

Orientation for Treble Heart Books Authors

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THB Orientation

Welcome to Treble Heart Books Publishing Company. We're happy to have you sign on with us. Please study this orientation carefully and keep it as a handy reference in case you have questions or can't remember our policies. It is designed to help you acquaint yourself with our company and with the ups and downs of the small press book publishing industry in general.

What Treble Heart Books is:

We are a traditional, small press publisher who pays royalties but not advances.

We are a short-run print publisher. Minimum is 30 books, but we can print thousands when warranted.

What Treble Heart Books is not:

We are **not** a POD (print on demand) publishing house.

We are **not** a vanity or subsidiary publisher. We do not work for you. You do not pay us to publish your book. The only thing you buy is your author copies for promotion at a substantial discount as it states in your contract.

Do I need an agent to publish with Treble Heart Books and its divisions?

Absolutely not, though a rare few of our authors are agented. There is no compelling reason to give part of your hard earned royalties to an agent when you will be receiving a standard contract from your publisher with no advance to negotiate. Agents are needed for advance-paying publishers who negotiate or for foreign and movie rights. Then its advisable to have an agent who knows all the legal ins and outs. Make sure you go with an agent who has some legal background in the business and has a recognized name in the industry. *Do not sign with an agent who charges you money.*

Do I need an attorney to study my contract before I sign?

THB's contract is very simple, straightforward and fair. It's not mind-boggling with legalese language you can't understand. If you want to pay your attorney to look it over, we certainly have no objections. If you understand the terms and conditions, then it really isn't necessary to spend the money. The decision is entirely yours.

Should I pay to have someone edit my book before I submit to THB?

You can, but be very careful here. This can become extremely costly. Check out their credentials thoroughly before committing your money. And bear in mind that despite what you have spent on your project, THB requires that your ms undergo the editing process the same as everyone else's project anyway, with our own editors. You must decide if this is feasible for you. If you are poor at grammar, punctuation syntax, point of view (POV) and spelling, then you SHOULD hire a professional editor before submitting your project to THB, though we don't require that you do so. Should your ms contain a mountain of these problems, then we simply will not accept your project for publication. The cleaner your ms, the better your chances of acceptance and publication. Study and follow each publisher's guidelines to the letter before submitting. They are not all the same for every house.

What happens after my contract is signed?

Your ms will have already gone through a prescreen read, a full read, and contract offer based

on the viability of your marketing plan. By signing a contract with us, you are promising to follow that marketing plan for the life of the book.

Now your ms waits in a queue with *many* others until one of our editors becomes available, or for the THB editor you've requested to become available to work on your project. You will work directly with your editor until completion of the final ms. In the unlikely event there is a conflict between the author and the editor, you are both obligated to state the problem to Publisher Lee Emory. Her decision is final in all such conflicts. If reassignment of an editor is required, the publisher will do that.

How long does it take for my book to be released once I have submitted my final, edited version to the publisher?

Depending on Treble Heart Books workload, unforeseen problems or delays, the wait usually takes months, even up to a year. Some authors have waited two years due to the problems we discovered during the editing or layout process, which delays production on your project. Please don't expect the publishing process to move swiftly. By the nature of the business and enormous submission loads, it rarely does. The sheer volume of submissions is staggering, many authors really have no idea just how immense that is, or how difficult it is for the publisher to give individual attention.

Face the harsh realities of this business with courage and patience. It's important to understand that scheduling a release date is extremely difficult for a small press with only one person at the helm. Too many things happen in a single day to throw off any attempt at concrete schedules. This does not mean Treble Heart Books is unprofessional; it merely means there is only one person to do it all. Make sure you can tolerate the wait at times. If you are an impatient author, then it's best to submit to a larger publishing house with a staff that *might* be able to produce your book faster, though it's rather unlikely. Large house or small house, prepare to wait your turn with good grace. Get your mind off of the wait by writing another book.

What is a galley proof?

The galley is an Adobe PDF file of your actual book as it will appear in print. The author is required to thoroughly proof read the galley for any **errors** missed during the editing process. This is not a license to change your words or make corrections to things that are not incorrect. An author can keep rewriting their book until time dissolves, but this is not acceptable. It ties up the production process and robs other authors waiting for their releases. (Don't turn in your ms as final until you are certain it really is the final.) You will be given only one chance to correct the galley, so, if errors still exist when you turn in your corrections, they will be printed in the book. (Be extremely thorough, don't skim or speed read; to do so is asking for embarrassment and disappointment.) **Treble Heart Books is under no obligation to reprint the book for errors you did not find in your galley proof.** *Again, the galley proof is not for the purpose of changing words or sentences unless they are in error. No unauthorized changes will be accepted once your book has completed the editing process.*

Can I make changes to my galley proof?

The author cannot make changes directly to the galley. The author must send a report to the publisher noting page number and line where an error occurs. (Text shifts during corrections, so make it as easy as possible for the layout person to find and correct the errors. A word or two beginning the sentence helps.) The publisher makes the corrections and sends the book to the printer.

Do I have any say about my book cover?

Yes, some. THB will attempt to fulfill your desires as closely as possible, but remember to keep your ideas simple and not too busy. Also remember that you cover only needs to be *indicative* of your story. If you try to get too literal, you will inevitably be disappointed. The company cannot always accommodate your vision; sometimes your vision does not work for the size of the book and the constraints of the title and byline that must appear on the front cover.

Do you give the author free copies of his/her book?

No, but you may buy author copies for a substantial discount and keep all the proceeds from the sales of them. In fact, you are required to buy at least 30 author copies from the initial print run and keep buying and selling author copies for the life of the book. The author is obligated by contract to market his/her book for the life of the contract. If you only buy 20 copies and then no more, you are not fulfilling your obligation to market effectively. Your contract can be terminated by the publisher. This is a tough, competitive business, not just a creative outlet for the author and it must be treated seriously by him or her.

CAUTION: Ask yourself if you are a writer or a hobbyist. If you are financially challenged, and you cannot or will not put yourself forward to market your book, then do not attempt sign a contract with a publisher and cause them to invest uselessly in your project. This can have legal ramifications that you don't need and neither does the publisher. Many small presses go under when authors do this. We know you love to write, but if you cannot participate in the business end of the writing, then you must be honest and responsible enough to admit you are not ready for formal publication. Know your limitations before signing a binding contract. Make sure you understand any contract before you sign it. If you don't understand something, ask *before* you sign on the dotted line.

In addition, if your ms fails to meet your promises with regard to writing skills, the publisher also has the right to terminate in the interest of avoiding bad debt.

What does Treble Heart Books do for its authors?

First, it is vitally important that you understand the following: a traditional publisher such as THB offered you a contract and you accepted it and signed it, not the other way around. Traditional publishers do not operate like vanity presses or subsidiary publishers where you pay to have the books printed and can have total control over every aspect during production. THB pays its prescreeners, its readers, its editors, all printing and setup costs, pays for the commercial web site and promotional posters. Therefore, your ms must be subjected to our editing processes, and you are expected to cooperate with your editor to the fullest extent possible.

THB maintains a commercial web site where sales of your book occur and where your reviews are posted. Each author is given a separate page for every book they publish. Trade size paperbacks, PDF and HTML electronic files are also released simultaneously, so customers have the choice of either print or electronic formats in most books. Illustrated books may be an exception due to their size, which makes electronic versions almost impossible to transmit. Hardback books may be produced for specific non-fiction books.

Reviewers who require print copies, either ARCs (advance review copies supplied by the author) or actual print books, must receive them from the author, not the publisher. Do not send out ARCs until your ms is fully edited. To do so prematurely could gain you a poor review.

THB *sometimes, not often*, engages in co-op ads with its authors. Magazine ads are very expensive, but sharing the expenses can help to keep the cost lower for everyone. THB authors can also get together to arrange for group ads. We encourage this.

THB produces one cover flat and/or one 11 X 17 standup poster for the author's use in promotion and book signings. *There is no charge to the author for these, but you must request them.*

THB spends a great deal of money to promote the business and its authors as a whole by attending significant writers' conferences and Exhibiting at the Book Expos/tradefairs whenever possible. This is VERY costly, which is why the company cannot spend money on individuals for promotion. Authors must do their share in the furtherance of their own writing careers.

When asked, THB participates in newspaper, library and radio interviews. We will be delighted to participate in TV interviews if we are lucky enough to land them. Authors are encouraged to do the same to get their name out there promote, promote, promote. You cannot do too much. And don't forget to utilize every possible avenue on the internet to promote your work.

What happens if the senior editor discovers errors or overused forms in the ms during the layout process?

The author is instructed specifically what must be fixed before the layout can proceed. This of course causes a delay in the release of your book. Make sure the final ms you and your editor turn in is as clean as a whistle and does not contain hundreds of em dashes, ellipses, hyphenated words, exclamation marks or semicolons or spelling errors...or too much passive voice, which are all very common problems. The time to fix these things is BEFORE you submit the *final*. The senior editor reserves the right to make minor last minute corrections or word changes for clarity in accordance with the contract.

Who writes the back blurb for the cover of my book?

You, the author. The senior editor is authorized to tweak the blurb (if necessary) for maximum marketability, or request the author rewrite the blurb to make it more intriguing to potential buyers. (Your back blurb is what sells the book; this is vitally a important piece of writing.) The publisher prefers to receive your information page via email attachment

Tip: Don't tell your entire story in the back blurb. If you do, the potential buyer will have no reason to spend money on your book. Tease them, intrigue them, make them want to spend their hard earned money to find out what happens.

Fatal flaw in back blurbs: Do not ask obvious questions such as "Will Jon and Jill be able to put get it all together before it's too late?" Don't do this. Form narrative statements that leave such questions in the minds of the potential buyer. Make them yearn to know how the problems finally reach a satisfying conclusion.

Do I need to be an avid reader in order to write a good book?

Could you be a rocket scientist if you've done nothing but work behind the counter at a local hamburger joint? Not likely. If you don't like to read, if you don't have time to read, then do everyone a favor and don't try to write a good book for publication-; it won't work. Mountains of poorly written mss are what cause the enormous log jam in publishing house slush piles. We don't accept them, but we must answer every single one in some manner. This eats away at precious production time like you wouldn't believe.

Am I obligated to join the THauthors Yahoo Groups loop?

We can't force you to join. However, if you do not, and you are never seen nor heard from on the loop, then how to you expect to gain a name for yourself? Do you expect the publisher has time to write to you individually whenever an important announcement comes up? Sorry, it isn't going to happen. Don't have time? Then learn time management, sign up for the digest instead of individual emails; scan through the subjects and choose to read only the ones of interest to you every day. If you go on vacation on the loop, make yourself a note to review the digests when you return.

Advantages to the loop

You are notified on the loop when royalty statements are mailed out and any other important announcements from individuals or from the publisher.

Post messages to share industry information at all times.

You are able to take advantage of all THB files, marketing manuals, tips and list of reviewers and more, which the company makes available to you once you sign your contract.

You will be able to ask questions of your fellow authors on all phases of writing, research, marketing, announce your joys and your triumphs with regard to your book. Get out there and crow when your book is released. Remember, fellow authors are, or certainly should be, potential customers too. It's up to you to entice them.

The loop is monitored. No flaming, defaming or nastiness is allowed or tolerated. Violators will be immediately removed from the loop. The loop members are like a family of professionals. Authors are expected to behave professionally at all times. Got a beef with someone? Take it up with them personally, not on the THB loop.

Am I obligated to buy books other than my own from THB once I sign a contract?

Obligated, no. But ask yourself it is a smart business move not to buy some of your fellow authors' books. If you want your own book to succeed, it makes sense to contribute to the success and growth of your publisher and the industry by buying some of your reading material from the company who was good enough to publish your work. There are many ways an author can contribute to the health of the book industry. Buying from your own company is a major contribution in support of both the company and your peer authors. "My to-be-read-pile is just too big already." This worn out cliché is no excuse to neglect doing your part to keep our industry healthy and strong. Support each other and show your loyalty to your publisher and the industry by buying some of THB's good books. The competition is staggering. We must help each other to keep the industry alive and well. The large pub houses and chain bookstores are making it harder for us every year. Remember that.

What about distribution?

THB distributes through Baker & Taylor wholesalers and with Amazon.com if an author maintains outstanding sales numbers. We are also signed up with Barnes & Noble (2006). But these companies do not warehouse our books, nor show up in the databases at bookstores, sad to say. The company has also negotiated with an audio books company for very specific titles. Again, your sales must show good marketing skills on your part before they will accept your title.

Does my book automatically appear in bookstores?

Not currently, but that may change if THB can get Ingram to carry our books in their stores. The royalty rates are considerably smaller when books are sold through Baker & Taylor, or Amazon.com. They take 55% off the top and do not pay shipping. Our company cannot sell the books for less than what it costs us to print them. Royalty rates on books sold through them is 15% instead of our usual 35%. Very little profit is realized for the company or for the author, but the volume of sales and author exposure is crucial. If the books are returned after 90 days, the publisher is stuck with them and we all lose money. The returns are frequent, very discouraging and detrimental to the financial health of the publisher and the author, but cannot be avoided.

Does my THB book appear on Amazon.com?

Yes, for what it's worth.

Does my print book automatically appear in libraries?

Not automatically. You the author must generate an interest with your state and local libraries, though THB regularly sells to some libraries, there are many other libraries we need to solicit. Remember that libraries often buy from Baker & Taylor and Ingram. Over time, things may improve even more with regard to this (don't hold your breath), but your help is always needed. [Audio books may be sold and rented through truck stops across the nation as well as libraries who might regularly purchase audio books.] Again, you must create the demand.

Am I obligated to do book signings in bookstores?

THB strongly advises that you do so whenever possible and in whatever city you visit. Get your name and your work out there and keep it out there. It takes hard work, diligence and persistence. Make sure your bookstore advertises your signing before the event to get people interested and bring them in. If they don't, then you must. Give the store a stack of fliers to place in the customer's bags about three weeks prior to your signing, if they are willing to do this. Turn in a press release to your local newspapers to appear a day or two before your signing. An interview with a newspaper is even better, if you can arrange it a week or two before your signing event. Get the locals interested in you and your book before the big day. If you can make arrangements with a bookstore to do a group signing with other authors, this is always a desirable thing. Trying to do signings alone, unless you have a very big name, is extremely hard to do. Usually people won't flock to see an unknown author, but with the right advertising, people will often come to see a group of authors.

Do I need a press kit?

It's advisable to make an impressive press kit to send to bookstores and the like. There are tips on how to do this in our Yahoo Groups **Files** section. Take advantage of the tools provided there for you. It's also advisable to ask your target establishment if they are interested in reviewing your press kit before you spend the money to mail it out. Don't mail them out as spam; this is expensive, ineffective and wasteful. That never makes a good impression and it will likely end up in the trash, unread.

In closing, feel free to share with the group anything that you personally find effective for marketing your work at any time. Most of all keep writing, keep improving your writing skills with every book. It's not impossible. It's a must.