

**The Nuts and Bolts of Publishing your Literary Anthology**  
A handout of the AWP panel “How to Publish a Literary Anthology”  
March 25, 2022, in Philadelphia, PA.

This handout on “How to Publish an Anthology,” represents the experiences of editors of the following anthologies—*The Boom Project: Voices of a Generation*, *The Louisville Anthology*, *Women Speak* and *I Thought I Heard a Cardinal Sing*. Our anthologies gathered both emerging and published writers in unique volumes to specific groups—the Baby Boom Generation of the Ohio River Valley, writers of Louisville, Kentucky, women of Appalachia, and poets of Ohio’s Appalachian region.

Below are suggestions based on what we’ve learned from our experiences as editors. The order mirrors the recommended process that we followed (or wish we had followed!) **The links to purchase each book are included at the end of this handout.**

**Consider working with a co-editor.** Choose someone who has a skill set different from your own. Consider creating a memorandum of agreement that specifies how the labor, costs and profits will be shared. State how you will resolve the future books sales if one partner resigns before the project is complete.

**Decide on focus, theme, and purpose—**Create a proposal that will guide you throughout each step of the process. Try to sum up your purpose in one sentence that you can repeat to potential funders, publishers, on submission guidelines and with contributors. Example—An anthology of poetry and prose by the Baby Boom Generation of the Ohio River Valley, which will have both historical and literary appeal, especially to readers born between 1946 and 1964.

**Create a working timeline** for all stages of the process. Make deadlines to determine type of publisher, fundraising, judging, selection, author contracts, book assembly, copyediting, publication date, pre-publication promotional activities and post-publication marketing.

**Decide** on featured writing genre (s) and strategy for acquiring submissions.

**Define your audiences—**potential contributors *and* readers.

**Set a reasonable goal** for the number of books you want to sell.

**Clarify how contributors will be compensated**—# of copies, cash award, participation in marketing activities.

**Decide how you would like your contributors to participate** in promotion and marketing activities. You may want to clarify your expectations in your submission request or writer contract.

**Decide on how you will collect submissions**—by soliciting manuscripts from specific writers, through submission management platforms (fee-based), snail mail and/or email. Will you allow reprints? Will you announce submission opportunities on platforms like Newpages.com or through literary organizations?

**Befriend Excel** spreadsheets! At least one of our editors loves spreadsheets.

**Create clear and specific submission guidelines**—deadlines for submission, genre(s), word count, payment, acceptance of simultaneous submissions, reprints, etcetera.

**Post your submission guidelines** on submission platforms (e.g., Submittable) social media and to organizations who might post your information (e.g., libraries). Consider listing your submission opportunity on literary websites that charge a small fee (e.g., Newpages.com).

**Determine who will publish your book**—find a small press, a hybrid publisher, or a self-publishing venue—before you list your submission request.

**Choose a fundraising method**—you do not seek or find a small press interested in publishing your project, you might need to self-fund or raise money on platforms such as Kickstarter.

**Create a one-to-two-page contract** for contributors to sign.

**Strategize the judging process.** Ideally, select three judges. Design specific criteria for judges to use as they assess manuscripts.

### **Complete a budget**

Decide the number of books you think you can sell. Determine editor(s) cost per book. Assess amounts deducted by bookstores, publisher, on-line sellers. Include costs of promotion for submission announcement as well as

marketing costs (e.g., website, copyediting and book design, event costs, travel).

**Notify writers whose work you have accepted.** Ask them to send a confirmation of acceptance and updated bio statement before sending contracts. Create a spreadsheet of contributors. You'll need it to keep track of contracts, contact information, titles, etcetera.

**Create empathic letters of "rejection."** Avoid the line we've all heard — "This is not the right fit for our publication." For this editor, rejecting pieces was difficult emotionally.

**Make yourself available to contributors.** The bond between editors and contributors is essential to success in marketing—readings, events, and distribution

**Decide how to organize your anthology** based on accepted manuscripts—by theme, chronology, genre. Some editors place especially compelling writing at the start and close of each section.

**Long before your book is at the printer, create a marketing plan.** Schedule readings and other events well in advance. Think outside the box—try unique ways to sell books (e.g., rogue marketing).

**Communicate with contributors** to identify venues for readings and sales.

**Create a website** and other social media platforms. Create teasers and colorful "ads" for social media.

**Write and distribute a press release** to announce the book's publication

**Plan a festive launch party** that is as fun for you as your attendees! Include contributors as guests and readers.

**Market your book in every way you are able**—events, readings, writing groups, schools, libraries, speeches to civic groups.

**Your contributors are key to the marketing process.** Maintain communication with all your contributors, ask for help from writers who are well connected or express special interest in the book.

**Remind yourself often** of the value of your project. How it has showcased new authors. How you've developed relationships with writers you've never met. How you've advanced an idea, a marginalized group, a place. How the scope of your anthology is more than literature. You've created a history of a time, a place, a perspective.

**Don't underestimate the power of your presence.** In-person events sells books, (as we learned starting our marketing six months before the COVID pandemic. People won't line up to buy a book on Zoom!)

**Work outside your comfort zone** (of find a partner with a different comfort zone).

**Expect surprises.** Adjust your plans to new situations.

**Be Informed.** Here are some resources to get you started!

"Tips for Publishing an Anthology," by Dalma Szentpály on publishdrive.com <https://publishdrive.com/tips-for-publishing-an-anthology.html>

"A Definitive Guide to Writing and Publishing an Anthology," by Aishwarya Mukandarajan in notionpress.com <https://notionpress.com/blog/definitive-guide-writing-publishing-anthology/>

"7 Tips on Editing an Anthology by Lisa Frank, editor of *Galway Stories*," in inkwell.com <https://www.writing.ie/resources/seven-tips-on-editing-an-anthology-by-lisa-frank-editor-of-galway-stories/>

"There's an Anthology for That," by *Submittable* outlines the advantages of publishing in an anthology, including suggestions on looking for the latest anthologies on crowdfunding sites. <https://discover.submittable.com/blog/theres-an-anthology-for-that/>

"Getting an anthology published," a Q & A with Jane Friedman on janefriedman.com <https://www.janefriedman.com/getting-an-anthology-published/>

"How to Put Together an Indie Author Anthology," by Matty Dalrymple and Mark Leslie Lefebvre from janefriedman.com <https://www.janefriedman.com/indie-author-anthology/>

“30 Best Small and Indie Publishers,” on bookfox.com  
<https://thejohnfox.com/2017/09/30-best-small-indie-literary-publishers/>

“8 Lessons for Launching Your Book with a Kickstarter,” by Zach Obront on scribemediacom  
<https://scribemediacom/8-lessons-for-launching-your-book-with-a-kickstarter-and-raising-25000/>

“The Six Best Crowdfunding Sites for Writers,” by Electra Nanou on makeuseof.com <https://www.makeuseof.com/best-crowdfunding-sites-writers/>

“How to Market Your Book Without Social Media,” by Carol Michel in janefriedman.com <https://www.janefriedman.com/how-to-market-your-book-without-social-media/>

“How to Promote a Book or Anthology,” on dreamerswriting.com  
<https://www.dreamerswriting.com/promoting-book-anthology/>

**Here are links to buy our anthologies.** Each of these books is also available at an online venue, of course! But we value our publishers!

*The Boom Project: Voices of a Generation*, edited by Kimberly Garts Crum and Bonnie Omer Johnson (Butler Books, 2019)  
<https://www.butlerbooks.com/boom-project.html>

*Women Speak*, edited by Kari Gunter Seymour (6<sup>th</sup> edition Sheila Na-Gig, 2021)  
<https://sheilanagigblog.com/poetry-prose-art-anthology-women-speak-volume-6/>

*The Louisville Anthology*, edited by Erin Keane (Belt Publishing, 2020)  
<https://beltpublishing.com/products/the-louisville-anthology>

*I Thought I Heard a Cardinal Sing*, edited by Kari Gunter-Seymour  
<https://sheilanagigblog.com/sheila-na-gig-editions-quick-shopping/cardinal-sing/>