

## **AWP 2023**

**Title: I Wish I'd Known: Advice for Navigating the Publishing World**

**Number: F119**

**Date/Time: 9:00am - 10:15am on Friday March 10, 2023**

**Location: Rooms 427-429, Summit Building, Seattle Convention Center, Level 4**

**Jean Kwok: moderator**

**Mitchell S. Jackson, Angie Kim, Rebecca Makkai, Danielle Trussoni**

From getting an agent to working with an editor to doing publicity, the life of a writer is filled with potential pitfalls. What are things you should do before you ever sign with an agent? What are definite no-no's while trying to get an agent? How many of your editor's changes do you accept? What are tips for a great reading? How can you best do publicity? These seasoned writers talk about their own experiences with different agencies and publishing houses and share their hard-earned advice.

Writers who are successfully navigating the publishing world share their top tips. Much of what is expected from a writer by agents, editors and publicity teams is unspoken and many of us have learned to find our way by trial and error. Within this solitary profession, this diverse group of writers with different publishing experiences extends a helping hand to others who are trying to traverse the same terrain. We hope that this panel will inspire and help both beginning and advanced writers.

INTRO: Welcome, many other panels.

Publishing is a bizarre world. Much of what is expected from a writer by agents, editors and publicity teams is unspoken and many of us have learned to find our way by trial and error. It's like navigating a minefield, esp. because it's incredibly competitive – a top agent sees literally thousands of queries a year and one misstep can and will get you rejected.

So many things I wished I'd known so we're going to run through the publication process here and give you an insider's view to the publishing world, plus some do's and don'ts for every step of the process.

Let me introduce this amazing panel of some of the savviest writers I know– I confess, I'm curious myself.

**Jean Kwok** is the award-winning, international bestselling author of *Girl in Translation*, *Mambo in Chinatown*, and *Searching for Sylvie Lee*, which was a Read with Jenna Today Show Pick and an instant NYT bestseller. Her work has been published in 20 countries and is taught in schools across the world. Her new novel *The Leftover Woman* will be published in October 2023.

**Angie Kim** is a Korean immigrant and debut author of the international bestseller and Edgar winner *Miracle Creek*, which is being translated into over 20 languages. She has written for *Vogue*, *The New York Times Book Review*, *The Washington Post*, *Glamour*, and numerous literary journals. Her new book *Happiness Falls* is appearing in September 2023.

**Mitchell S. Jackson's** Mitchell S. Jackson is the winner of the 2021 Pulitzer Prize in Feature Writing and the 2021 National Magazine Award in Feature Writing. He is the author of the novel *THE RESIDUE YEARS* and the memoir *SURVIVAL MATH*. He teaches Creative Writing at Arizona State University.

**Rebecca Makkai's** 5th book, *I Have Some Questions for You*, is out in early 2023. Her novel *The Great Believers* was a finalist for both the Pulitzer and the National Book Award; it won the LA Times Book Prize, the Carnegie Medal and the Stonewall Award. She is Artistic Director of StoryStudio Chicago.

**Danielle Trussoni** is a New York Times, USA Today, and Sunday Times top ten bestselling author whose novels have been translated into 33 languages. She has served as the Jury Chair of the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction and currently writes the Dark Matters column for *The New York Times Book Review*. Her new novel, *The Puzzle Master*, is coming out in June 2023.

We only have an hour – the last 15 min will be for questions from the audience, so we need to cover a lot of ground in that time. I've broken up the publishing process into four chunks and I'd like to talk about each one: before the agent and choosing the agent/ selling the book/ the book deal and the editing process with editor/ after publication

Then I'll open the panel up for questions from the audience.

#### QUESTIONS:

1. Let's talk about life before the agent and choosing one. For the sake of time, I'm just going to say that for traditional publishing, which is what this panel is about, you need an agent.

What should we make sure we do before we ever approach an agent? How did you get your agent? Do you remember your emotions and how did you deal with them? Did you get rejected and how did you deal with it? What are some definite no-no's?

DO: make the book as good as possible  
Reserve your name for website/facebook, etc.  
Use Agentquery.com  
Publishersmarketplace.com  
Join a writing group/program/conference  
Learn how to write a good query letter: the hook, the book and the cook  
Simultaneous submissions

DON'T: call them  
send attachment  
Try to be unusual/cute  
Send to publishing houses on your own  
Publish your work on the internet or own your own

2. Selling the book. After the agent, before the book deal. What happened after you got your agent? Did you sign a contract? How was your book sold? Was there an auction – if so, how does that work? Large advance/small advance?

DO: be polite and kind  
Research editors  
Trust your agent  
Trust your gut feeling  
Open-minded

DON'T: lose your mind

- email or call your agent a million times a day
- Be a diva on the phone with a potential editor
- Make a decision on the spot
- Talk money or terms with the editor - never

3. Talk briefly about the book deal itself – payment, terms. Working with your editor. Can you just run us through what happens? How many drafts? How many of your editor's changes do you accept?

DO: stay on schedule

- be as open-minded as possible
- In the end, the book is yours
- If you have an issue, let your agent know

DON'T: ever react immediately if your instinct is negative

- Be rude – always stay professional and polite, small world

4. After publication. Publicity, some happens beforehand. Author questionnaire. Editing process is done, what happens then? What are tips for a great reading? How can you do publicity best? How do you know if they're going to pay or if you're supposed to pay? Should you hire an independent publicist? What about social media? Which ones?

DO: smile, easy to work with

- Be comfortable/uncomfortable
- Be careful, know everything is public record
- Pack extra outfit/makeup in carry-on
- Reach out to people you know, thank people you've met
- Make a business card with your email address/book cover
- Get a good author photo
- Make a professional website
- Social media

DON'T rant/rave/get defensive

- React to negative reviews/readers

**Q&A at end**