



As the Author Learns

Bits & bites about publishing & writing from

J L Wilson

*Author of mysteries, time travel, romances, & other books
that defy categorizing*

What's Happening?

In my last newsletter I mentioned the Big Clean-Out, where I went through everything including the notebooks I used to track all my books.

I finished reviewing everything – all the books I've written, published and unpublished – in March and have my notes about the details tucked away. I went from having three tubs of notebooks to none. That was a big job, well done.

I spent the rest of March getting ready for the presentations I'm doing at a local library. My hometown library asked me to do a couple of 'classes', one on the publishing industry and one on writing and what is involved in getting a novel written and released.

Not much has changed about the writing aspect. I mean, all stories will always need characters, plot, conflict and all that. But I did need to update my notes because the last time I taught this class, it was a real class that took place over several weeks. I had to condense all of that into a few pages of presentation.

I had the "Get Write On It" class early this month and it went very well. Two of the women in the class have been somewhat working on a novel for a long time and another lady is about two-thirds done with her book. The others who attended were just curious and wanted to talk about my writing process.

I'm always happy to discuss the ways and means of writing so it was a very pleasant three hours.

In early May I'll be doing the publishing class and that will need a lot of updating. So much has changed since I last taught that class thirteen years ago. The world of self-publishing has turned the publishing world on its ear.

Just to give you an idea of how much things have changed: in 2023 approximately three-four million (3-4M) books were published. In 2005, there were 280,000 titles published. Think about that. We've seen a ten-fold increase in the number of titles that are released. **It's around 10,000 titles each day.**



New books have a less than 1% chance of being stocked in a bookstore. For every inch of shelf space, there at least a thousand titles competing for that one inch of space. Most bookstores must rely on the tried-and-true authors (the usual bestsellers) because they have to stock what people will buy.

And let's face it, books can be expensive if you buy paperbacks or (heaven forbid!) a hard back book. That's why you need to look at those statistics and realize that not all those books get printed. The majority of self-published titles and those from small presses are print-on-demand. The book is assembled when it's ordered. Traditional publishers gamble on print runs and stock thousands of books in a warehouse.

Most self-published books sell less than 1000 copies during its lifetime. The average book now sells less than 200 copies a year. But some self-published authors are tremendously successful (a case in point: Andy Weir and *The Martian*). There is just no guarantee that anyone will notice your work out of the thousands that are published and (1) buy it and (2) spread the word so that (3) it hits best-seller lists.

That's why I always encourage would-be authors to define success for themselves. So much is out of your control – who buys the book, what reviewers say, how well it does in sales. Don't agonize over that.

Enjoy the process and if you do, that enjoyment will come through in your work. Writing should be fun. Otherwise it's a job and a not very rewarding one at that (at least in terms of monetary value). Just keep it all in perspective.

In Other News

I finished final edits for *Shoed* and it should be coming back to me from the proofreader in mid-April. I will do one more review and then it's off to the copy editor to review and then I'll have a release date. And I can guarantee you that despite having had four people review it in addition to the four reviews I gave the manuscript, there *will* be a typo in there somewhere.

::sigh::

What's Next?

I still want to send out queries to agents for my series and to consider covers for the series if I decide I can't get a 'regular' publisher for it. My goal is by the end of this year, I have a good idea of how and when I'll launch it.

I'm also working on my next manuscript. This is my Jack and the Beanstalk story. I have a good idea of where the plot is going and I've somewhat mapped it out to about the middle of the book. I'll be taking a road trip soon and that's always a good chance for me to come up with scenes for my books. I just crank up the music, put on the cruise control, and let my mind wander (within reason, of course!)

