You only write the winning manuscript once—that's your 100%. Query letters are door-knocking. Congratulations! You've done it like the pro's do. Neither you nor they have time to do the full prep without having at least the 50% chance you get with the query and go-ahead.

The other 50% (which is really 100%, 200% or 500%)?

There are two paths (and a combo) into this post-sale heaven: (1) you sell the very same article described above (after it has appeared in print) as a reprint (also called second rights), (2) you significantly redesign the just-sold article (again, after it has appeared in print), then you rewrite its query letter so you can submit your redesigned article after you get a "go-ahead." You can rewrite the subject as many times as it can be configured into a distinctly unique article. And (3), you can sell reprints of the rewrites too.

The reprinting and rewriting can actually be more profitable than selling the original article, but it's seldom as exciting!

Let me share the specifics about the **"Profits from reprints, rewrites, and reprints of rewrites"** in a blog by that title printed here a few days back, 2/7/15.

I know that all of what I'm telling you works because I put two sweet daughters through grad school, plus fed several suffering wives, by doing it. Now it's your turn!

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Profits from reprints, rewrites, and reprints of rewrites

As long as you have written a fetching **article** that an editor wants readers to read on his/her pages, why not sell the same blend as **reprints**, then mix the same magical facts, quotes, and anecdotes into a **rewrite** or two with different slants? You could even sell some **reprints of the rewrites** later on!

Lest that sound like a hapless hodgepodge of word play, it's precisely what professional writers have done for decades to squeeze much more honest pay out of ideas, facts, interviews, photos, lists, and historical slants, plus similar retellings elsewhere in the world.

I blush only slightly to admit that my reprints and rewrites kept me and my family alive (and the girls later in college) for many years until books and speaking came to the rescue!

Alas, what baffles writing novices is how it's done, where second-rights markets hide, how reprint-seeking editors are approached, and how copyright toes aren't stepped upon. So I've tried to mentally untie the strings in **30-page wee ebook**, now offered almost instantly by [Kindle](#) or [us](#) for the shameless sum of \$2.99. It's called [Reprints, Rewrites, Reprints of Rewrites, and Resales: Sell What You Write Again and Again \(and Again\)...](#)

Want some quick peeks under the printed sheets?

Think **newspaper** (or **magazine**) travel where almost any site almost anywhere has four or five different slants to be seen

anew, or to be reborn in comparison with four other like places or three different epochs. "Downton Abbey" begs to be slanted a dozen ways (each an article or a spin-off), like fashion, class, downstairs/upstairs, pre- and post WWI... Or the Life of Lords in the 1100s; in the days of Shakespeare; in France, Russia, Sweden, or Spain (or any of them in comparison with Julian Fellowes' currently created TV society and castle)...

Or the **sidebars** accompanying any article above: specifics about how to actually visit any site suggested, the state of health and medicine then or there, the life of children at any point or place, or of women, or the lame, the gifted, the odd. Sidebar shards gathered like caste-offs from unused research, then re-grouped to fill readers' by-product curiosity and questions.

When are **query letters** needed (mostly for full articles), or how **cover notes** cover newspaper simultaneous submissions—see four samples in the ebook—or if/when you send sidebar copy, unannounced, with the expected text—when it's short and you can't bring yourself to throw it away!

When **reprints** are welcome (by "pay on publication" editors) and how their arrival is announced. Can you make changes in the reused copy? When should you? Which **photos** can be sold (any not bought by the original buyer). How many more complications arise when you sell the **reprint of a rewrite**?

And the breadwinners, the shiny new **rewrites**, mostly restructured, words and ideas in new places, a different article sharing many common bricks (and sometimes a few quotations). But how much must they be rewritten? Or whether they are rewrites must be said at all. And those photos again—just remember that those sold are toxic to resell.

A final point, if reprints and rewrites seem akin to journalistic thievery. The best return in writing for money

comes from **niche publishing**, which can be the baronial foundation of empire building, where just one set of words about one need or frustration met can indeed be very rich mortar. Most of that long-life paying mortar comes from reworking and reusing the same words and ideas again and again, the same we are discussing here, but in niching more than the same.

Best wishes unraveling!

Gordon Burgett

P.S. If **“Writing Travel Articles That Sell!”** is the kind of four-hour seminar you might need, and Santa Rosa, CA, is within driving distance, I will be offering the program from 1-5 p.m. on Saturday, February 7. Please check the details [here](#).

Can you sell the same article to a magazine, newspaper, and blog?

(1) Can you sell the same article to a magazine and a newspaper?

(2) And can you use the same article or item in both print on paper and in the digital market, like blogs, at the same time?

The real question for both is “Should you...?”

With a big healthy dose of caution and common sense you probably could. But with a bit more common sense you probably wouldn't.

#1 has a stronger protocol in place. If you query a pay-on-acceptance magazine and they agree to publish the article, in print it's theirs, even if they only bought first rights. You can then create a different query, write a different article (you can use many of the same facts, with discretion, and maybe a few of the earlier quotes), and sell it again to another magazine. I'd make sure they aren't competitors or you'd likely lose both for future sales. Best if they hug different coasts. That's the rewrite system.

On the other hand, you can use the same copy from the first buyer, without a whit of change—and sell it as **second (or reprint) rights** to anybody who will buy it. In that case you copy the article once it's in print and send the copy to your other potential buyer(s) with a cover note that explains (a) "I sold first rights to XXX Magazine on Y date, (b) it appeared in print on Z date, as you can see by the copy enclosed, and (c) I am offering you second (or reprint) rights. Who would buy it? Those that buy second or reprint rights. It tells you who they are in the **Writer's Market**.

Incidentally, you can sell a **rewrite** of the original the same way too. And all **photos** that were sold on a one-time rights basis to the original magazines can be resold with the reprint(s)—plus all those that remain unsold.

Then you can sell **reprints of the rewrites!** Does it ever end?

#2 is more good business than a traditional, accepted procedure. You can fairly well track a printed article if it's to a reclusive niche market; there may be no rights conflict. But digital sales somehow travel around the world like lightning and nobody will be pleased if the reader/viewer finds it popping up "free" just when the other paid for some exclusivity.

Instead, do what professionals do when they find a chewy fact bone. They cut it into pieces, focus on some distinct element

in each segment, get particular quotes about each bonelet, then write the devil out of it so none of the articles or items look (much) like the others—then they sell each to a different market. The best of all worlds would be to also write each in a different language!

Think of baseball as a field you could play on. If you focus your writing solely on retelling Lou Gehrig's "goodbye" speech, heavens. Even if you're a magic-word genius, where do you go to sell it the fourth time?

But you could play your whole life following, say, the National League teams and players and the World Series from 1876 to now. You could even start with the Cubs (then the White Stockings) winning the very first pennant that first year, beating the Louisville Dark Blues in six games...

There's a lot more about rights, reprints, rewrites, and resales in about five of my **blogs at this site**. Just put those words in the search box near the blog title. Also see my [Travel Writers Guide](#), which is a few books short of being O.P. The [ebook](#) lives on, though, and lots of the bound versions hide in libraries.

Patience. You still have to write and sell that first article. By that time you will be so rich and brilliant these reuse answers will just ooze out of you!

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Find a new, streamlined website domain among 600 choices!

Trying to find a **grabber website domain** ending in “.com” that contains less than an arm’s length of letters is a near-fruitless treasure hunt. You probably can’t use “.org” and will anybody come if it ends in “.net”?

The hunt is over. Last February, the ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers), an international non-profit charged with overseeing the Internet’s infrastructure, modestly opened the namegates for website owners. Its **600-some new web domains** are dramatically changing the face of the Internet by providing more tailored domains beyond examples like “.com” and “.net”.

I’ll give some **examples below**. According to Ray King, CEO of Top Level Design, in bookbusinessmagazine.com, publishers (or anybody) can capitalize on the domain expansion to make their websites and products more accessible to readers (by adapting) secure, short, and succinct web URLs that are specific to their work or aims.

These new gTLDs are **not limited to publishers**. Any person or firm can get one of these new URLs.

Instead of best businesspracticesinorthopedicdentistry.com, a mouthful, I might try bestorthopedicbusinesspractices.dentistry—which, as I read it, is about as bad. Here are much better examples. Children Slay Monsters.com might be ChildrenSlayMonsters.book or ChildrenSlayMonsters.fiction.

Or perhaps Boiseflower.shop or stepmother.consulting?

You can check out the 600 new gTLDs at [Go Daddy](http://GoDaddy), enom, and

[Network Souldtions](#). I used [marcaria.com](#) where you can also see a long list of choices, with annual costs. It's **first-come, first-served**. Registrars will also "hold" a name for a yet-to-released extension so it's yours when that happens.

Is anybody "big" doing this? Google itself applied to manage 101 new gTLDs.

Do annual fees vary? Of course. In my niche:

K-12schoolboard.expert costs \$50

K-12schoolboardexpert.com is \$13

K-12schoolboardexpert.us is \$5.

Service might vary too. At least you want to use ICAAN-accredited domain registrars. According to Ray King in his recent blog "*Publishers Can Boost Discoverability with Newly Released Web Domains*," you can also use other non-Latin script, like Arabic and Chinese.

Here are a few **extensions already available** that might interest self- or giant publishers: guide, report, institute, consulting, education, reviews, training, university, services, and book.

Will this distinguish your firm or improve your online outreach? Can you target your title better? Or can you reassure your clientele that you are almost kin in their niche? Check the list and play around with new combinations. A more streamlined, simpler name **might be the key to the new you!**

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Niche books are very profitable. How are their authors chosen?

I publish to niche markets, in my case to K-12 school administrators. All of those who write books for my firm must have a specific field of expertise of interest (and meet needs of) K-12 school administrators. Two examples, our two latest books, are [*The Art of School Boarding: What Every School Board Member Needs to Know*](#) and [*The School Principal's Toolbook*](#). Our book titles tell the kind of knowledge (and expertise) the author is sharing.

Before we ask an author to publish with us we know that they are the best expert we can find about their topic. The author tells us what of their expertise our niche members will pay to read about; that is, what buyers' needs their book will help the buyer meet. Together, we write a title that tells in one short line what their book is about, and from it we create a book description that explains more fully what the book will cover and what benefits they will receive from buying (and applying) the book's message and processes. Finally, we develop a tentative table of contents so that everything important is covered in a sensible order.

The writer then writes their book, we edit it (in collaboration with them), they rewrite what needs redoing, we have it proofed, we edit a last time, and out comes the book.

I mention the process because we have a second and equally important selection criterion for the writer: that they have experience speaking to the niche, are an association member, and expect to regularly offer major presentations built around the book and their expertise to the niche. A logical extension is that their listeners will want to buy their book after

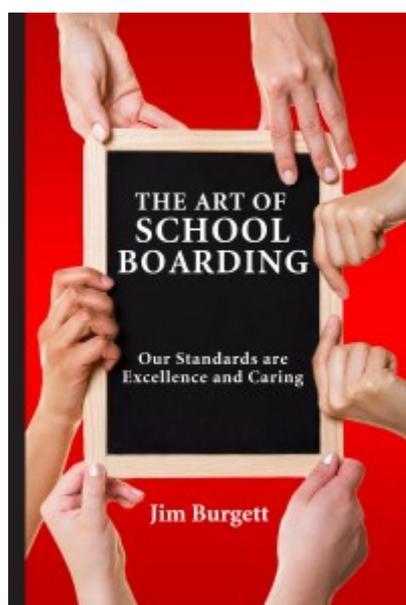
hearing their presentations. (We also encourage them to write articles based on their book for association newsletters, journals, or related venues.)

We want to help our authors build their own expertise “empires,” and we hope that the book that we jointly create is the foundation of that growth.

The reason for this blog? How do we select or reject authors is a frequent question asked when I speak about niche publishing, so I hope the information above shares some insight into our firm’s procedure.

We also pre-test our niche books so we know, before the books are written and printed, an approximate number of bound books we will sell, the price (or range) that buyers will pay, and if the title is acceptable. How that’s done requires much more detail and examples. The best source is my [**Niche Publishing: Publishing Profitably Every Time**](#). Other related material can be found [here](#).

Best wishes,



Gordon Burgett

How can I syndicate my article or my writing?

Syndication is the goal of many of my writing/publishing seminar attendees, so let me share what I know about it so you can pursue it farther on your own, if you are then still interested.

What they mean is usually one of two things: (1) having a syndication (very few still exist) or a newspaper chain take an article (or today perhaps a blog) and sell it (as is) to many other publications "in their chain," or (2) a syndicate would set up the process where the writer prepares a series of articles (or blogs) so they will appear each month usually as a special column. The syndication finds and signs the buyers, sells your gems, and pays you a percentage. The more times it appears, the more money you make.

A great idea but very, very hard to arrange. **The usual barriers:** (1) there are very few syndicates; check Google; (2) there are fewer newspapers, with less print space, (3) magazines are far less interested as well, (4) editors will only seriously consider a writer with lots of items in print, (5) being famous helps a lot, (6) a popular book helps that much more, and (7) how do they (the syndicate "selling" you or the editor buying your output) know you can produce top-quality material more than once, particularly month after month?

You want to try it anyway? Great! Find a syndicate, see the kinds of publications they serve, zero in on a topic or theme the readers of those publications care a lot about, and write six columns (or articles or blogs) to send to the syndicate or

editor you think will hire you. Include a query letter explaining your quest, plus a full resume that contains some references. (More anon.) Since short is always better than long, make the six samples 400-600 or so words long, each separate and prepped in ready-to-use copy form. If you have a book in print, send a free copy too.

Don't ask if they will pay you in your first submission! (If they pay freelancers, they will pay you.) You can send it to as many editors as you wish. Most will reply, in time. If any say "yes," follow those up with whatever the editor wants to read or hear. In the meantime, keep writing and selling the regular way.

I suppose the gist of **winning query letters here** would include: you like their publication because..., you'd like to share some very interesting information with their readers because..., you have (or can write) many items or articles that they may wish to syndicate (samples enclosed) because..., and they should include you on their pages because... In short, how your syndicated pieces will (mightily) help the readers and the magazine. Then take it from there.

Have I ever done this? Yes, but the travel editors of a couple dozen newspapers scattered across the country probably didn't know. They received a newspaper article from me in the regular way: fully written, with a cover note attached that gave the highlights of the article and told of the availability of photos. If they wanted to see the pix, I mailed a proof sheet of b/w's, they picked out what they wanted, and I sent the negatives. (That was the process before the Web and digital cameras.)

How was that syndicated? If the editor liked (and used) the article, he'd usually write back and ask if his newspaper could syndicate it. (Example: the *Chicago Daily-News* and the Field Syndicate.) I wrote the editor back, told him I was honored to be asked but I was mini-syndicating it myself and

it was likely that there would be rights difficulties if it got syndicated again where I was already submitting. I never lost a sale.

Did that work? Yes. I usually sold two to four articles to a regular 13-18 targets, but twice I sold 9 of 13 and once I submitted to about 100 and I think I sold more than 30—I know it was past 20 but I was too busy to keep track. (**If you want to see this article/photo process in detail**, see my book [The Travel Writer's Guide](#).)

Getting back to the question of how you get syndicated, I think there are only **a few ways that up your odds**: (1) see the editor of your **local newspaper** and discuss writing a regular or weekly column (the best of which can be syndicated [as reprints] elsewhere later), (2) focus very tightly on a **niche topic**, probably write “the” book about it, and stay visible so some editor in the field asks you to write regularly for his/her publication, when you might suggest a column or syndication, or (3) **become some kind of celebrity** so it would be a “feather” in some editor’s bonnet to have your name regularly on their pages.

Not very encouraging, I know. Of all the above, if you can get some editor to ask you to do it, bingo. Or have some syndication “court” you so you/they can earn from your notoriety. (But please **don't get notorious by bumping off lowly blog writers**.)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Copyright? Using others' words or artwork in your book.

To avoid the whole issue just read or hear what others say and retell it in your words. That would be the text of your book.

But there can be wee pitffalls. If you are quoting them directly, you must tell the reader who they are, and usually the context of the statement. Others often know more than you do about your topic. As long as you use their information fairly and accurately, write away. It's your book.

If it's just text and it's dated (say 100 years plus), don't worry. It's good to inject a bit of Lincoln or Pedro II to add some heft and authority! Or if it's from public figures and was said publicly, even yesterday, you can almost always use it, too. Particularly if it appeared in a government-issued publication, which is almost never copyright protected, and thus anything from it is yours to "borrow."

Just plain facts are the bricks of your book building. Copyright only protects the words in the order in which they are used. It might say in copyrighted print "The Mayans at their peak never saw horses. Horses had long since disappeared in the Americas, and their descendants only reappeared when the first Spaniards reached the Mayan Empire, or what remained of it." (To see if the book, in this case, is copyrighted, look for the symbol on the *volta face* page, the page almost always following the opening title page.) You can use any fact from those two sentences any way you wish, but you can't use the words in that order because how the words are used together is the artistic creation that the copyright protects. You can quote it (as I have done) but you then must indicate where it came from.

Or you can paraphrase it. Thank God. For example, you might say that Arthur McLouse, pre-historian of the Americas, contends that Mayans never saw or knew of horses before the Spaniards arrived in the Yucatan. You needn't use his name or the reference either. You can just say that Mayans never saw or knew of horses before the Spaniards arrived.

But if you are going to pluck the actual words out of copyrighted or privately-owned sources, you will may have to get permission to quote that material. It isn't clear if it's necessary if you only use a limited amount of text, but getting permission is almost certain if you use images, photos, graphs, charts, software, and other artwork from a copyrighted source.

Also, titles and interviews you personally conduct need no copyright release, but poetry, music, lyrics, and personal letters definitely do.

What doesn't need someone else's copyright or permission to write about are ideas, even if the idea came from something you read about in another's book. So you could write a book (or even part of a book) about the Mayans and horses, or anything you wish.

Mind you, I'm not a literary attorney so if doubt lingers you may want to get legitimate legal advice.

If you request that permission to use a copyrighted element, how might a "Permission to Quote" letter look? See www.gordonburgett.com/permissiontoquoteletter.htm for an example that we have used for decades.

Writing the book itself is the most important thing, and copyrighting it yourself is the next step once it's in print. (Get TX forms from the Library of Congress. Do it digitally; see Google for the sources.) I talk a lot more about this in [**How to Get Your Book Published in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days.**](#)

I hope that helps.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Where do you find more information for your book?

Here are some solid starters:

* Start with a keyword list. Think, if you need the four (or six or ten) words that best describe your topic, what would they be? Create two columns on a piece of paper. Put those keywords in the first column.

* Head to Google (or more specific search engines) and type in the keywords, one at a time. See how often those interested in your topic seek information about it using those terms. Then write down in the second column all of the closely-related words or word combinations that appear next to or with your keyword.

* Also find keyword research tools to see how often particular keywords are used on the key search engines, plus what other keywords they suggest. Google.com can help you here.

* Study the links that the search reveals, plus the organizations and other sources providing related information. Follow up on the most relevant links.

* Don't forget the library. First check the magazines and newspapers most related to your topic. Ask the angels of the stacks, the reference librarians, how to do this quickly and

thoroughly. Let them help you develop a specific hunt for the kind of information you need to make your book up-to-date and sufficiently comprehensive.

* Ask them if you have computer access through their library to Lexis-Nexis articles and news sources, and, if so, how that can be done from your home. That's a gold mine.

* If you are writing in the travel field, my book [Travel Writer's Guide](#) will guide you through research and interviewing there. Accuracy is golden in travel writing!

* Have you interviewed anybody for your book, if it's appropriate or needed? There are books about the technique, but it's hardly mysterious. You can interview them in person, by phone, or through email. (If you tape, ask permission. If they say no, write fast!)

Know something about the person you wish to interview before you make the contact, know basically what you want from that interview, prepare your questions in a logical order, and then contact them. (Once I wanted to interview then Governor Adlai Stevenson, so I called his office to see if I could set that up. In short, he answered the phone—and said he had about six free minutes right then if I was ready to go!)

Tell them you are in the middle of writing a book about ____, and you'd like to share their thoughts or knowledge about three specific things. (If it's by phone, tell them it will take less than 15 minutes.) The book will be published in ____, and, of course, you'll send them a copy when it sees light. Get to the point quickly—and let them talk.

Finally, be accurate when quoting. If you don't understand something, ask the person to explain it in a different way. If you don't hear them, ask them to repeat it. Thank them. Get their address so you can send them a book or article copy.

* Doing research is not a permission slip that allows you to

hide at the keyboard or in the stacks rather than writing and publishing your book. It's an in-and-out card so you can publish lots of books while you're still fairly pink!

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Incidentally, if you need guidance publishing your new (or old) book in ebook form, my [How to Get Your Book Published Free in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days](#) may help.
