Get Published in 2011

Workshop Presented by Biff Mitchell at the

2011 Maritime Writers' Workshop

Overview of the Industry and Recent Trends

You've spent the last year or more writing your book, whether it's a novel, book of poetry or short stories, or a non-fiction book. It's finished, revised, rewritten, edited and revised again and again. It's finished. Now, the real work starts…getting it published. This could take a few months. This could take years. It could take just a few minutes.

Time Frame
Getting published the traditional way has always been difficult, and time consuming. Let's look at the time frame. You take a year to write your book. You spend another few months polishing it up. You could spend up to a year finding an agent or publisher. If your book is accepted for publication, you're looking at another year or two before it's actually released. Then, you're looking at another six to 12 months before you receive a royalty check, probably longer if you received an advance. You're looking at about three years before you get any money. And the money is probably not going to be a lot.

BTW, advances, especially hefty ones are becoming increasingly rare.

This is the traditional model, and it's getting worse.

Some Realities of Publishing
The publishing world is in deep trouble, the old model isn't working and new models are arising (i.e., ebooks and other electronic models, many of which are free).

New competition is taking readers away: online games, free and fee-based online newspapers and ebooks, a whole new generation of readers who read from a screen.

Books are becoming increasingly expensive (even ebooks) at a time when people have less money to spend.

The traditional model is based on printing around 5,000 books or less for a first run. The publisher is lucky if half of these sell. Problems are:

- Expensive print run
- Marketing
- Distribution
- Returns

It's an inefficient system.

The Big Six (Random House, HarperCollins, Penquin, Simon & Schuster, Hachette Book Group-owns Time Warner, Holtzbrink-owns MacMillan) are getting on the ebook bandwagon, some with plans to have up to 70% of their new titles come out first as ebooks within the next few years.

As sales decrease, publishers bring out fewer titles and the ones they do bring out are ones they are sure have great sales potential.

This comes at a time when more people than ever are submitting manuscripts (mostly because of computers, partially because of large populations, including retired baby boomers).

Even agents are getting harder to find. With the general downturn in the publishing industry, agents are accepting fewer clients and focusing more on the ones they have that are generating revenue. Today, it's likely easier to find a publisher than to find an agent.

But you begin submitting your manuscript. This process is best described as "The Crap Shoot."

Here's how it works:

- You send your manuscript to a publisher (not one of the big 6, they only talk to agents, never to writers)
- It arrives along with the several dozen others the publisher receives every day
- Whoever looks at it first is likely to be the "eliminator", the person who lightens the load of the editors by eliminating submissions that don't conform to the submissions standards, such as:

  - submissions that are sloppy
  - poor grammar
  - writing style
  - not worth publishing (My Life. Unless you're a celebrity, who cares?)
  - a coffee stain

- Next, your submission goes to a senior editor or to an editorial board. This is the tricky part. The editor will first (if the other person didn't) determine:

- whether they have too much of your topic,
- whether they think the topic is hot or not (we'll get into this later),
- whether they think it has sales potential
- a variety of other factors, such as whether they've recently published something similar that didn't sell, the mood or personal bias of the editor

But, your submission makes the cut and you get an offer. It's still going to be at least a year before your book comes out and there's the possibility that it won't (for instance, in that year, several other similar books have been released and the market is saturated).

You get the picture

For 99.99 percent of the population of the world, writing is not a get rich quick thing. Just getting to the point of making enough money to write fulltime is beyond most writers, especially in Canada.

However, never before has there been so many ways to get published and never before has there been so much opportunity for new voices to be heard.

In this workshop, we're going to look at these ways of getting published.

When Do You Look for a Publisher?

You look for a publisher when you have something finished, polished and the best you can do. Not before. Especially for fiction.

Don't even think about approaching a publisher with an idea for a fiction book unless you're already a best-selling writer.

The only exception to this is non-fiction, but your idea needs to be well-developed, original and you need to prove that you are either an expert in the field or that you have the means to turn the idea into a book.

Things you need to do before approaching publisher:

- edit the book thoroughly (or have someone else do this)
- make sure that it's finished (or, for non-fiction, have finished idea)
- make sure that it's the absolute best you can do
- pass it around to friends for opinions (try Zoetrope for some critiques)
- have your "publisher hunt" tools ready

HINT: Before you start sending your book out to publisher, put it away for a few months. Don't even think about it. Then, bring it out and read it. Most likely, you'll see a lot you missed.

The Scams in Publishing

There has never been a shortage of people who have a book they want to have published. Most of these are pretty bad and will never be published, but the authors still want their books out there and they'll do just about anything to make that happen. (Generally, these are people more interested in being seen as authors rather than being writers, or they're just plain desperate.)

This situation has given rise to an entire industry within the publishing industry: those who want to take advantage of aspiring writers' need to be published.

There are bogus publishers and agents (especially agents) out there to get your money. It's easier for them to operate these days because of the Internet. They can set up a great looking (and convincing) website and make themselves look legitimate. They may have all kinds of testimonials from current clients. These will mostly be fake OR the one or two people they may have gotten published, and these will likely be authors most people have never heard about.

How Bogus Publishers and Agents Make Money Off You

They Charge a Reading Fee
There are a handful of legitimate publishers (books and magazines) that charge token reading fees. I think they do this simply to cut down on the number of submissions they have to wade through. For the most part, though, reading fees are an alarm bell. Agents should never charge reading fees. They make their money when they find you a publisher and you start receiving royalties. None of the associations for literary agents allow their members to charge reading fees.

They Charge for Additional Services
This is where they really sock it to you, both agents and publishers. They tell you that your book has potential and they're interested, but it needs editing. Editing can be expensive, ranging from a few hundred dollars to thousands of dollars. After you've invested your money in the editing (which may or may not be good editing), they've made their money off you. As a rule, you do your own editing (or pay someone to do it) before you start submitting your manuscript. Any additional editing will be done *after* your book has been accepted for publication.

Bogus Agents Will Charge for So-Called Business Expenses
These expenses range from charges for meeting with publishers, mailing, faxing, long distance calls…just about anything they can do that supposedly represents you. But you have no way of verifying any of these expenses. They may just be sending your manuscript out to publishers the same way you would be doing without an agent, which defeats the whole idea of having an agent who has inside contacts, including with one or more of the Big Six publishers. Again, agents make money off your book after it's been published, not before.

Some Publishers Will Want You to Pay for Services
In most cases, these will be vanity publishers. They don't make money off the sale of your book. They make their money off you, the author. You could end up paying a fortune for any number of services such as ISBNs, printing, cover art, editing and others, and you could end up with two

or three hundred copies of your book and nowhere to go with them. Or you could end up with nothing. I've read about people taking second mortgages on their homes, just to end up with a room full of books that will never sell.

Some Will Publish Your Work in an Anthology…That You Buy
This was the case with poetry.com. You send them a poem, they send some edits for you to make (generally very poor editing), and your poem is accepted for publication. So, finally, you're published. You buy several copies of the book yourself (generally around $60 per copy) to send to family and friends. This is how they make their money.

Some Publishers Appear to be Legitimate
Some publishers appear legitimate…but on closer inspection it turns out that they're in the business of making money off the writer and not off the sales…to the extent that they'll publish anything you write (knowing that it won't sell) as long as you pay them.

Before considering a publisher or agent, check out this page published by the Science Fiction & Fantasy Writers of America: https://www.sfwa.org/other-resources/for-authors/writer-beware.

In the end, these publishers and agents don't care if you ever get published or your book sells; they've already made their money off you.

How to Avoid Being Scammed

Google the publisher's/agent's name to see what you can learn. Try Googling their name along with words like scam, rip off, complaints, law suits, class action, etc.

Before contacting a publisher, do a Google search on "publishing scams." This will bring you up to date on the latest plots to part you from your money.

Don't let your desire to be published blind you to the reality that there are people who will use that desire to rip you off.

Where Do You Start?

1. Research

You identify the agents or publishers who are interested in your type of writing. Don't send a mystery story to a romance publisher unless it's a romance mystery.

This takes research.

Consider writers whose style and genre are similar to yours. Who are their publishers? Who are their agents? (Check their websites for this information.)

Google "publishers." Add your genre to the search; for instance "mystery publishers" or "cozy mystery publishers."

Complete the submissions tracking template. This should list the publisher, the publisher's website and the page for submissions. It should (if possible) include the contact info for the particular editor/agent who handles your type of work.

2. **Publishing Kit**

Put together your publishing kit:

- List of people to contact (submissions tracker)
- Covering/query letter
- Bio
- Synopsis (one page and four page)
- First 30 pages or first one or two chapters

Your Publishing Kit

Having a publishing kit ready before you contact publishers will save you a lot of time and frustration when you start submitting your manuscript. Some of the materials in your kit will likely be modified to customize them for specific publishers. Many of them require slightly different material, but these form the basis for what most publishers and agents want. Also, some publishers and agents have online submission forms. Having a kit will help you to fill these forms out by cutting and pasting from your kit.

NOTE: You should try to keep each of these down to one page (except the manuscript sample). Some publishers will want more, but most will want your submission to be brief.

Your Covering/Query Letter

There's little difference between the covering letter and the query letter. Queries usually apply to non-fiction but some small press publishers and agents (especially agents) ask that you query novels before sending any other material.

This should be one page. No more (unless requested). This should be just as well written as your manuscript, if not better. This is something you need to spend time on. It's the first thing the publisher/agent will see. It's the first impression they will have of you. In some cases (where publishers/agents want a query letter only), it may be the *only* impression they have of you.

Consider this: The typical editor may have to sift through dozens of submissions per day. It may be as many as fifty, or more. Realistically, it works the same as a personnel manager facing 200 resumes for a single position. Their first step is to eliminate as many of them as possible. If your

covering letter doesn't grab them right off the bat, they won't even look at the rest of your submission.

So, your first line has to capture their attention. It should be better than the first line of your book. The first line of your book is not the first line that the editor will read. Don't start with something like, "I am submitting my book ABC for your consideration." Of course you are. Why would the editor be reading the letter in the first place?

Start off with something like an interesting quote or fact. For instance, if your book is about a coven of witches on the Miramichi, start with something like, "*The second largest population of witches, warlocks and other pagans in North America thrives secretly along the banks of the Miramichi River in New Brunswick, which ironically is the second largest Christian bible belt on our continent. This book explores…*"

Try to avoid saying MY BOOK.

Write several of these, maybe ten, and pick three you like best and have friends read them. Pick the best one of these.

Things to include in your covering letter:

- Hook (the first line or two)
- Title of book
- Brief description of the book (one paragraph)
- The word count
- Genre
- Your website or blog
- For non-fiction: Why you're the right person to write this book (for instance, you live on the Miramichi and remember the tensions this created at some point and you started to investigate … which led to the book
- A short paragraph mentioning previous publications (just the main ones, you'll be making a list for your bio)
- Your contact info

Keep it professional. Don't start with a line like, "*This book is going to be your next number one best seller and I know they're going to want to make a movie out of it.*"

And don't start with a demand for an outrageous advance on royalties. Most publishers don't offer advances, and most of the ones that do, are the ones that will only talk to an agent.

You might even want to include a short section on how you intend to help market the book. Or you can outline a marketing plan on one page and attach it to the covering letter. This is especially important if your book is non-fiction. And it's even more important if you're submitting to a small press. However, if the submissions guidelines are adamant on the minimum amount of material you can send, follow them exactly and send only what they request. If you do

submit some ideas on marketing, read *eMarketing Tools for Writers* first, to get some ideas, but make sure that whatever you suggest will be reasonable.

Your Bio

Make this short (three or four lines) and relevant to your book. If you're submitting a book on collecting trains, don't mention your penchant for gardening.

Make a list of your interests and achievements, your work history – include only those things that relate to the book

Include a list of previous publications (even if they don't relate to the book, as this just demonstrates that someone else considered you to be publishable). You can list all your publications or you can just list a few of the more noticeable ones and summarize the others. For instance, *I don't list all my short stories…just " and short fiction published in various print and online magazines, anthologies and collections.*"

Keep this formal. Don't joke around (unless you're submitting a humor book to a humor publisher).

Keep it appropriately humble. Don't start off with lines like, "*Everyone I know, friends, relations, co-workers all say that I'm the next William Shakespeare.*"

If you have reviews from previous publications, use three or four of them on a separate page titled "Reviews." Just use quotes from them…one or two lines, maybe a short paragraph if it's glowing.

These can come from other recognized writers, newspapers, online review sites, magazines, etc. NEVER use personal friends or relations unless they are among the previously mentioned. Publishers won't be the least interested on what your mother thinks about your book. This might even give them a negative attitude before reading your manuscript.

To start your bio, make a list of everything that you can think of that has anything (even remotely) to do with your submission. Interests and activities for fiction writers will probably not be as relevant as for non-fiction writers but, if you've never had anything published, you might have enough for a least a one or two line bio. Go through the list and start deleting anything that is not closely related to the work you're submitting.

NEVER EVER invent reviews. Some people write their own wonderful reviews and attribute them to local newspapers or magazines. Some people do this by starting bogus review websites under assumed names and then post glowing reviews of their own books along with reviews of other books. If you're ever caught doing this, you can damage your ability to get published or find an agent to the extent that you might have to change your name.

NEVER give the publisher the URL to your website in place of a bio. These people are too busy to go off surfing the web to learn more about you. In short, if they haven't already heard about you, they won't be inclined to visit your website.

Get a friend or two to read it and get their opinions.

Your Synopsis

Again, brevity. You've attached your first 30 pages and you want the editor to get to those quickly to see what a literary genius you are. This should be no more than a page. It should briefly outline the plot of your book (for non-fiction you should talk about *what is covered and the manner in which you've presented the subject*).

Don't get into a lot of detail, just the highlights.

Don't make a list of characters along with their function in the story or any physical description. Integrate them into the plot outline. For instance, *Just as the war between the Grooks and the Grocks threatens to extinguish both races, Amadeus, Prince of the peaceful Gracks and Juliet's secret lover, exposes the evil Banyon's plan to incite war between them.*

Mention only the main characters. You have just one page.

You should also mention the theme of your book, if it's relevant. This is not necessary for most genre fiction. If you mention the theme, keep it short.

Some publishers/editors may want you to sum up your novel in less than one page. Can you do it?

When you write your synopsis, pretend that a friend has just asked you what your book is about. You have just two or three minutes (i.e., the time it takes to read one page) to answer the question. How do you answer the question in that amount of time while making it interesting enough that your friend will want to read it? Spend the time on making it good, on making it a compelling piece of writing, on making it something that sums up the book and creates excitement about it.

Again, pass this around to friends. Get their opinions.

Your First 30 pages

Your first 30 pages have to be perfect, with no spelling or grammar errors, no convoluted, confusing sentence constructions. Have a friend or two read them. Get their opinions.

Some publishers will want just the first five or 10 pages. If this is what they ask for, send only five or 10, no more.

NOTE: If you have a more compelling piece further into the book, you can use this, but you'll need to write a short paragraph to provide background to the piece. Make sure it's a short paragraph and just as well-written as the piece you're submitting. Check the publisher/agent requirements first. Some insist on the beginning of the book since this is what readers will browse through when it's published.

The Traditional Route – Getting Published by a Publisher

This means finding **a publisher** yourself or finding an agent. The **process** for both is exactly the same. You'll likely have more luck finding a publisher (with the exception of the Big 6, who will talk only to agents … exception: Harper Collins Authonomy.com and a Random House competition).

NEVER submit anything to a publisher without first researching the publisher.

Step one: Go to the Publisher's Web Site

If they don't have a website, be careful. Do a web search on their name. If nothing bad comes up, then you might want to give them the benefit of the doubt.

Read the information on their site carefully. Make sure that your book is something they'll be interested in.

Check to see if they have a list of genre editors (romance, humor, western, mainstream). Identify the one you need to contact.

Go to their submissions page.
- Do they require a query first before seeing the manuscript…if so, don't send the manuscript
- Are they closed for submissions till a specified date?
- Do they require any special formatting?
- Do they want mailed or electronic submissions?
  Do they allow simultaneous submissions?

Check and double check that you have met all the requirements.

HINT: Copy the submissions guidelines into a word document. Double space them. Put a short line in front of each. You now have a checklist.

Keep in mind that if you break any of their submissions page rules, you're instantly out of the running. You might not even get a rejection slip. They'll just trash it. Some of them state this explicitly on their submissions page.

Make a list of all the publishers and agents you contact along with the date you submitted and who you submitted to, if it was to a specific editor. (Use the tracking template)

You should be sending manuscripts out (either by mail or email) at least once a week. Go for the electronic submissions first. Then, the more expensive snail mail. Exception: Go for your favorite publishers first.

HINT: If your publisher is in the US and you're sending your work in through snail mail, buy a supply of American postage stamps for the return of your manuscript.

When it comes to a publisher/agent, you have to be persistent. It could take a year or more. Just the length of time to get acknowledgement of your manuscript could take months. It could take half a year or more before it gets to an editor who will decide whether to publish or reject it.

Short Stories, Articles and Poems in Magazines and Anthologies

Getting short fiction, poems and articles published in magazines, newspapers, and anthologies is a good way to build up your writer's portfolio. The same rules apply as for books:

- Read the submissions requirements and follow them
- Make sure you're submitting to the right market (don't submit mystery to romance mags)
- P&E lists magazines and what types of stories they accept

Don't overlook local and regional magazines, some of them may take short stories if they have a local or regional theme

If you've written a non-fiction book, you've become an expert on the topic. Suppose it's a biography about Mary Queen of Scots…check out history and biographical publications and query them. Tell them about your book and ask if they would be interested in an article.

HINT: Make sure that you suggest an article from a new perspective. For instance, from the executioner's perspective. How did this affect his life?

HINT: Submit to Nonymous Magazine locally. They don't turn anything down. There to provide a platform for any and all voices. This can be put on your bio as a publishing credit.

Do a Google search on "anthologies" + "submission guidelines". Anthologies such as Twisted Tails and Chicken Soup are always looking for new voices. Generally, the payment will be small (or non-existent), but you'll build your writing portfolio.

The Modern Route – Self-Publishing and Online Publishing

Never before have authors had more control over the publication of their work. Never before have authors had so much choice in the manner in which they can be published. Never before have writers had so many opportunities to get into print and get their name out there.

But first …

Vanity Presses

Dorrance, Authorhouse, xLibris, iUniverse, Publish America, Vantage Press, Tate Publishing.

All I have to say about them is: given the other options available today, save these as a last resort. They're expensive and none of them guarantee results. Check their prices and compare among them.

Things to look for:

- Are there additional costs beyond the cost of printing (editing, etc)?
- What kind of marketing will they provide, if at all, or for an additional price?
- What kind of distribution do they offer, and at what cost?
- What is the quality of the books? (Google them on this, there will be a forum somewhere)
- Are they affiliated with other organizations like Amazon, B&N, iBookstore etc.?
- What exactly do you get for your money?
- And then compare.

Online Self-Publishing Sites

The number of online self-publishing sites is growing, and some of them offer better (and less expensive) options than many of the vanity presses. There are a few things to keep in mind with all of these:

- Your work needs to be edited. Some of these sites offer editorial services for a fee. If you can get this done on your own, go for it.
- You'll need to do your own marketing, or use the fee-based services offered by some of the sites.
- You will have to supply your own cover art, or pay for cover art through the site. Some offer free cover art templates. Don't use these. Cover art is as important as the first paragraph of your book.
- Each of these sites has formatting software to convert your manuscript into an electronic file that will be print-ready or ready for ebook distribution. Sometimes, this software can be challenging.
- Some of these sites charge for ISBNs. You can pay for this or get a free Canadian ISBN from

Post your ISBN at the beginning of your book. Some ebook distributors won't carry your book unless it has an ISBN. Some reviewers won't review it unless it has an ISBN.

Here are some of the more popular sites:

Blurb
http://www.blurb.com

Blurb allows anyone to create any kind of book, from nonfiction to photo, recipe, and more. You can use one of their templates and layouts or import your own design. Once you've created your book, you can choose between making the book open to the public or keeping it private. If you choose to make your book public, it can be sold on the Blurb website. Additionally, you can opt to offer readers a preview of the first 15 pages of your book to help them decide if they want to make a purchase.

CreateSpace (Update: CreateSpace has been closed.)

CreateSpace was acquired by Amazon in 2005, and similar to Lulu, it provides book publishing and digital media development. Because CreateSpace is a subsidiary of Amazon, it's easier and quicker to sell your book through Amazon. Like the other sites, you are able to choose between making your book open to the public or private. The only format accepted during the submission process is PDF, which is for both text and images.

Pricing: Standard B&W starts at $3.66 per book; Standard Color starts at $6.55. You can also upgrade to their Pro Plan, which is $39.00 per book. The Pro Plan allows you to keep more from each sale, and pay less when ordering copies.

CafePress
http://www.cafepress.ca

CafePress provides a way for people to sell their creations in "shops." It is a marketplace with over 1- million products (i.e. clothing, gifts, books, etc.). They also provide you with the ability of self publishing your books. Like the others, CafePress also has private and public options. While you are able to upload your book in PDF format, it has to be less than 100 MB. There are different templates you can use based on the type of book you are trying to publish, and you can tailor it the way you see fit.

Pricing: Prices start at $0.045 per page and a $4 binding fee.

Lulu
http://www.lulu.com

Lulu allows you to create a variety of books, and also lets you develop digital media. These range from music and ringtones to videos and e-books. With Lulu, you can also scan and digitize

your old books, albums, and photos. You are given the option of leaving the book in private view or releasing it to the public.

TIP: Keep the font small to cut down the number of pages. Lulu's base price is based on the number of pages. Shipping costs will also be higher for longer books, thus raising the end cost to your readers.

Smashwords
Link to How To Publish on Smashwords
http://www.smashwords.com/about/how_to_publish_on_smashwords

iBookstore
Blog on How to Publish Your Book on the iBookstore
http://www.copyblogger.com/publish-in-ibookstore

As of this writing (2019) there are many additional self-publishing options. I recommend taking the time to do some web searches and find the right publisher for you, and sometimes that might be yourself.

Alternative Forms of Publishing

Blogs

Blogs are becoming popular ways for authors to get published, build up credibility for their publications, market their publications and make money through syndication and affiliations.

These are becoming especially popular in the non-fiction market, with experts in technology, education, business and other areas publishing content that is useful to others in their fields. And that's the key…the information has to be useful enough that readers will keep coming back and recommend your blog to other readers. As your credibility and readership grows, you are in a position to make money off your blog by affiliate programs or to begin taking content from your blog and expanding on it to produce articles and/or books that you can submit to publishers. Your blog may even be picked up for syndication.

For fiction writers, blogs can be used to serialize novels and have them listed on blog novel listings such as New Writing International. You can use your blog to promote your novel as I did with Murder by Burger. Or, after you've finished your serialized novel, you can take it off the blog, and look for a publisher. A warning here: some publishers will consider it to have already been published and may not consider it for publication. However, if you've built up a good readership (and possibly received a few reviews) some publishers will consider your book to be saleable, as happened with Emily Benet's *Shop Girl Diaries*. Here's the blog:
http://www.emilybenet.blogspot.com

The best thing about using a blog: it's free.

The Process:

You can set up a blog at blogspot free of charge. Then you can publish a chapter a day, or a week, or a month.

You can publish short stories or poems on your blog. Some people publish a poem a day. Some publish a flash fiction story every day.

You can publish articles on subjects on which you're an expert, and relate to the book you want to publish. Blogs that offer useful information (or entertainment) on a regular basis tend to draw lots of readers after a while. This can help build your presence in the online publishing world and enhance that bio you send out to publishers.

Sometimes, blogs are picked up by syndicates and the bloggers make money.

There's also other ways to make money with your blog. There's a few tips at Problogger.com and you can Google this as well. One way to make money is to set up a Paypal voluntary donation button on your blog.

Here's a novel published originally on the author's blog and then made available on his website:
Simon of Space by Cheeseburger Brown
http://cheeseburgerbrown.com/stories/Simon_of_Space
The blog:
http://simonofspace.blogspot.com

Fan Fiction

"Fan fiction (also known as fanfiction, fanfic, FF or ffic) is a loosely defined term for fiction about characters or settings, written by admirers of the original work. Fanfics are not commissioned by the owner and creator and are very rarely published professionally. Most fan fiction writers assume that their readers have knowledge of the canon (original) universe in which their works are based." (from Squidoo)

Sometimes the stories are based almost exactly like the originals, using the same characters and circumstances with a new story line. Sometimes the stories are changed, possibly using the characters in an alternate universe, or using the same characters but in a different context (consider Twilight without vampires).

Here's how it works: You write a story based on your favorite movie, television or book series (Harry Potter, Star Trek, Twilight) and post it at one of the fan fiction sites.

Here's a list of sites:
http://esgalhothwen.tripod.com/id5.html

You post your story a chapter at a time. It could already be completely written, or you could write the story as you go.

Readers (usually other fan fiction writers) come to your page on the site. They can comment on your story, and some sites have rating systems. You get immediate feedback on your story.

A big drawback to fan fiction is that, because of the copyright angle, you don't get paid. Your work is posted and read free of charge.

So why do it? Fame and glory.

(NOTE: In writing your story, you will have developed a plot. You might be able to apply this to another story with different characters and a different context.)

Social Media

WeRead and Scribd.com are social media sites that specialize in books.

WeRead is affiliated with Lulu.com and is slanted more towards book recommendation (so you should have a book there).

Scribd.com lets writers upload and publish all types of unpublished documents and offers its own form of content syndication. Scribd claims 50 million readers a month and offers a great platform for authors seeking a publisher

You can use Facebook and MySpace to serialize a novel or publish poetry. Facebook has a Notes feature that you can use. You can specify who it gets sent to and they can forward it on to others who can forward it on to others (you'll need to keep your Facebook open, or the newbies will have to join your friends list).

Again, social media is a way to get your name out there and build publishing credits. You won't make any money off them unless…

If the novel becomes popular, note how many people are reading it, get comments from them. When the novel is finished, take it off Facebook and turn it into a manuscript ready to be sent to a publisher or agent … along with an explanation of what you've done and the results.

Here's a few Facebook links:

How to write a novel on Facebook
http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=37793836089

The three day novel contest
http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=2230799474

Writing a Novel on Facebook
http://www.mahalo.com/writing-a-novel-on-facebook

The LiveBook collaborative novel and other social media novels:
http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/livebook_fiction_20.php

If you're into writing a novel (or even a non-fiction book) in segments of 140 characters or less, you might want to check out Twitter. Instead of posting chapters/scenes, you'll be posting "tweets." (Leanne Ayer submitted a short story using Twitter tweets for the re:myth project.)

In fact, some people are writing entire novels in a single post, similar to the Novels In 3 Lines genre.
http://twitter.com/novelsin3lines

For a list of Twitter novels in progress, check out:
http://www.readwriteweb.com/archives/twitter_novels_not_big_success_stories.php

Aramis Fox by Adam Ford is probably the best known Twitter novel. You can read the whole thing here:
http://aramisfox.wordpress.com

Want to start a Twitter novel? Here's how:
http://www.twitip.com/how-to-start-a-twitter-novel

Online Free Article Sites

There are hundreds of sites on the web that offer free and fee-based content for websites, blogs, newsletters, news sites and other sites. Some of this content is even used by print media. These sites are sometimes referred to as *content mills*. They make their money by selling the articles on their site and/or from advertising revenue. In either case, some of these sites make good money off their writers and the writers make little or nothing. In fact, most of these sites do not pay their contributors. In addition, they keep the rights to do just about anything they want with your articles, including selling them to other content mills without sharing the profits with you. This makes it practically impossible for you to use the article elsewhere, especially for pay.

Why would you write for free?
- gain exposure.
- establish yourself as an expert in your field
- build a portfolio of publications
- bring traffic to your website

List of article sites:
http://www.wilsonweb.com/linking/wilson-article-marketing-1.htm

One of the best sites to post your articles is Helium. Not only can you make money here, but your articles may be picked up by magazines and newspapers in addition to online publications. You can visit them here:
http://www.helium.com/content/whatishelium

Your Own Website

You can publish anything you want here and you can give some of it away free and create links to books/stories that you can sell right from your site or linked to Lulu.com or other self-publishers.

Sell from Your Site: You can get an e-commerce site through GoDaddy or other website service and sell your books right off your site. They can be PDF downloads or other software (many of the converters for these are free). Or, you can get the books published yourself and sell print copies.

You can even serialize your novel on your site. You can publish poetry on your site. You can publish non-fiction on your site (with accompanying graphics). But, unless you have access to your site set up for paid access, then you'll be giving it all away free.

I've seen sites where they publish the first one third of a short story or novella, or the first few chapters of a novel…just enough to get you hooked, and then they charge for the rest. (If you do this, make sure they know that it's a sample before they start reading.)

Again, the goal may just be to get your name out there, or to build a readership that can be used as ammo to get a publisher or agent.

NOTE: All writers, whether fiction or non-fiction, should have an author website. Or at least a blog.

Cell Phone Novels

Cell phone novels are a literary genre springing from text messaging, first started by young Japanese women with mostly romantic themes. Today, cell phone novels are a worldwide phenomenon with all the themes of traditional literature. Chapters tend to be short and simply written, using mostly dialogue.

The largest site carrying cell phone novels is Maho i-Land (http://mirushto.blogspot.com/2008/12/maho-i-land.html) with over a million titles and billons of hits each month. One of the most popular English language sites is www.textnovel.com.

Cell phone novels are given away free of charge, but many of them are being published in print books and being made into TV series and movies. The best selling cell phone novels in print format are:

- "Deep Love" by Yoshi (2003, over 2.700.000 copies sold, TV-series, film)
- "The Red Thread" by Mei (1.800.000 copies sold, 2007)
- "Love Sky" by Mika (2.600.000 copies sold, 2008 No.1 best-seller)

Email Novels

These are serialized novels delivered to the readers through email. You can build up a readership quickly if you ask people to forward it to their friends. You should definitely have a web site or blog where you can make previous chapters available for late comers.

If you don't mind giving your first novel away free, this is a good way to build a readership for the ones you sell.

You can also tear it down when the novel is finished and then look for a publisher.

The most famous of these is The Daughters of Freya. Which is an email mystery novel told through a series of emails.

And then there's …

Competitions

Look for those that will give you some good exposure (Writers of the Future, Amazon, Drue Heinz, Harpers and Collins, Random House, CBC competitions)

Some of them offer the chance to be published along with the first prize

There's a huge list of these on P&E and you can Google others.

Some of these require a fee, some don't.

Some of these are scams (for instance, ones with a $25 dollar entry fee and a hundred dollar first prize. This contest was likely started just to raise money through the entry fee and the winning entry isn't going anywhere)

Legal Considerations

Copyright

You own it as you write it. How to prove it:

- Mail it to yourself
- Register it with a copyright agency
- Publish it at Lulu but don't sell it (and get an ISBN)
- My way: each day when I finish writing, I send the manuscript so far to my gmail account. Every day of writing is recorded and dated.

Contracts

The fact is, these days publishers contracts are becoming more and more standardized with the authors having very little control over the terms. If you have an agent, there may be room for negotiation. If it's your first book and you don't have an agent, you have very little leeway, your only option being to turn down the contract and the offer for publication.

Things to look for in a contract:

NEVER give away your copyright, unless they offer you enough money to make all your dreams come true. Books are always copyrighted by the author

Don't give away merchandizing and movie rights. These are things you negotiate under separate contract for merchandizing and with the movie company for movie rights/ If these are specified in the contract, make sure you will get a reasonable share of them, which may mean hiring a lawyer who specializes in publishing contracts.

Pay careful attention to how long the publisher has exclusive rights (if it's forever, they might take your book out of print…or never publish it…and you won't be able to get another publisher for it … check the opt out clause…is there one?) This is especially a bad situation if your only payment will be royalties on the sales of the book.

Check when royalties are paid.

Check the royalty payments fine print.

What will the publisher do for marketing? What will you have to do?

Make sure that you will receive royalties (and know what they are) for other forms of publishing (ebook, POD, audio).

Some contracts are signed and the book is never published.

The publisher may sell the contract to another publisher and request that you repay the advance.

Do they get first rights to subsequent books, if they do, make sure the time period for their decision is stipulated (they could hold on to your second book for years)

Essential things to ask:

- What rights do you have? What rights does the publisher have? Who owns the copyright?
- What rights does the publisher have to alter your book? (title, editing)
- How much do you get?
- What happens if the contract is terminated (who gets what)? They may still own the publishing rights.

Dealing with Rejection

Famous rejections (sheet)

The reasons a manuscript might be rejected…

- You didn't follow their guidelines
- They have too much of what you submitted
- They're looking for something else
- The editor was in a bad mood
- The editor has a bias
- The editor was choosing manuscripts to read at random and automatically rejected the rest
- They don't like you

There's nothing fair about the publishing world. You can have potentially the greatest novel ever written and still may not be able to find a publisher (until, of course, you self-publish and the word gets out).

Most publishers are not looking for new voices, they're looking for what's currently hot, or what they feel is the next big hot thing. Hot is what is currently of interest to the reading public. It's what people will buy. It's what will keep the publishing house in money, and publishing is all about money, especially with the current financial crisis, the competition from other forms of entertainment and information access, and the high cost of publishing and distribution.

Just keep in mind all the options you have in addition to the traditional approaches to getting published.

Publisher/Agent Tracking Sheet

Publisher Contact and Comments	Date Submitted	Date Returned
Name of Publisher: Email Submissions: Y/N Publisher URL: Publisher Address (If no email submissions): Submissions Page: Editor: Editor's Email: COMMENTS:		

Fiction Query

Hello,

Cassie Hayes is the idol of the universe. For a thousand years, she's been triumphant in the Reality Wars, a deadly series of online games played every 100 years and broadcast throughout the galaxies. But Cassie, a sentient software program, is tormented by the death of her virtual mother after her human father abandoned them 2000 years earlier. Now, he's back…just in time to abandon her again as he goes off to save the universe with the help of a computer virus that thinks it's Buddha.

The Reality Wars is set in a universe devoid of intelligent life other than humans, clones and sentient software. Life spans extend into thousands of years, but after the mysteries of Creation have been explored, mapped and explained away, boredom and death-wish define human nature. Genetically connected to an internet based on the vibrations that compose the stuff of existence, humans share online life equally with virtual reality people.

The Reality Wars pit human against software in games that test thousands of contestants mentally, physically and spiritually in hundreds of online arenas. The Clans, a genetically altered race of warriors, has bred the perfect weapon to end Cassie's millennial winning streak—the weapon's name is Loac. Beautiful, deadly and driven by boundless hatred for all things virtual, Loac is counterbalanced by her lover and equally beautiful but deadly bodyguard, Shade, who has treasonous feelings about the duo's role in a 500 year plot to destroy trillions of virtual lives. Cassie's human best friend, Sara, a second place finisher in the Wars for centuries, has antagonized the Clans to the extent that this Reality Wars will not just pit human against software, but throw four extraordinary women into a life-or-death contest that turns deadlier than ever from a new twist… it's run in both the virtual *and* real worlds against the backdrop of an inter-galactic war that will change the very nature of the universe.

Word count: 112,581
Genre: science fiction (cyber punk space opera)

I've had four novels published in both print and ebook formats, plus dozens of short stories in various magazines, ezines and award-winning anthologies. Several of my novellas have been published as individual ebook downloads. A book I wrote about online marketing for writers was an ebook bestseller on Fictionwise for nearly half a year.

Would you be interested in seeing more of *The Reality Wars*?

Thomas "Biff" Mitchell
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www.biffmitchell.com

Non-Fiction Query

Hello,

If writers don't market their own books, who will? Increasingly, the answer is **nobody**. Writers with one or more publications are beginning to smarten up to the grim reality: Publishers can barely afford to publish. Writers will have to sing their own laurels. But where do they start? What do they do, especially if they don't have thousands of dollars to spend?

Answer: They buy *eMarketing Tools for Writers, 3rd Edition*. Why? Because it's short, simple, easy-to-use, doesn't insult the writer's intelligence—and most of the tools are free.

Here's how it works: Rather than wade through 300 pages of confusing technical jargon, *eMarketing Tools* presents 37 online technologies such as blogs, podcasts, YouTube, free media releases, email, author websites and Facebook. Each is explained in one or two short paragraphs, followed by a brief explanation of how it can be used to market books. If the author feels comfortable with the technology, a resource section provides abundant links to further information.

In short, *eMarketing Tools* allows writers to quickly identify the online marketing tools they want to use and gives them the resources they need to learn more about them.

The second edition of this book was an ebook bestseller in the business section at Fictionwise five years ago. The third edition has been updated with special attention to new technologies, including social media.

eMarketing Tools is not just a reference book—it's a learning tool drawing on my experience as a marketing manager and adult educator. Its most logical publication format would be ebook, though it could be published in print format with an accompanying CD, or even a compact Flash drive.

Word count: 19,122
Genre: Self-help (Book Marketing)

I'm currently working on a second title, *eMarketing Tools for Small Business*, and have plans for several more, including non-profits, YouTube movie producers and visual artists. I've also taught workshops on Internet advertising and marketing through the University of New Brunswick and the Maritime Writers' Workshop. I've had four novels published in both print and ebook formats, plus dozens of short stories in various magazines, ezines and award-winning anthologies.

Would you be interested in publishing eMarketing Tools for Writers, 3rd Edition?

Thanks for considering my query.

Thomas "Biff" Mitchell
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www.biffmitchell.com

Proposal for eMarketing Tools Series

Target Audience for the Series

People who:

- Don't have thousands of dollars to spend on marketing, especially an extended marketing campaign to promote a book or support long-term marketing for an online business or other endeavor, such as promoting movies on YouTube or special events and promotions in bars or restaurants
- Have neither the education nor experience in marketing and wouldn't know where to begin a marketing campaign
- Want to spend most of their time active in the things they want to market as opposed to spending most of their time marketing them
- Want quick, easy access to reach their target market(s) through mediums that are becoming increasingly popular with the public
- Have minimal or extensive computer literacy

What Makes These Books Different?

- They're not just books—they're online tools. Hundreds of links provide immediate access to resources, additional information and the actual tools, allowing the reader to learn about the tools and then start using them immediately. For instance, the reader can spend a few minutes reading about blogs and, within 15 minutes, have their own blog up and running
- They simplify the information in an instructional manner by defining each tool in one or two paragraphs, describing how it can be used in one or two more paragraphs, and providing links for further research. This allows the reader to quickly identify those tools that are right for their needs (and technological comfort level) and have access to the resources to learn more about them
- They're short
- They focus on marketing tools that are either free or inexpensive
- Given the readily adaptable format of the books, they can be customized for an unlimited variety of topics, adding an deleting tools and emphasizing those tools most relevant to the specific topic. For instance, "Author and Reader Websites" can be changed to "Small Business Websites" and provide links to an extensive collection of specific business types

What Makes Me Qualified to Write These Books?

- I've worked as both a traditional and online marketing manager. I also have experience in sales, advertising and public relations
- I've worked as an instructional designer for more than 10 years, developing learning materials for adults

- For the last six years, I've taught workshops on writing, e-publishing, e-marketing and creativity through the University of New Brunswick and the Maritime Writer's Workshop
- I've actually used all of these tools

What Are the Sales Channels?

- These books are the ebooks' ebooks. They would be best sold through online sites such as Amazon (Kindle), iBookstore (iPad), Barnes&Noble.com (nook) and online multi-format ebook distributors such as Fictionwise.com and eBookstore.com
- These books could be converted to print format, but would require a CD or compact flash drive containing the links, or even the entire book in ebook format

How Will I Help to Market the Series?

- I'll use the tools in the books to market the books

How Will This Series Be Branded?

- All books will be titled "Biff Mitchell's eMarketing Tools for _____." I've used my name for the last few years in all my workshops (e.g., Biff Mitchell's Scary Outdoor Night Time Horror Writing Workshop) and the name seems to stick in people's minds. It's certainly helped in attracting media attention
- The marketing stress will be on simplicity, ease-of-use and the fact that most of these tools are free

What Are the Titles?

Biff Mitchell's eMarketing Tools for Writers, 3rd Edition has been completed. Other topics—all of which will follow the same format, with modifications for the specific readers' needs—include:

- Small business
- Non-profits
- YouTube video producers
- iTunes musicians
- Visual artists
- Musicians (especially those who are selling their music through online outlets such as iTunes)
- Job Hunters

Given the re-usability and adaptability of the ebook format, other titles can be added on demand or as feasible markets are identified.

And speaking of the ebook format, these books can be easily updated on a one or two year basis to include new online tools and enhancements to existing tools.

What's In the Writers' Book?

In addition to the tools, the book begins with a short introduction to marketing and branding, hints on how to use the book and an overview on social media. The book ends with a section called Beyond eMarketing Tools for Writers. This section briefly discusses tools such as Kijiji for posting free ads, Zoetrope.com for free critiques that can be used for marketing, using Lulu.com as a means creating self-published material that can be used for marketing purposes, online writers' conferences, Flickr and PhotoBucket for visual marketing tools, and using online news media such as CNN as a marketing tool by using the Comments feature.

The Tools:

- Author and Reader Websites
- Banners
- Blogs
- Book Review Websites
- Chat Rooms
- Digg
- Electronic Newsletters
- Email
- Electronic Signatures
- Ezines
- Facebook
- Forums and Discussion Groups
- Free Content
- Google Buzz
- Paid Search Engine Listings
- Internet Radio
- LinkedIn
- Micro-Communities
- Microblogging with Twitter, Plurk and Others
- MySpace
- Newsgroups
- Online Auction Sites
- Online Book Stores
- Online Contests
- Online Directories
- Online Media Release Sites
- Online Merchandising
- Podcasting

- Reciprocal Links
- RSS Feeds
- Search Engines
- Skype
- Squidoo
- YouTube
- Your Author Website
- Wikipedia

One Page Synopsis

Two thousand years from now the entire universe has been explored and no intelligent life has been found anywhere. Humans are born genetically connected to an Internet (Quannet) in which communications throughout the universe are instantaneous, and software personalities are as sentient as human beings. How have humans, with life expectancies of 2000 years and counting, adapted to these circumstances? In *The Reality Wars*, the most common response is suicide, and the Wars, played in virtual reality, are the biggest suicide game in Creation. Through quantum entanglement, when one player dies, millions of viewers perish.

For a thousand years, the ultimate winner has been a sentient software program named Cassie Hayes, calling into question the value of being a flesh and blood human. For two millennia, Cassie has hated her human father for abandoning her and her software mother. The Clans, a species of humans so altered by genetic engineering and nano tech that they seem barely human, have bred the perfect Wars weapon, Loac, whose single goal is to win the Wars and kill Cassie Hayes. Her partner, Shade, is at odds with the plan. Against all her genetic programming, her commitment to Loac is based more on love than duty, and she has doubts about the morality of the Clan's scheme to exterminate trillions of sentient life forms.

Bella Bjork, through her control of Quannet and command of vast intergalactic navies, is the most powerful person in the universe. But her empire is falling apart, and she's dying. Her only hope is to gain control of an anomaly at the edge of space: The Texture, believed to be a gateway to another universe and a source of infinite power. Her navies are in a race with the Clans to seize control of it. However, a wildcard threatens to upset the goals of both navies. A single ship with the most unlikely crew in Creation, a gang of reject clones seeking equality with natural-born humans, are using the basic of nature of the universe—absurdity—to get there first, and they have a powerful ally: a centuries old computer virus that thinks it's Buddha.

In the most vicious Reality Wars ever, Bella takes control and kills off all but Loac, Shade, Cassie and Cassie's best friend, Sarah—forcing the four women into an epic battle between software and flesh and blood that leaves entire planets devoid of life. Outside the Reality Wars arena, a war between the Clans and Bella's forces rages throughout Creation, destroying entire planetary systems and threatening to upset the very nature of the known universe.

In the end, the clones, the Clans and Bella's navy reach The Texture, which turns out to be much more than a gateway to another universe—it's a gateway to countless universes, all teeming with intelligent life. Through The Texture, they send a "song" of hope that brings an end to the suicidal madness of our own universe.

Only Cassie and Shade have survived the Wars, and they become friends. After Bella's death, the war with the Clans peters out. Cassie is re-united with her father, and the clones become inter-dimensional explorers in new universes where they are accepted as equals.

Four Page Synopsis

The Context

The Reality Wars is set 2000 years in a future populated by three dominant life forms: natural born humans, clones and sentient software personalities who live in a virtual world called Quannet, a quantum Internet that spans the universe and, through quantum entanglement, makes all communications instantaneous. Human life spans are in the thousands of years and all humans are born with a genetically engineered connection to Quannet. The universe has been explored from end to end and no intelligent life has been found anywhere, leaving an emotional hole in most humans—the mysteries of life and the universe have evaporated. A bored inter-galactic population responds to the emptiness with mass suicide, and the most popular medium for suicide is an event called The Reality Wars—a series of online competitions with thousands of competitors held every hundred years. Billions of spectators are quantum-entangled with the competitors to the extent that, if a competitor dies, so do their entangled spectators. With every Wars, billions of spectators perish. *The Reality Wars* is set weeks away from the next Wars.

The Story

The story begins with the crew of the intergalactic cruiser, The Finder, arriving at an anomaly at the edge of the universe. It's called the Texture and it's believed to be a pocket of properties left behind from another universe from a time when our universe came into contact with the other. The pocket exists in a constant state of flux, its properties unable to assert themselves in a universe defined by alien properties. There are those who believe it may be a gateway to the other universe and that it may be a source of infinite power. After it brings the crew of The Finder to the brink of madness, they realize that it's much more than just another space anomaly.

Cassie Mae Hayes is a 2000 year old sentient software program and the winner of The Reality Wars since its beginning a thousand years earlier. She gives some back story to the novel, telling how her father gave her and her mother sentience and then deserted them, leading to her mother's suicide by deleting her program. She also mentions a strange being that helped her father save her and her mother after a powerful woman, Bella Bjork, who had them kidnapped in the hopes of learning the secret of eternal life from their virtual sentience. She tells how the Internet crashed completely as a result of an online war between powerful virtual city states, ending in the deaths of billions of hard-wired users, and Bella's ascendance to the single most powerful person in the universe through her creation of Quannet.

The story moves to Bella and her cloned lover, Lovesong, in her planet-sized crystal fortress. Through Quannet and her command of vast galactic navies, she controls most of the universe but, after just two thousand years, she's dying and her control over her empire is disintegrating. Fifty years after the disappearance of The Finder, she's sent a fleet to seize the Texture in hopes that it might hold secrets to extend her life and help her regain her power.

However, a genetically altered species of humans, The Clans, have also sent a fleet to seize the Texture. The Clans, under the command of a warrior priest named Bavn, are believed to be as powerful as Bella. The most powerful of them, the Tears of Blood Clan (named for a common

birthmark in their cheeks) want to destroy Quannet and all of its virtual, though sentient, population (called VRs) and revert to a universe where flesh and blood humans are the predominant life form. They're especially concerned about a new technology that will allow VRs to exist in the physical world. One of their prime goals is to have a human win the Wars and, to this end, they've spent 500 years breeding a woman, Loac, to become the ultimate Wars competitor. Another woman, Shade, has been bred to be Loac's bodyguard and lover. However, she has two flaws: her love for Loac is stronger than her duty to their cause, and she believes that the VRs have a right to exist.

Cassie, Loac, Shade and Sarah (Cassie's best friend and a natural born human) will all be in the next Wars. Shade, who hates the Clans, taunts Shade and Loac during a pre-Wars weigh-in, leading to a brief and violent exchange. This rivalry promises to make the next Wars the best—and most violent—ever.

Kingston Cormorant (known as The Cormorant) is the most powerful of a group of people called The Gamblers, who control all gambling in the universe. Through them, entire planets have changed hands during the Wars, the greatest gambling event of all time. The Cormorant plans to fix the next Wars by hiring an assassin to kill Shade in the hopes that this will throw Loac's game and give Cassie an advantage, on whom he's bet billions of dollars.

The Assassin is a conflicted killer who converses with his conscience continuously. To assuage his conscience, he's mastered the art of robbing his victims of their will to live—to the point where they want to die—before he gives them what he calls "a beautiful death." However, Shade manages to resist him and teams up with Loac and a "witch woman" to fight back at the Assassin's life-draining attempts.

In another part of the universe, a powerful sentient computer virus (it orchestrated the online war that destroyed the first Internet) awakens after two millennia of meditation and believes that it's Buddha. It also believes that it has a mission to save the universe, but first, it helps its old friend, Abner Hayes (Cassie's missing father) escape from Bella, who has been keeping him prisoner for 2000 years. Buddha wants Abner to come with him to Bella's fortress to create equality between humans and clones by destroying a registry in Quannet that records who is and who isn't a clone throughout the universe. The key to the registry is in a pendant that Bella wears around her neck at all times.

The race to the Texture has been complicated by a wild card—Soul Ship, a space cruiser with several hundred clones who think that the Texture will help them find their souls. They're no match for fleets sent by the Clans and Bella, but they have a strategy. They've emulated the basic absurdity of the universe by using a ship that is designed to fail and by giving it a crew designed for failure. The ship's commander, Jeli Role, is a Chief Magistrate and his crew are the last beings anyone would ever imagine getting to the Texture first. The scenes with the clones add comedy to the story. They're unaware that they have a powerful ally: Buddha.

At the opening of the Reality Wars, the Assassin makes his move and accidentally kills one of the other competitors. He immediately goes into hiding.

In the first Wars arena, Cassie and Shade are entwined in a deadly virtual game in which they have each other's' bodies. They have to avoid being killed by hundreds of other competitors likewise entwined, and avoid killing each other, which would cause both of them to die. Twice, during this game they save each other and manage to get close enough to touch, thus ending the game and making them the victors.

In the next arena, Loac and Sarah are matched in a virtual environment devoid of color or substance, just the two of them floating in space. They're supposed to fight each other, but this game is one of empathy. Any negative feelings they have toward the other comes back several fold on themselves. Loac comes just seconds away from absorbing Sarah's life force when she's suddenly shredded to pieces. It turns out that Bella is interfering with the Wars. When Shade learns of Loac's death, she wants nothing more than to kill Sarah.

Meanwhile, Bella is deteriorating fast and she's going insane. She orders her navies throughout the universe to attack all the worlds populated by the Clans. The first attack comes on Blood Citadel, a belt of thousands of asteroids populated by the Tears of Blood Clan. Each asteroid is a heavily armed fortress with thousands of Clans members living under the surface. The planet around which the asteroids circle is rumored to be a bomb that would be detonated by Bavn if ever Blood Citadel were to fall to an enemy. Bella has sent millions of war ships to attack the asteroids.

In another part of the universe, a small fleet of Clans ships has arrived at the only entrance to a small galaxy that houses the database and operating systems for Quannet through entire planets populated by human computers. It's guarded by the largest of Bella's fleets. The small Clans fleet mission is to get just one ship into the galaxy and spread a virus that will destroy Quannet. Before they can make their move, Bella orders her fleet to attack. In the ensuing battle, the Clans manage to get their ship through, but it's destroyed a rogue ship commander before the virus can be released.

Back at the Wars, Sarah and Shade are pitched against each other in a pit surrounded by thousands of gargoyles in an arena that switches between virtual reality and the real world. With each change, the arena grows larger until it's a massive pit, and both Shade and Sarah have been replicated thousands of times. If any one of the real women or their replicants deals a killing blow, the real woman will die. Again, Bella interferes, and kills Sarah, but Shade realizes that the battle was rigged and begins to wonder about the real nature of Loac's death.

The next battle pits her against Cassie. This one takes place at the Wars' starting area, where thousands of competitors stand on pads that will launch them into their next arena. The area is littered with the bodies of those who have been killed in battle so far. Once again, Bella interferes by killing all the competitors, leaving only Shade and Cassie in a battle that will ultimately determine the dominance of flesh and blood or software. But, they're both onto Bella by this time and they fake their battle.

At Blood Citadel, Bella's fleets use suicide ships carrying massive explosives to crash into the asteroids and disrupt their orbits, causing them to crash into each other and into the home planet.

Realizing that the battle is lost, Bavn ignites the planet and destroys the Clans and Bella's navies. However, in parts of the universes, Bella's forces lose half their battles.

Buddha and Abner have managed to get through Bella's defenses and have infiltrated her fortress. Buddha disconnects Bella's connection to Quannet, freeing Cassie and Shade from having to fake their battle. Just as they secure the pendant with the registry, the Assassin shows up. He gives Buddha and Abner time to escape before he blows up the fortress, killing himself in the process.

Soul Ship, through a series of mishaps, wrong turns, and visits to alternate realities arrives at the Texture at the same time as Bella's and the Clans' fleets. The crew of the Finder is there to greet them and tells them that the Texture is, in fact, a portal to not just one universe, but infinite universes, each populated with its own intelligent life forms. The Texture sends out a song throughout our universe as a form of greeting. Soul Ship and both the war fleets enter the Texture, after the weapons have been "turned into useful things like ornaments they could give out as gifts during their travels in other universes."

At the end of the novel, Cassie is reunited with her father. She tells how the universe has changed since the Texture sent out its song, but warns that there are new powers getting ready for the next big conflict. The rest of the universe is mostly peaceful…and the suicide rates have dropped.

Buddha decides to spend the next two thousand years as mist.

I've started making notes for a sequel to this novel, beginning just before the "next big conflict."