

**S u b m i t**

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2nd Edition

**How to Publish  
Your Creative Writing  
in Literary Journals**

Emily Harstone

Authors Publish

# Submit Publish Repeat

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in Literary Journals

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

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## Introduction

In my experience, one of the best ways to become an established author is not by sending out a thousand query letters to agents and independent publishers. Instead, all of my professors in graduate school, famous authors, and poets became established the same way: by publishing their work in literary journals.

A literary journal is a magazine that specializes in publishing work of literary merit. Some focus on a particular genre, like science fiction or crime writing, and others just publish poetry, short stories, or flash fiction. Most are open to work of all kinds. There are well over four thousand literary journals that are being published at this time. Some are printed publications that have 1-12 issues a year, others are electronic publications. Many literary journals have both print electronic versions.

Literary journals are published all around the world. There are respected journals published in English and based out of China, Spain, Germany, and almost any other country you can think of. Most journals are open to work by authors of any nationality.

Many literary journals are associated with an academic institution; most universities have at least one literary journal they produce. Most of these journals are well-respected. Another quick way to spot a respected journal is to see when it started. Some journals have been around for well over a hundred years.

The majority of literary journals do not pay their writers. This is because many are registered as non-profits. It is also because most online sites that publish literary journals have no ads, and thus no obvious way to raise money. Some journals do pay, usually between \$10 and \$75 for poems and short stories. In addition, most print magazines give you a

complimentary copy of the journal your work appears in.

In this book I will talk about why you should submit to literary journals. I will also provide advice on how to find reputable journals, how to submit to them, and all the other practical details involved in submitting.

I have had my work published in over 50 reputable journals, as well as in many anthologies, some of which you can find at most major bookstores. My poetry has been translated and published in over 10 countries. I have also submitted for others professionally. I have placed many poems in prestigious journals for other people. I have done all this in the last four years, and before that point I had never submitted to a literary journal.

This publication history helped me find publishers for both my chapbooks. The first university I was hired to teach at chose to employ me based on my publication record, as at that point I had no

experience teaching at the university level. I also know that publishers will consider my manuscript more seriously, because many of the poems my manuscript contains have been previously published in established literary journals.

Submitting and being published by literary journals has helped improve my writing life in so many ways. That is one of the reasons I always encourage others to get their work out there.

## Chapter 1: Why You Should Submit to Literary Journals

When I was first starting out as a writer, I had no desire to submit to literary journals. I did not really understand what function they served, and I also didn't know how many there were out there; I just thought they were a small niche marketplace.

By the time I entered graduate school I had been published a few times. Most were in journals where I knew the editor and my work was solicited. This sounds nice and easy, but it is actually less rewarding if you know the person in charge of a publication. You always wonder if they chose your work just because they know you.

When I entered graduate school I discovered very quickly why having your work published in literary journals was important, regardless of what genre you wrote. It was a stamp of approval, a way of

making it clear that you were not a novice. It also made it easier to publish work in the future.

The first reason that you should start submitting to journals is that agents and publishers are more likely to sign a contract with an author who has a track record. I had written many query letters before I started submitting to journals, and my author's bio was always depressingly empty.

Once I started to publish my work in literary journals, I started to get the attention of agents and publishers in a way I hadn't before.

Novice writers often complain to me about the expectations agents and publishers have for pre-existing publications. They tell me about how complicated it makes getting the first book published. If they started to submit short stories and excerpts of their novels to journals for publication, they would have a solid stepping-stone towards getting their first book published.

The second reason you should submit to journals is that it can actually attract agents to you, or create a direct connection with a publisher. I know several authors who have received queries from agents after getting their piece published in a prestigious journal.

If the journal is well-respected it can even lead the agent or the publisher to you. In addition, some journals, like *Tin House* and *Rust + Moth*, have a manuscript press attached to the journal. These manuscript presses almost always end up publishing authors whose work has appeared in their journals first.

The third reason that you should submit to journals is, as a general rule, the more you are published the easier it is to get more work published. Now when I submit my work to a respected journal I am no longer a poet without publications, but one who has appeared in many prestigious journals. I don't know if that alters the editor's opinion, but it probably

encourages them to examine my work more closely.  
My work certainly receives more acceptances and  
appears in more prestigious journals every year.

## Chapter 2: How to Know Your Work is Ready to Submit

Most writers struggle with this question the most. They write something and then for a brief moment they feel it is the best thing ever written, then they change their mind. Even after many edits they are not always sure if something is ready. Perhaps you do not do this. If you are someone who is always sure that your work is ready for public consumption, you can skip this chapter.

I am someone who is prone to self doubt and rarely do I feel like a piece is ever truly done, however I have a set of guidelines that help me know when I am ready to submit it. Having these guidelines in place helps me always have something to submit.

**Make Sure the Piece Is at Least Two Weeks Old**

When I first write a poem or short piece of prose I tend not to have any idea if it is any good or not. I lack perspective on it. I like to take at least two weeks off before editing it. I think space and time really helps.

### **Get Another Persons Perspective**

This step is not always possible for me anymore, I write and submit so often that it is hard to find someone to give me detailed feedback for all my poems, but at least for the first few times you submit it is very important to have someone look over the work.

If you are just looking for typos anyone will do, however if you want more feedback than that, and honestly you should probably have it, look for someone whose opinion you trust, or look for a writing group. Many independent bookstores and libraries house writing groups. Writing Groups are wonderful because you get feedback from a variety of people all at one time.

## **Know Your Self**

Most people make the same minor grammatical or spelling errors over and over again. Most writers also tend to overuse a favorite word or phrase.

If you know what mistakes you tend to make in terms of spelling and grammar you can be on guard for these. For example I have a tendency to add more commas than needed.

In terms of words, I sometimes use the word ‘lull’ too often. If you know these sort of things about your own writing you can avoid falling into any obvious traps.

## **Avoid Beginner Mistakes**

Beginning prose writers don’t usually pay enough attention to paragraph breaks.

Poets who have yet to be published tend to fall into a punctuation trap. They tend to use punctuation sporadically. It is best to use consistent punctuation when submitting a piece. Journals are more open to publishing work with established, predictable punctuation.

### **Edit**

Make sure that everything you submit to journals is edited. This may seem obvious but unfortunately it is not. Some people submit their first drafts to literary journals. This usually ends in rejection, but if the piece is accepted with mistakes and the mistakes are published this reflects poorly on the author. Make sure to edit both for mistakes and for content

### **Don't Procrastinate**

Sometimes it is hard to take that final step and submit, even if you have edited a piece a half dozen times or more. Don't fall in to that trap, even if you are a perfectionist. Start submitting after you have completed the above steps and are satisfied with your work. Even if it is not perfect in your own eyes, it could very well be for

someone else. After all, writers are often their own worst critic.

## Chapter 3: The Basics of Submitting

It is very easy to submit your work to literary journals. In the past you had to submit work through the mail with a self addressed stamped envelope (SASE) and it could take months or even years to hear back from the journal. Submitting through the mail still exists but only around 10% of literary journals require you to do so.

Now the world is very different. Turn-around times are much faster. Trees are being saved. Some literary journals still require post submissions, but most accept electronic submissions.

There are two primary ways to submit electronically. The first is through email. That way used to be the most common way to submit. You can use your existing email address or create an account that you use exclusively for submitting. People have personal preferences. It is good to figure out which works better for you.

When you submit via email, some journals prefer the work to be attached and others prefer the work to be in the body of the email. Either way it is easy to submit via email, and rather fast.

However, the second method of electronic submitting is becoming even more popular. Submission managers, largely run by third party services, are becoming even more common. Submission managers are easy to use sites that organize the information for the editors on the other side.

By far the most popular submission manager is Submittable (formerly submishmash). Submittable charges the journals that use it, but not the submitting writers. It is easy and free to set up an account. You can even connect it to a pre-existing Facebook account.

Submittable saves your address and contact information, and makes it easy to insert your cover letter and upload your work. It also allows for easy withdrawals of work from some journals if your piece is accepted elsewhere.

There are other smaller submission managers, but most you have to sign up for on an individual basis.

Once you have done that, all you have to do is update your submission tracker (more on that in the next chapter). Submitting is very easy and once you have submitted a few times and know how to find good journals it can be easy to submit to up to seven journals in one hour.

## Chapter 4: Five Tips for Submitting

### Your Work

If you have never sent your creative writing out to a literary journal before, the experience can be intimidating. Many productive writers try to avoid submitting; however there is no real way around it if you want to get your work out into the world.

This chapter contains five tips for submitting your work. Even if you have previously sent out work before you may still find them helpful. I have been submitting for four years now. After submitting for so long, these tips are still a touchstone for me. They always help me keep on track.

My first tip is to set a submission goal for yourself. Set it somewhere that seems reasonable to you: perhaps five submissions to different magazines per month. I often exceed my per month goal, because once I reach that point, I want the feeling of

accomplishment to linger. Soon those submissions will really start to add up. The more experience you have submitting, the faster you get; as you progress it becomes easier to submit your work. I often have 40 submissions out at a time. Three of the most respected authors I know suggested that this was one of the ways that they became successful. I don't know why 40 is the magic number, but it seems to be the case.

My second tip is to create submission packets. If you are a short story writer you don't need to do this, since most journals only consider one short story at a time. However if you are a poet or a flash fiction writer, journals generally want between 3-5 of your poems or flash fiction stories to consider at a time. I have 5 packets that each contain between 4-5 poems. I always reserve two packets to submit to places that do not accept simultaneous submissions. The rest I submit to multiple places.

My third tip is to keep track of what you submit and where you submit it to. I keep a Word document that keeps track of which journals I have submitted to, what poems I have submitted to them, and when I submitted these poems. I write down which poems have been accepted and where. I document which journals have rejected certain poems. I update this 'submission tracker' every time I submit, otherwise I might submit the same poems to the same journal twice, or submit poems that have been accepted elsewhere, or any similar minor disasters. Make sure you regularly update this document; otherwise it will get out of control. I have included a sample of a very small submission tracker:

***Sample Submission Tracker:***

**Pending:**

The New Yorker, Submitted September 28<sup>th</sup>. What The Living Want (short story)

Perception, Submitted September 28<sup>th</sup>, My Teeth, Supermax, Pumpkin Bread (poems)

**Acceptances:**

Waterhouse, Submitted Jan 14th, 2013. Ham, Companion, Ursa Minor (poems).

**Accepted Companions:**

Block Review, Submitted Jan 25th 2013, Ready (short story).

**Rejections:**

Three penny Review, Submitted Jan 7, 2012. Reel (short story).

Apple Journal, submitted Jan, 7, 2013. Hopscotch (short story)

My fourth tip is to create a couple of biographical statements. When you read submission guidelines, which vary from site to site, almost all of them will require that you include a brief biographical statement and a cover letter. Most submission guidelines are very similar, so as long as you have a biographical statement and a cover letter on a standby it should take you very little time to submit.

One of your biographical statements should be under 50 words and the other should be under 100 words in length. Once your work has been published in various literary journals you should include some of the most recent or prestigious journals in your biographical statement. However, you should not include all of them, that would just be overwhelming and it would come off as unprofessional. Below are examples of biographical statements of less than 50 words, one contains journal names, one does not.

***Sample Bio 1:***

Maria Smith resides in the rural Pacific Northwest. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in numerous places, including: *Tin House*, *The Liner*, and *Echolocation*, and the anthology *Killer Verse*. Her second chapbook *Pancakes for Dinner* is forthcoming in 2014 from Hawthorne Press.

***Sample Bio 2:***

Joshua Jones is a poet, editor, and recovering New Yorker who now lives in Idaho. Joshua once wrote a sonnet every hour for twenty-four hours straight. He loves to hike, cook, and read.

My fifth tip is to create a standard cover letter for all the journals that you are submitting to. A cover letter should be as simple as possible; an editor does not have a lot of time and does not want to be bogged down by the details. If I am submitting to a journal I particularly like, I will include a note about why I like it. Sometimes journals will request that I include additional information such as titles and word count in my cover letter and I will cut and paste that information in. Otherwise my cover letter is almost identical to the sample letter.

***Sample Cover Letter:***

Dear Editors,

The following poems are for your consideration.

Thank you for your time,

Katharine Hathaway

## Chapter 5: How to Prepare Your Work for Submitting

One of the questions I am most frequently asked is how do you choose what to submit? Now there is no simple answer to this but there are a couple of good steps to take.

For one thing I never ever submit a piece that I just wrote. When you first write something, you lack perspective on it. You have that new love glow. Over time this glow fades and you can see the piece from a more objective perspective. I wait at least a month before submitting anything.

Not everything one writes is worth submitting. You should not try to get something published just for the sake of publication. You should be proud of the piece and want to share it.

In addition to giving myself time in order to have some perspective, I much prefer to have someone else look at the piece before I submit it. This does not always happen, but often I am able to get a friend, a family member, or a member of my writing group to give me their perspective on the piece.

Sometimes all they do is catch typos, but often they are able to point out the redundant words that have made their way into the piece. They can also point out what I left out. As writers, we're often too close to our work to know what might be missing. It all makes sense to us, even if it doesn't actually make sense. That's why it is important to get feedback before you submit.

No matter what, I make sure that I edit the piece as thoroughly as possible for typos, misspellings and grammatical errors. No matter how hard I work these sometimes sneak in. A simple mistake can prevent your piece from being accepted. If you are nervous about that aspect of submitting, it might be

worth hiring someone to look over your work. Copy editors can be relatively cheap and easy to find on the web. You can try websites such as Fiverr.

I also try to make sure that I have the right title. I never thought about titles much until I was an editor of a literary journal when I realized that they were the first impression an editor has of the poem. Plus, during editorial board discussions, your poem is almost exclusively referred to by its title.

It is good to choose a title that is memorable, particularly when it comes to short stories or creative non-fiction. Try to choose a title that most other people would not have thought of, yet one that fits with your piece. When I was working as an editor, we received multiple pieces from different authors with the same title. None of these pieces made the final round.

Also, make sure the first line or first paragraph are particularly appealing. If the title is your first impression, the first line or paragraph is your

second. It is important to attract a reader's attention right away. Often, when writing, the first paragraph is the writer's on ramp, their way into the story or poem, however the essential information is not usually contained in the on ramp. Make sure that you have a good first line, even If it requires a number of revisions.

## Chapter 6: How to Submit Your Poetry for Publication

If you're ready to get your poetry published in literary journals, then you're going to need to go through the process of submitting your work. This portion will guide you through the most important step in the process so that you can start submitting your work, and get published.

What is that step? Putting together your submission so that it has the best chance of getting the editor's attention, and being accepted for publication.

When you submit short stories or non-fiction to a journal it can be very straightforward: You just choose one well edited story that you wrote and submit it.

With poetry, things are a little tougher because you have to choose 3-5 poems to submit. There are

several things you have to do before you submit them.

The first step is that you have to choose 3-5 poems that go together. Some journals accept 6 and some only accept 3, but I usually have the packets include between 3-5 poems, because 6 is rare and it's easy to shave a packet of 5 poems down to 3 for one journal.

I call each grouping of 3-5 poems a "submission packet." I usually have between 5-7 submission packets at one time, and each packet contains 3-5 poems. I submit each of these packets to more than one place at a time, but usually to no more than four. That way if the poems get accepted anywhere I can easily withdraw them from consideration at the other publications.

When choosing which poems to place in which packet, I consider the tone. For example, say I have a number of darkly comic poems, I may group these together in a packet.

However there should be variation in each packet. Don't make the mistake of having poems that all have the same tone, theme, and subject matter. The editor who reads these poems only gets one impression of your work, and if it doesn't match with what they are looking for, too bad for you.

Having variation in your packet significantly increases the likelihood of the editor connecting with one of your poems. Still, think about order and sense of narration as well; one poem should not contradict or clash with the next. After you have chosen this group of poems, go over them one last time, reviewing for any obvious mistakes or changes in spacing during the rearranging process.

Some poets often have an urge to over explain the context of their poems in the cover letter when they submit their work to a journal. Restrain yourself from doing that. Most editors won't publish work unless the context is made clear within the poems themselves.

Once you have your submission packets ready, your poems should be ready to submit to any journal! Restrain yourself from editing the packets for every journal, just make sure that the way your poems are formatted to fit the journals' guidelines.

Some journals require your name and contact information to be on every page. Other journals prohibit this and will discard any packet that includes the authors name or personal information. Make sure your packet is formatted correctly for the specific journal.

Once you have a couple of submission packets it is easy to submit your work. Often it will take me no longer than 10 minutes to submit my poems to a journal I am interested in.



## Chapter 7: Print Versus Online Journals

Print journals have been around for a very long time; you can submit to journals that are going into their sixth decade, and have published many famous poets, both dead and alive. Online journals are clearly a newer phenomenon.

There are advantages and disadvantages that are associated with both forms of publishing. Below I will offer my personal opinion.

### Print Journals

The advantage to being published in print journals is that they are generally more established, and they can really help your overall reputation as a writer. The most established and respected journals are all currently in print. With print publication you often you get a free contributor's copy, so you get to see

your work in print. Often these print journals are well bound with a nice cover. If a journal is made well, receiving it in the mail is a thoroughly wonderful experience. It can go on a shelf with all your other printed work, giving you an occasional ego boost. Print journals are also more likely to pay, although they do this mostly through free contributor copies or subscriptions to the journal.

The disadvantage to print journals is that less people read your work. However, this is more a theory than something I can concretely prove. Some journals do have a very large circulation and a large group of consistent readers, but most do not. Many print journals cite the rising costs and a decreasing list of subscribers as the reason they now charge writers to submit their work.

People generally seem more open to reading poems for free online than seeking them out in print or subscribing to journals. All the feedback I have

received from readers that I didn't know has been regarding poems that were published online.

In addition, sometimes you have to pay in order to read a copy of the print journal that your work is in, and sometimes there is not even a discount for contributors. I think it is wrong that the writer should have to pay to see their own work in print.

Print journals often have slower response times. Sometimes it will take over a year to hear if your work has been accepted or rejected. It can also take up to a year after that in order for the journal to be printed.

Additionally, as I touched on before, print journals are more likely to charge readers a fee in order to consider their work. I will talk more about reading fees in a later chapter.

## Online Journals

There are many advantages of online journals. Sometimes they have a large established group of

readers who read the journal regularly. Since nothing tends to be hidden behind a pay wall, there are a lot of great poems out there that people can access for free. It is also easy to share poems that are published online with friends and acquaintances, because you can link to it through Facebook, Twitter, or email.

Online journals can have audio and visual options that are not as easy for print journals to offer. They also tend to respond to your submission a lot faster, and often it is posted online within months. You don't have to wait years to see your work out in the world.

Of course publishing in online journals also has its disadvantages. Most online journals are not taken as seriously as print journals, however this is changing. Even within the last two years, online journals have become more respected. This is partially due to the fact that they tend to have a larger and more vocal group of readers.

Once a piece is printed online you have fewer options open to you in terms of getting a journal to reprint it. Also, you don't get to feel the joy having a journal arrive free in the mail with your poem in it. Instead, it is a link to your work that arrives in your inbox.

I have made some pretty general statements here, because when you go too far into the specifics there are often exceptions. I have submitted my work extensively to both online and print journals. For a while last year I only submitted to print journals, and however rewarding that was, after a while I missed the accessibility and visibility of online publications. So now I am once again submitting to both.

## Chapter 8: How to Choose Where to Submit Your Work

Choosing where to submit is one of the trickiest propositions as a writer. I know some people who submit their work to a great variety of publications, others who only submit to the most prestigious, and some who only submit to journals they like. Really, where you submit is up to you.

However there are good guidelines to keep in mind when submitting. You can personalize these as much as you like, and they change from time to time; mine are constantly in flux. However most of the time when I submit, I do so based on one of the following factors:

### Do They Accept Electronic Submissions?

I am not much of a letter writer, and I hate dealing with stamps. So I generally just submit to journals

that accept submissions electronically. I can be much more efficient this way, and I can submit to five journals in an hour if I try. I also don't have to bother with including self addressed stamped envelopes (SASE) in order to get feedback.

The times I have submitted by mail I noticed several differences. Response times seemed to be much slower: It took most journals around six months to send me a response, either by letter or email. In addition, there were a lot more journals overall that never responded at all and just never got back to me about my work, even though I included an SASE.

However the upside to submitting by mail is that most journals, even established respected journals, which only accept submissions by mail generally have a much higher acceptance rate, because fewer people submit this way. So that is worth keeping in mind.

## Is the Journal Respected?

Not all journals have a great reputation. Some journals accept too much work, others don't seem to have any quality control, while others treat their writers poorly, or don't try to promote their journals at all. Some just want you to pay for a print edition, and others will reflect badly on you if they appear in your biographical statement.

The more you submit the easier it will be to tell if a journal has a good reputation or not. There are several obvious signs that will help you know. The first sign is acceptance rates (more on that later), the second is reviews, the third is how long it has been around, and the fourth is word of mouth. I submit to many respected journals, but I also submit to journals that aren't particularly well known. However, I would never submit to a journal with a bad reputation.

## How Much Work Does The Journal Accept?

Some journals accept almost everything that is submitted to them, while others accept less than 1 out of every 100 pieces they receive.

There is a website called Duotrope that monitors acceptance rates. They base these acceptance rates on data that submitters give them. Most people who use Duotrope report every time a piece of work has been accepted or rejected. Because so many thousands of writers use Duotrope they have a fair amount of data to work with. Not every journal has acceptance rates listed there, but all of the popular ones do. Duotrope used to be a free service, but last year they switched to a pay model, so it now costs 50 dollars a year or 5 dollars a month. They also have free trial offers. Each week they feature a market of the week, and this always includes acceptance rates.

Some journals are notoriously hard to get into, such as: Tin House, The New Yorker, AGNI, Glimmer Train, The Black Warrior Review, Fence, Gulf Stream, and The Paris Review. Other journals are notoriously easy to get into: Danse Macabre, Writers Haven, Leaves of Ink, Dead Snakes, Linguistic Erosion, and The Story Shack. However most journals fall into the middle, accepting between 5% and 30% of the work they receive. So keep that in mind when submitting.

## Do You Like The Journal?

If you visit the website of an electronic journal and are overwhelmed by the bad graphics and the clunky interface, don't submit. You don't want your work to be associated with something you aesthetically dislike or find frustrating. The same should be true for print journals.

Whenever you visit a website or browse a magazine, evaluate it; not just in terms of visual aesthetics but also the writing it contains. You don't have to like

everything a journal publishes, but you should at least like one of the poems, or one of the stories, before submitting. If it's a print journal and they require you to buy a copy to read the contents, then you have fewer options.

I often submit to brand new journals, ones that have never published a single issue, and some of these journals have been wonderful. Most of the new journals I have submitted to have gone on to have great reputations. I took a chance on them, but I never regretted it. Often I will submit to these journals based entirely on website aesthetics. This might sound shallow, but so far it has been a very good strategy.

## Chapter 9: Beginner Mistakes You Can Avoid Making

Not all of the following mistakes are ones I have made. However, as an editor I have seen all these mistakes among incoming submissions. Many of the mistakes listed below are ones you would most likely not make, but are good to keep in mind, just in case. However, some of these mistakes involve more specific aspects of literary journal culture and can be easy to make as a new submitter.

The first mistake is to have overly long cover letters. Now, I already gave you a sample letter, however I really want to stress this point. When I was an editor I received several actual job cover letters with poetry submissions. This information was not needed and not read, but it made it clear that those submissions were from people who did not know how the system

worked. Another common mistake and an easy one to make is to not submit your work to a journal that requests to see more of your work. If editors really like your work but are not sure about the particular poems or versions of the writing you sent in, they may send to you a rejection letter requesting to see more work or to see a different edit of the poems or short story you submitted to them. Take these personal requests very seriously. Editors do not send them out casually. You should make sure to submit your work to this journal again.

One of the biggest mistakes new submitters make is that after their work is accepted by a literary journal they continue to post that accepted work online. This is considered to be impolite and also violates the informal code of conduct or the formal contract many journals have.

Once your work has been published by the journal, the rights to the poem or story returns to you, sometimes immediately and sometimes six months later. At that time you can decide if you should or should not to self publish it on your website or submit it to journals that accept reprints. Even if you just publish it on your website remember to give credit to the journal that originally published it.

Always remember to be patient. Most of these literary journals are run by volunteers who are unpaid and do this in their spare time. Querying an editor a couple times a month, or even a year, to find out if your work has been accepted is most likely not going to help the situation.

One of the mistakes I myself have made is to assume something about the size of the journal. Once after my work was accepted I wrote the editor back, we had a mutual friend in

common and I mentioned her in my reply. Unfortunately that editor never saw my email. Another editor had taken their place. The awkward reply I received from the new editor, a complete stranger, was not an experience worth repeating.

Make sure that you never ignore any clear guidelines set out by the journal. If they tell you to format your work a particular way, do it. They probably have a good legitimate reason. Many journals receive so many submissions every month that it is hard to keep track of everything properly unless these guidelines are followed. They have every right to ignore your work, and many do so if you do not follow their guidelines.

If you submit your work simultaneously to more than one journal at a time, you have to make sure to go about it in the correct manner. Most contemporary journals in the United States are open to simultaneous submissions. If a press does not mention

simultaneous submissions it is safe to assume that they accept them. If a journal makes a direct statement saying that they do not accept simultaneously submitted work, it is up to your conscience to submit or not. Most of the established authors I know do anyways.

However the most important thing that you can do is report when your work is accepted elsewhere. Say a journal accepts one of your poems or a short story that you have submitted to ten other places. You then have to write those ten other places to withdraw the piece.

If you submitted through the manager Submittable you can withdraw the piece using the same system. It is very easy to do, although a little time consuming. If you submitted more than one piece and they only accepted one, you can tell the other publications of this situation. This is the right thing to do, and should ensure that you are on good terms with the editors whose magazines you submit

to. It is the responsible way to simultaneously submit.

Some journals have a huge staff of readers and editors, others are just one person. Some journals, particularly ones associated with academic journals, have a high staff turnover rate, with the editors and readers changing every semester or year. Other journals have had the same main editors for over two decades. It is always safest to assume that the editorial staff do not know you, even if you have been published by that journal before. The most important point I can make though, is this last one: You should always be polite. Since you never know who will be receiving your work and who will be reading it, or how many people will be reading it, you should always be polite.

The literary community is a small one, and the more you submit to journals the more you realize that everyone knows someone who

connects back to you or connects deeper into the community. Comments written in jest in emails can easily be misconstrued, so be careful even with that.

It is better to be boring and polite than to accidentally insult someone. Of course this works both ways. Journals that have not handled work well or have had rude editors tend to be known and avoided by the writing community at large.

## **Chapter 10: 10 Literary Journals that Pay Their Writers**

Many literary journals do not pay their writers. This is because many are passion projects, they are not for profit, and they are run by a person or a small group of people who love to write and read but do not nec-

essarily have a lot of money. Many of these journals are run by schools with underfunded English departments. I would say that over 75% of journals do not pay their writers. I have no problem with that.

I focus on getting my work published by literary journals that have good reputations or do a good job of supporting their authors in other ways. Most print journals may not pay their authors in money but most do pay their authors with a copy or two of the issue they are in. This is payment enough for me.

My brother-in-law once teased me about this, saying that I should at least try to get paid for my work, so for one month I submitted only to journals that paid money, not copies or issues. I ended up making about \$200 in the month of October. He laughed at how small this amount was and how many journals it had come from. I told my friend who was an editor at the time at Poets & Writers about it, and she was very impressed. She offered to pay me to write an article about it. I never ended up writing the article

Below for your reading pleasure are 10 literary journals that pay. They may not be the most prestigious journals, they are not all open to submissions right now, but all of them do pay their authors.

The amount of money these publishers pay their authors may change over time so do keep that in mind

### **1. The Threepenny Review**

We have reviewed this literary journal before, so you can learn more of the details by reading that review [here](#). The Threepenny Review is one of the most respected print journals out there and they also pay their writers \$200 per poem or \$400 per short story. You can visit their website here: [http://threepennyreview.com/online\\_submissions/](http://threepennyreview.com/online_submissions/). They are primarily interested in short stories and poems.

### **2. Flash Fiction Online**

Flash Fiction Online is an electronic journal that accepts very few of the flash fiction pieces that they receive. They are only interested in publishing short stories that are between 500 and 1000 words in length. They pay 60 dollars per story. They are open to stories of any genre but have very specific guidelines that you can read on their website here:

<http://flashfictiononline.com/main/>

### **3. Page & Spine**

You can read our full review of Page & Spine [here](#). They are a fairly new market that accepts a wide range of work, from the very good to the unfinished. They have a fairly high acceptance rate. Page & Spine pays its authors \$20 per short story or longer poem. They are primarily interested in short stories and poems. You can visit their website here: <http://www.-pagespineshowcase.com/contact-us.html>

### **4. Glimmer Train**

Glimmer Train exclusivity publishes fiction. Out of the 100 short stories listed in the recent edition of Best American Short Stories, 10 first appeared in Glimmer Train Stories, more than in any other publication. Glimmer Train accepts less than 1 percent of the work submitted to them. They pay over 5 cents a word. If you are interested in submitting to Glimmer Train please visit their website here: [www.glimmer-train.com](http://www.glimmer-train.com).

## **5. The Malahat Review**

The Malahat Review is an established and respected print magazine based out of Canada. They purchase first world serial rights and, upon acceptance, pay \$40 CAD per published page, plus a one-year subscription. Copyright reverts to the author upon publication. To learn more visit their website here: [http://www.malahatreview.ca/submission\\_guidelines.html](http://www.malahatreview.ca/submission_guidelines.html)

## **6. Shimmer**

Shimmer publishes speculative fiction. We have reviewed them before. For more detailed information you can read our original review [here](#). They pay their authors 5 cents a word, with a minimum payment of \$10. To learn more, read their submission guidelines here: <http://www.shimmerzine.com/guidelines/fiction-guidelines/>

## **7. Bound Off**

Bound Off is an interesting and unique literary journal that publishes short stories. Instead of publishing stories in the traditional way, they select for publication an original story, pay the author, and then someone records the story and it is published as an audio file that anyone can listen to. Sometimes the author reads their own story for the recording, often someone else does. They pay \$20 for every story they choose to publish. To learn more, visit their website here: <http://boundoff.com/submit/>

## **8. Frigg**

Frigg is an online journal that has been around for a long time, mostly as a non paying market. However, they recently started to pay their writers. They publish short stories and poetry. They are based out of Seattle and publish a lot of compelling stories and mysterious poems. If your work is accepted you will be paid \$50, regardless of length. To learn more visit, their website here:.

<http://www.friggmagazine.com/editors/editors43.htm>

## **9. Confrontation**

Confrontation is an established and respected literary journal that publishes prose and poetry. They pay \$50-125 for short stories and \$25-\$75 for poetry. They accept very few submissions. To learn more, visit their website: <http://confrontation-magazine.org/>

## **10. The New Yorker**

It would be strange if such a list did not mention The New Yorker, which is legendary for how well it pays its writers, among other things. The New Yorker does not release the exact amount they pay on their website, although they pay very well. They are a popular magazine more than a literary journal, and publication in the New Yorker can greatly help one's reputation as a writer. Often it leads to book deals and many other publications. Of course, because of this, it is very hard to get a piece accepted by the New Yorker. Many famous authors still try for years. It is easy to submit online and a wonderful opportunity. To learn more read their submission guidelines here:

<http://www.newyorker.com/contact/contactus>

## Chapter 11: How to Find Literary Journals

So now that you know a little more about submitting, you're probably curious about where to find listings of literary journals. There are a lot of literary journal listings out there, and some are better than others. Authors Publish does not have a formal list of journals at this point, but we review up to five literary journals a week. In our longer reviews, we include submission guideline details, acceptance rates, and payment information; we are very thorough.

The four biggest listing services all have pros and cons, but all are worth using. Below I review all three.

### **Duotrope:**

[www.duotrope.com](http://www.duotrope.com)

Duotrope lists almost all the journals out there that are open to free submissions. They also list journals that involve a fee, but they are always careful to make note of that. To find journals on Duotrope you can sign up for their weekly market update, which is an email that informs you of what journals have opened and which ones have closed. You can also use their search engine and their statistics page for more detailed information. There are many ways to find new markets on Duotrope

In my opinion their statistics page is the most helpful. On this page they list the journals that have the highest and lowest acceptance rates. They also list the journals that are slowest to respond and those that are quickest. These are all helpful statistics to know. If a journal takes more than a year on average to respond, I won't submit to them. If a journal accepts over 20% of what is submitted to them, I will not send them my work.

Duotrope is a wealth of information; you can monitor the journals you submit to there, and you can use their handy submission tracker to keep track of where you have submitted your work.

Duotrope also provides interviews with the publishers, informs you on how much they pay, and provides various other kinds of information.

Unfortunately, about a year ago Duotrope started charging 5 dollars a month to use most of its services. You can browse a scaled back version of the site without paying, but to see the truly useful information you have to be a subscriber. Previously, Duotrope had been free for years; however they often offer free trials and discounts which are worth looking into. They post such offers on their website as well as their Facebook page. I pay the 5 dollars a month and never feel any regret about it, but honestly it depends how much you end up submitting.

## **Poets & Writers**

[http://www.pw.org/literary\\_magazines](http://www.pw.org/literary_magazines)

Poets & Writers is a magazine that also has a website filled with resources. All their resources are free and easy to use. In my experience, the most helpful resource they provide is their literary magazine listing services. They do not list as many journals as Duotrope, and most of the journals they list are based out of the United States. However they still list over 2,000 journals.

You can look through the listings alphabetically by title or you can apply search filters. When they list the magazine, they list what kind of creative writing they accept, if they accept simultaneous submissions, and if they accept electronic submissions. They also tell you if they pay, even if it is only a contributor copy. They also list the dates the journal is open to submissions as well as if it is an electronic or print journal.

This is a lot of helpful information, but there is nothing about response times or acceptance

statistics. You still have to visit the literary journals' individual websites to find out the details of their submission guidelines. Poets & Writers also does not update their website as frequently as Duotrope, so some of their information is out of date.

### **The Review Review**

<http://www.thereviewreview.net/>

The Review Review is a review of literary journals. They write up thoughtful in-depth reviews of literary journals but they also have a simpler, to the point listing of literary journals.

The Review Review doesn't have nearly as many journals on their site as the other services I mention, but the information they do have is easy to navigate and well organized. You can look at it alphabetically or by using a search tool. You can only look at paying markets if you like.

### **The New Pages**

<http://www.newpages.com/literary-magazines/complete.htm>

The New Pages provides writers with a number of services, and they also post excellent detailed reviews of journals. However their services are disorganized, so I am always reluctant to recommend this website as it is difficult to navigate.

Their listing service is as minimalistic as it comes; they only list all the journals with a link to their website and a list of the genres they publish. This website does not specify if journals are a print journal, or if they pay, or anything like that. All the more thorough reviews of the journal are elsewhere on the site, and you have to search to find them.

## Chapter 12: Paying to Submit

I have submitted my work to well over 300 different journals in the past two years, and many more before that. When I first started submitting four years ago, one or two journals charged writers a couple of bucks to submit their work for consideration.

This fee did not cover anything else. It did not ensure that the writers work was considered more seriously, it did not guarantee editorial feedback, all it did was allow the writer to submit their work for consideration to be published.

Most journals back then justified this choice by saying that they were charging writers only \$2-\$3 dollars and it that cost writers about that much to submit via post. I still took issue with that argument. After all, it is one thing to pay the post office if submitting by mail is the only way, it is another thing to pay a liter-

ary journal to open email, read it, and more often than not, reject your work with a generic email.

I am not opposed to supporting literary journals. I subscribe to a number of them, but they should not be making their money by charging authors directly without offering anything tangible in return. On that same note, I will only enter contest where I am rewarded with a subscription to the magazine.

In the last two years there has been a solid shift towards charging authors submission fees. Most magazines that charge authors are not going to pay these authors even if they accept their work. This is a real issue for me.

At first it was only older more established journals that were charging readers to submit electronically. It is strange because most of these journals won't even consider work submitted by mail, so paying is truly your only option.

Some journals say this is because submission services, that save time for editors, like Submittable (formerly submishmash) charge the magazines to use them. Still that does not make a huge difference. Many journals manage to skirt this issue by selling people copies, having Kickstarters with rewards writers actually want, etc. Also most literary journals are non-profits and submittable gives all nonprofits 50% off.

Lately I have even seen brand new journals with no reputation, and no Submittable account charging readers to submit. This issue has gotten out of hand. But the tipping point has yet to happen, you can still submit to the vast majority of journals for free. I am hoping it stays that way, but I am not assuming that it will.

One of the ways that I push against this new movement to charge to submit is by not submitting to journals that do charge. I also never review them. *Authors Publish* only publishes reviews of journals that do not charge for submissions.

Even though I no longer submit to Crazyhorse and a few other esteemed journals, there are still hundreds of prestigious journals that I can submit to without paying a premium to have my work considered.

One of the additional factors that complicates this whole issue is solicited submissions. Many of the more prestigious journals already solicit many of their submissions from poets that they admire. These poets generally do not submit through normal avenues. They never pay to have their work considered and it is in fact almost always accepted.

Ultimately you will have to make your own mind up about paying to submit to journals. It is your money after all. But in the meantime I will continue to review excellent journals who do not charge writers a fee to have their work considered.

## Chapter 13: Are Contests Worth The Fee?

As an author, editor, professional submitter, and poet, I end up talking about contests a great deal. A lot of writers enter contests, but as a general rule we do not review contests on Authors Publish. This is because there is an entry fee attached to contests.

The first time I ever encountered a contest I was not entering it; instead I was an intern for a small press. This event took place a number of years ago, and this press is not longer in business. My job as an unpaid intern was to read approximately 400 manuscripts. I had a little over two months to reduce these 400 manuscripts to 10. I was the only one to read these 400 manuscripts, even though on the official contest outlines (for which each person had to pay a considerable fee) it said that each

manuscript would be reviewed by a group of qualified readers.

I handed this pile of 10 over to my boss to read in order to hand over the final three to a very famous writer who was the official judge. However, at the last moment my boss specified several things he wanted to make sure would be included in the chapbook. They were very specific details about the gender of the author and the topic of the poems. One of the manuscripts I had discarded fell into this category exactly, so I removed one other manuscript from the pile of ten and put this one instead, even though it was not particularly good. This was the manuscript that ended up winning.

All contests are not like this. Many first book contests are highly regulated and have large teams of readers. These contests are usually very prestigious and highly competitive. I have entered a number of these contests because I understand that as a poet, the best way to land a good publisher for

your first book is by winning a contest. Don't assume the judge of the contest will ever see your work, as most judges only read what the readers deem to be the top manuscripts or pieces. This means the readers have a great deal of control over who wins. However there are a number of scams out there for chapbook length manuscripts. Many presses will agree to publish your book even if it is not a winner, but only if you pre-sell a large number of copies. Finishing Line Press is particularly notorious for this.

Many literary journal contests are expensive, but the competition is less steep. Sometimes they have so few entries in the contest that they struggle to find a winner they can print. However when academic journals are involved, and particularly with student run journals, the roles of the readers become a little murkier. Often close friends of the editor end up winning, because theirs is the work that reaches the judge. However you should not

dismiss contests out of hand; you should take the following factors into consideration.

### **1. How prestigious is it?**

Make sure that if you're willing to pay to enter the contest, the payoff is worth it. If it is run by a journal that publishes everyone and their mother, even if they have a well-known judge attached, you don't particularly want to be associated with that contest. In addition, contests from less established presses are not necessarily regulated in any way. The more famous the journal is the more they have to lose if their contest is discovered as being run incorrectly in any way.

### **2. How expensive is it?**

Short story and poem contests can cost up to 50 dollars to enter; book contests can be over 100 dollars. The competition for contests this big is less steep, however they also tend to be associated with less established organizations that know they will have fewer submitters. As a general rule I never

spend over 35 dollars to submit to a manuscript contest, and never over 15 to submit to a short story or poetry contest.

### **3. What is the Prize?**

Make sure you really want to win the first prize. It is also even better if you would be happy with the second or third prize, or a runner up status. If all those rewards look good to you, then it is probably worthwhile submitting.

### **4. Do You Get Anything For The Entry Fee?**

Of course it would be nice to win, but you cannot assume that you will win. Therefore in the ideal world you will receive something for just entering the contest. Many literary journals that have contests have an option that if you pay for a subscription to the literary journal you will be able to enter the contest for free, or vice-versa. Either way, you get a year's worth of a journal you probably would want to subscribe to anyways.

## Chapter 14: Your Publishing Journey

It is always tricky to start something new. Every time you submit to a new publication it can feel like a big event.

Initially each acceptance is a celebration and each rejection is a reason to mourn. But things change.

When I first became serious about submitting my work, it would take me almost an hour to submit to one publication. Now I can submit to 5 journals in 1 hour. It is just a matter of time. Just get started and you will become more confident over time.

My one word of advice is to not give up. One of the tricks to not giving up is to submit to journals that are not the New Yorker or Tin House. I am not saying don't submit to the most prestigious journals right away. You should. I am telling you to submit to Tin House and a community college publication and a new journal that you know very little about. Just

make sure that you are submitting different work to each publisher.

This way you will hear from journals on a regular basis, and you will most likely get acceptances in the first six months. This will feel wonderful and keep you motivated to continue submitting.

You have to remember that you never know where a piece will end up. Just because a brand new journal accepts your story it doesn't mean that everything is over. Perhaps your story will be nominated for an award, or an anthology editor will read it in the journal and want it for her anthology. Both of those have happened to me.

Some writers think of publishing poems or short stories as giving them away, but you are not, the rights return to you for reprints and once they are out there in the world, much more exciting things are likely to happen.

One of my favorite things is when I receive emails from complete strangers because my poems

affected them. This would never happen if my work were not published widely.

Submitting can seem like an uphill battle at first, but the more you submit the easier and more rewarding it can become. I am much happier in my personal life and much more successful in my professional life because of literary journals.

## About Emily Harstone

Emily Harstone is the pen name of a published writer. Her work has been published in 12 countries, four continents, by over fifty different journals. She is a professional submissions adviser and editor.

## About Authors Publish

Our mission is to help authors build their careers. We publish a weekly newsletter with reviews of publishers, and advice for building your publishing career. We also publish books and ebooks for writers. To learn more about us, visit our website:

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