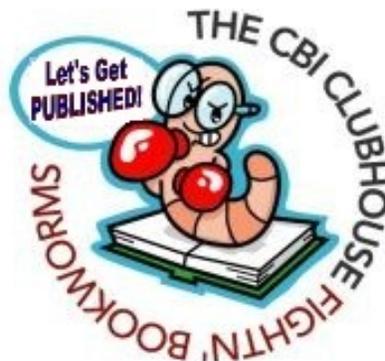


Writing for Children: 2012

A Look At The Trends Impacting Children's Writers Today



By The Editors of *Children's Book Insider*, *The Newsletter for Children's Writers*, and the Expert Guides of CBIClubhouse.com

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Foreword

By Jon Bard, *Children's Book Insider* Managing Editor

For most of our 22 years in business, our advice to aspiring authors has pretty much been the same:

Write a great manuscript, research publishers, assemble a submissions package, send it off....and wait.

If you're one of the lucky ones, your wait will end with a contract offer. If you're like most writers, the cycle will be completed by another rejection letter. Not the most fulfilling process, but it was the only process that worked.

But things have changed. We've entered a new era of publishing, one that offers a fundamental shift in power. Writers can, if they are so inclined, completely sidestep the traditional publishing structure and take on a more entrepreneurial role. The means to produce, distribute, sell and promote one's writing are now within the reach – and budget – of almost every writer.

No era of fundamental change arrives without uncertainty, confusion and fear, and today's publishing environment is no exception. For writers who have gone about their business the same way for years, talk of eBooks, apps and the like may strike a discordant, even unsettling note.

That's all perfectly understandable – the dust kicked up by the rapid pace of change makes it hard to see a clear path to a promising future. But here's the good news: the dust *is* settling, and the road ahead is finally becoming clearer.

And, we believe, it's a road that can take writers to some very exciting places.

We see the future of children's writing as having three key components:

1. In the New Media Environment, Craft Is King

More now than ever, the ability to write well and tell a compelling story reigns supreme. The days when a publisher could turn a subpar work into a hit by sheer force of marketing dollars is over. Today's big sellers are the result of one thing: word of mouth. Parents talking to other parents. Kids talking to other kids. Bloggers championing their favorite authors and titles. The impact of this is simple to see: Bad books don't get recommended by word of mouth. Good books do.

The new model for a hit book is a slow build, a rising tide of organic buzz about a great read. It's all about the quality of the writing and the story.

2. The Author Has The Power to Choose His or Her Path to Publication

Choice = power. And you now have choices.

You can still go the traditional route, submitting your manuscripts to publishers. It's as valid a way of reaching the market as it ever was. But now you can choose to opt out of that model. Self-publish, create eBooks for the Nook and Kindle, build an App for the iPhone or Android. It's all possible, it's all eminently doable and it's all now a completely legitimate means of publishing your work and reaching millions.

No more waiting around for someone else's arbitrary decision. You have control.

3. Authors Need to Think Like Marketers

Whether you self-publish or get a contract from a big publisher, the reality is the same: you must learn how to market and promote yourself and your work. With the barriers to publication gone, you'll have lots of competition for the attention and dollars of your audience. That's the bad news. The good news? Almost no one really understands how to effectively promote their books. Once you learn a few key concepts, you'll have a huge edge.

I know what you're thinking: "Arrggghhh! I'm a writer, not a salesman! I don't want to spend my time promoting myself!"

So listen up:

*Marketing is just a fancy name for communication. And, as a writer,
communicating is your strong suit!*

We aren't talking about going door-to-door to hawk your wares. Promoting in the modern media environment is actually a whole lot of fun. Imagine blogging in the guise of one of your characters (perhaps your antagonist stops in from time to time to torment the hero in the comments section!), creating a story to send out on Twitter — 140 characters at a time, creating a fun online game for your Facebook page, visiting with a classroom full of giggling young fans.....

Meeting your readers, connecting with parents, sharing yourself with the world: these aren't acts of drudgery. They're endless opportunities for joy and fulfillment.

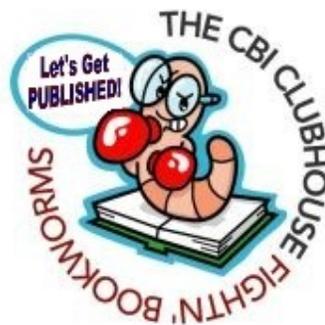
In this eBook, we present the viewpoints of some of children's publishing's most distinctive voices – our CBI Clubhouse Expert Guides -- each addressing a different aspect of the state of the art as it exists in 2012. We'll discuss the

kinds of books that are selling, the technologies that are transforming our industry and some new mindsets that may dramatically change things even further.

I hope we help calm some fears, provide some inspiration and perhaps even set you off on exciting new challenges.

If you're looking for some companionship and guidance for these new adventures – or you'd just like to learn more about what we're up to at the CBI Clubhouse, I invite you to come and visit us. You'll see much more from our Expert Guides and meet our friendly denizens, whom we have affectionately dubbed *The Fightin' Bookworms*.

We're open 24/7 at <http://cbiclubhouse.com>



What The Heck's Happening In Picture Books?

By Natasha Wing, CBI Clubhouse Picture Book Expert Guide

The past few years has brought the biggest shift in picture books that I've observed in my twenty-year writing career. Things that I believe have contributed to the shift are:

- The awarding of the Caldecott Medal to a novel-length story that happens to have a trillion drawings and was labeled a picture book.
- On the flip side, the request from editors for shorter text ruling out picture story books, legends and tall tales.
- Student testing coupled with parental pressure to cultivate gifted offspring is driving parents to push chapter books over picture books.
- The cost of hardback picture books nearing \$20 is causing recession-affected consumers to question the value of the book versus it being a spontaneous purchase.
- Down-sizing has piled more job responsibilities on editors and therefore manuscripts that are submitted are needing to be more "perfect" and polished than in the past.
- And of course, the infiltration of electronic reading devices.

Some of this might sound dreary, but one thing I've learned about surviving in the writing business longterm is: Stay hopeful. Believe in the ingenuity of the human race to invent and re-conceptualize in order to continue to have outlets

for creativity. And then be ready with a manuscript to submit.

As some opportunities fade, others shine bright. On the bright side, kids still want to be read to. And if they love a character, they want more. Teachers still use trade books in their classroom, especially if it fits their curriculum. And dare I mention the expansion and ease of self-publishing outlets such as NOOK and Kindle?

There is still a need for a good story, be it in traditional paper book or electronic form. That's why honing your skills is important so you can create stories that the market will buy.

My editor for my *The Night Before* series, Jane O'Connor, is also the author of the wildly popular *Fancy Nancy* books. Here's what Jane says, "Picture books are coming out in electronic editions but, at least in the foreseeable future, my gut instinct is that parents will still prefer to buy print picture books for their young children, to build a library of favorites that sit on a bookshelf in a child's room.

"Picture books are very different from middle grade or YA novels and not just because they are so much shorter and have artwork. Reading a children's novel is a solitary experience – the child does it alone. Picture books are meant to be shared. A grownup gathers a child on his/her lap and they experience the book together – the grownup reading the story, the child listening, turning actual

pages, absorbing details in the pictures and so on. I may be a Luddite but I don't think reading a picture book on a device offers the same special coziness."

My agent, Linda Pratt of Wernick & Pratt Agency, adds, "Pictures books are one of the most challenging categories for publishers these days. Partly because sales have shifted from being strongly supported by schools and libraries – which had historically been the backbone of all children's book sales – to requiring a significant sell through in the retail market in order for a title to be successful. Another part is that the production costs in creating picture books have always been higher than novels due to factors like larger trim size, paper stock, and printing costs for full color illustrations.

"The tighter focus on featured titles in retail outlets helps these books stand out to consumers, which is certainly wonderful for the book and ultimately the publisher. However, it leaves other titles that may need the benefit of being placed into just the right child's hand by a knowledgeable librarian, teacher or bookseller fighting for attention on packed shelves.

"Publishers have to factor all of this into their acquisition decisions. The key questions become: Who is the child who will ultimately read this book? And what paths exist to get it to them?

"With half my clients writing and/or illustrating picture books, I can attest that

they are still being acquired, editors still love working on them, and readers exist who continue to covet them. While some of my clients' sales have been for exactly the kind of picture books that seem to be in demand – shorter texts with strong characters, many written and illustrated by one creator – others squarely defy current conventional wisdom. For example, I hear, ‘Wordless pictures are so difficult’. Yet Lita Judge's *Red Sled*, which is virtually wordless, has been selling very strongly.

“In the end, it is about the truth of the story and how strongly that truth resonates with the child reading.”



CBI Clubhouse Picture Book Expert Guide Natasha Wing has been writing children's books for 20 years and has published 22 books with more on the way. She is best known for her Night Before series that puts a twist on The Night Before Christmas. *The Night Before Kindergarten* has sold more than 1 million copies. Her books have been featured on best-seller lists, state school reading lists, and notable books lists.

To learn more about Natasha, go to <http://cbiclubhouse.com/meet-our-expert-guides/natasha-wing-pictureBooks/>

Top 10 Trends in Easy Readers

By Anastasia Suen, CBI Clubhouse Easy Reader Expert Guide

10. There is now an award for beginning readers. The [Geisel Award](#), the award for beginning readers named after Theodor Seuss Geisel (yes, Dr. Seuss himself!) is "given annually to the author(s) and illustrator(s) of the most distinguished American book for beginning readers published in English in the United States during the preceding year." This award from the American Library Association was first presented in 2006.

9. Easy readers and chapter books have gone digital. Some easy reader books have come out as apps (notably, [Dr. Seuss](#)) while others, like the digital [I Can Read](#) books from HarperCollins can be read *by* the child, or with the press of a button, *to* the child. Well-known chapter book series, such as the [Magic Tree House](#), are also available as eBooks.

8. Two more publishers created leveled-book lines in 2011. Little, Brown debuted a new leveled-reader list called [Passport to Reading](#) and Holiday House added a new picture book line called [I Like to Read](#) TM.

7. Two of the “Big Six” publishers rebranded their leveled-book lines in 2011. The new [Penguin Young Readers](#) line takes books from the various

Penguin imprints and places them into a single line with standardized look. The [Ready to Read](#) line from Simon and Schuster also has a clean new look.

6. Publishers are now labeling their books with the "Guided Reading" leveling system used in the schools. The new Penguin and the Simon and Schuster leveled reader series both include the new "Guided Reading" [leveling system](#) in addition to their traditional numbered levels.

5. Easy readers are now written for the preschool age. The simplest easy readers are now written for the preschool age, children who are only four years old. Some are very simple [comics](#).

4. Chapter books are now written for first graders. Many children know how to read by the time they reached first grade, so in the second semester of school these children are reading chapter books. In fact, in some schools it is a requirement that students read a chapter book in the second semester of first grade.

3. Easy readers and chapter books are often sold as a series. This means you can sell four, five, or six books at a time. It also means that publishers taking a big chance by allowing you to write so many books at once. As a result, series sales tend to come later in your career, after you have established that you can meet deadlines, etc.

2. Licensed characters and branded characters dominate some publisher's lists. Look carefully at the copyright dates and you will see that some publishers only acquire new books with licensed characters. These are the same characters that young children see on [television](#) and in the movies. Other publishers focus on publishing easy readers with [branded characters](#) from their [picture book](#) lines.

1. Backlist is king. The good news about [easy readers](#) and [chapter books](#) is that these books tend to stay in print for a very long time. The bad news about [easy readers](#) and chapter books is these books tend to stay in print for a very long time. It can be hard to sell a new book in these formats.



The author of 135 books, CBI Clubhouse Easy Reader Expert Guide Anastasia Suen teaches writing at Southern Methodist University and online, and has written with students of all ages in workshops all over the globe.

Her many honors include Association of Educational Publishers' Award (Wild Animals series), Best Girl Reader (second grade), New York Times Best Illustrated Book (Window Music), Nick Jr. Best Book (Toddler Two Dos años), Smithsonian Notable Book (Baby Born), Time Magazine Best Book (Window Music).

More about Anastasia: <http://cbiclubhouse.com/meet-our-expert-guides/7776-2/>

Middle Grade: Where We Are, Where We're Going

By Kirby Larson, CBI Clubhouse Middle Grade Expert Guide

I am delighted to be your CBI Middle Grade expert guide, with emphasis on the word guide. In fact, let's call ourselves fellow flaneurs, strolling about in children's literature.

As we are fellow pilgrims, it seems only fair to clarify my bias that a good story will always find its way to readers. So I encourage you to focus, first and foremost, on producing your finest work. Next, find a first reader who cares enough to shoot straight from the hip. (Author Erik Larson's is his wife who draws zzzs in the margins if she finds her attention wandering while reading.)

Now that you know where I'm coming from, let's talk about where we're all going. This is an exciting time to be writing middle grade as the young adult market may have hit the high water mark, leaving editors and agents – and readers! – eager for new middle grade material.

Here are a few other thoughts about the current state of the middle grade genre from people far savvier than me:

Librarian Mary Ann Scheuer (greatkidbooks.blogspot.com) shared this: The thing that pops immediately to mind is illustrated novels, whether it's line drawings spread throughout the novel or blended graphic/ traditional novels. My students really respond to those visual aspects in a text. Having said this, I find that many of my students still respond to traditional genres, ranging from fantasy to realistic fiction to historical fiction.

Multiple Newbery Honor winner Jennifer Holm echoed Mary Ann's observation, reporting the trend that sticks out to me in the middle-grade category is graphic and hybrid-style graphic novels. I would include *SMILE* by Raina Telgemeier and *The Strange Case of Origami Yoda* by Tom Angleberger and *The Popularity Papers* by Amy Ignatow as leading the pack in this format.

Speaking of the Origami Yoda books, author Tom Angleberger offered this succinct take on trends in middle grade: Nerdy.

Barbara O'Connor, the diva of school visits, clocks dozens of presentations in a year. The word that came to mind for her in terms of middle grade reading was eclectic. She sees kids devouring fantasy, humor, classics, mysteries and series. I love knowing that young readers have so many reading options and are taking advantage of them

Newbery medalist and former librarian, Susan Patron, offers this: “If I ever spot a trend, I run in the other direction. . . because the best writing is fresh and original and cannot be easily categorized. . . Writers should look for their own hard-won, unassailable truth, and leave the trend-spotting to critics.”

So here's to fresh and original writing, writing that is not easily categorized. Perhaps you have a passion for history that leads you to create a docu-novel somewhat like Deborah Wiles' *Countdown*, or a scrapbook like Candace Fleming's *Our Eleanor*. Perhaps baking with a beloved relative leads you to explore storytelling through recipes, ala Sarah Weeks' *Pie* or Sharon Creech's *Granny Torrelli Makes Soup*. It could be that there's room yet for a middle grade novel in the form of a libretto or ship's log or the game plan from a football playbook.

Perhaps your passion is not for a fresh format, but a fresh take on a familiar story. For example, how writing a janitorial handbook helps a shy girl makes a friend (*Hound Dog True*/Linda Urban), or how a geeky guy finds acceptance through paper folding (*The Strange Case of Origami Yoda*/Tom Angleberger), or how an unloved child finds family in an unconventional way (*Icefall*/Matthew Kirby).

The last word belongs to Joseph Heller: “Every writer I know has trouble writing.” Here's to lots of trouble for each of us!



CBI Clubhouse Middle Grade Expert Guide Kirby Larson is the acclaimed author of the 2007 Newbery Honor Book, *Hattie Big Sky*, a young adult historical novel inspired by her great-grandmother, Hattie Inez Brooks Wright, who homesteaded by herself in eastern Montana as a young woman.

Kirby’s passion for historical fiction is reflected in *The Fences Between Us* (Scholastic, Dear America series; September 2010) and *The Friendship Doll* (Delacorte; May 2011). She is currently at work on a sequel to *Hattie Big Sky*.

To learn more about Kirby, visit <http://cbiclubhouse.com/meet-our-expert-guides/kirby-larson-middle-grade/>

What's Hot in Young Adult

By Helen Landalf, CBI Clubhouse Young Adult Expert Guide

It's a great time to be a writer of books for Young Adults. Recently, Michael Cader of *Publisher's Marketplace* and *Publisher's Lunch*, called YA the "bright spot in book publishing." Not only are teens reading more than ever, but crossover titles have hooked many adults on reading books for teens, and the forecast for sales of YA hardcovers continues to be strong.

Walk into the YA section of most bookstores, and you'll be able to spot the current trends. Fantasy, paranormal, and dystopian novels are everywhere, riding the wave of the groundbreaking success of the Harry Potter series and the Twilight and Hunger Games trilogies. A huge number of the most popular novels are populated by vampires, werewolves, ghosts, angels and zombies. A recent article in *Publisher's Weekly* noted that today's YA books "overwhelmingly feature menacing creatures, forbidden romances, and apocalyptic visions of this and future Earth." You'll also note the rising popularity of steampunk (an interesting hybrid of science fiction and Victorian steam-powered technology) and story lines involving shape-shifting and time travel.

While it's tempting to jump on the bandwagon and write to latest trend, that approach may end up backfiring. Publishers are swamped with paranormal and

dystopian submissions right now, and unless your manuscript offers something truly different, it's likely to be overlooked. It's also important to remember that it often takes years from the time a manuscript is sold to the day the book finally hits the shelves, during which time the trend may have given way to something new. So by the time you finish your novel about shape-shifting werewolves, realistic urban fiction, which is on the rise, may have outstripped paranormal as the hottest-selling YA category.

Perhaps a better strategy for breaking into bookstores is to look at what the trends say about the universal concerns of teens. Vampires, for example, are the quintessential outsiders. Could you find a way to speak to the core fear of not belonging without resorting to the currently overdone vampire theme? Dystopian novels reflect apprehension about an uncertain future. How could you address this anxiety in a new way, one that's not just a copycat of *The Hunger Games*?

In the end, it's always best – and most fulfilling – to write the story that you need to tell rather than try to chase after the latest hot trend. Notice what types of books speak to you. Then mine your memories, follow your imagination, and write from your heart. Perhaps you'll end up starting a new trend.

Try this:

- Visit the YA section of several bookstores, taking note of the current trends. In a notebook, list some of the underlying teen concerns being addressed by

these books. Then, using the list you've created, brainstorm ideas for stories that would touch on these same concerns in new ways.

· Take a category in YA that's currently hot and think of a way you could turn the genre on its head or combine two genres to create something new. Urban dystopian zombie romance, anyone?



CBI Clubhouse Young Adult Expert Guide Helen Landalf's debut young adult novel, *Flyaway*, was released by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt in December, 2011.

She is also author of two picture books, including *The Secret Night World Of Cats* (Smith & Kraus, 1998), which was illustrated by her autistic brother, Mark Rimland, and received a 1998 Parent Publishing Association Honor award, as well as five nonfiction books for teachers on integrating dance and drama into the curriculum.

To learn more about Helen, visit <http://cbiclubhouse.com/meet-our-expert-guides/helen-landalf-young-adult/>

Don't Fear The eBook

By Laura Backes, Children's Book Insider Publisher

I'm not a gadget geek, but I love my Nook. Unlike many of my author colleagues, I've never had an aversion to eBooks, but I've also never had a burning desire to own an e-reader. But the Nook Color looked very cool, so I put it on my Christmas list. And it's a Christmas present that I won't be returning any time soon.

I am into instant gratification when it comes to books I want to read, portability, and downloading titles from the library without leaving my house. I also don't buy the argument that eBooks will be the death of publishing or literature. Maybe publishing as we've known it, but certainly not literature or books in general (as long as our definition of "books" remains fluid). And I think eBooks are a boon for authors. Here's why:

Recently, I was watching *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*. Author Susan Casey was the guest, talking about her new book *The Wave: In Pursuit of the Rogues, Freaks and Giants of the Ocean*. This is not a title I would likely ever pick up if I saw it on the shelves, but hearing the author describe the book, and hearing Stewart rave about it, made me want to read it. With my Nook in hand, I purchased the eBook before the show was over. I can handle a \$9.99 impulse buy, and I needed some bedtime reading.

Without an e-reader, my options would be to go to the book store (the next day—if I had time—and fork over \$27.95 plus tax for the hardcover, not a viable option when I had Christmas presents to buy), or order the book online (about \$20 plus shipping) and wait for it to arrive. Or (most likely) I'd talk myself out of buying it altogether and order it from the library. It's a new book, so I might not get it right away. And by the time it came in, my enthusiasm for reading it may have waned.

Which option benefits the author the most?

Considering that most publishers are giving fairer, higher royalty rates on eBooks than in the past, and the eBook price point doesn't have nearly the sticker shock of the hardcover, I'd think authors would demand that all their books be available in both formats. I still love hardcover books, but if I want to try out a new author or genre, have a more portable option, or get it immediately, eBooks are a must. And if you're self-publishing, it's a no-brainer. The cost for producing an eBook is minuscule compared to a hardcover. If a parent's buying books for three different kids, this is a huge consideration.

The key is in the marketing. I discover new fiction through print reviews and blogs, but I tend to find out about nonfiction via radio and television interviews. If I hear an author passionately talking about her subject, I want to read the book. And while not every author can be on *The Daily Show*,

numerous radio and smaller television interview shows (local and national) book authors as guests. One good interview is all you need to get the ball rolling.

I'm convinced that we'll always have hardcover and paperback books, because so many readers love the weight of the book on their lap and the feel of turning the page. I do too. But I think eBooks deserve as much respect and an equal place in the market. If you shun eBooks, you're losing your impulse buyers, and customers who want to try you out for less money before investing in your hardcover books. I don't know any authors who would willingly give up that kind of cash.



Laura is the founder and Publisher of *Children's Book Insider*, the Newsletter for Children's Writers. She's also the author of *Best Books for Kids Who (Think They) Hate to Read* (Random House) and co-founder of the Children's Author's Bootcamp workshop series. She's written for *Writer's Digest*, *The Writer*, *Writer's Journal* and many other publications.

Find out more about *Children's Book Insider* at <http://cbiclubhouse.com> To learn more about Laura's personal critique service for children's authors, visit <http://cbiclubhouse.com/get-a-personalized-critique/>

Children's Book Apps – An Exciting Opportunity For Writers

By Karen Robertson, CBI Clubhouse App Publishing Expert Guide



There's never been a better time to share your stories with children around the world, thanks to innovations in digital books like eBooks and Book Apps.

For many children's writers, however, technology is an area we aren't comfortable with, so navigating the world of eBooks and book apps can be a bit scary.

My name is Karen Robertson and I'm the author of the award winning book

app, *Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island* and the author of several eBooks about creating and marketing children's book apps.

I have a love/hate relationship with technology, I love what it can do and I hate that I don't understand it, especially when something doesn't work when it's supposed to.

But when my dyslexic son picked up an iPad for the first time and chose storybook apps over games, I knew I had to "go digital" so turned my interactive, printed children's book into a book app in early 2011.

Once I'd launched, I started getting requests to write and speak about how I did it and the feedback from other writers has been amazing. So I'm here to write for you in a writer-to-writer voice, without jargon. I'll write about the book app opportunity, how to determine if it's right for you and how you can do it.

First, you may be wondering, what's a book app? Isn't it the same as an eBook?

A book app is a software program that runs like a "book" on a mobile device like a tablet computer (iPad/Samsung Galaxy), mobile phone (iPhone/android phones) or mobile device like the iPod Touch. It can include functionality like page turning, narration, text highlighting, music, sound effects, animation,

touch-based interactions, integration with activities (like puzzles, games, coloring pages), video and more.

eBooks are generally digital books produced in the epub format. (epub is the standardized format created by the International Digital Publishing Forum). One reads eBooks on devices like Nook Color (Barnes & Noble), iPad (Apple), Kindle (Amazon) and Sony Reader.

eBooks don't offer as much functionality as book apps so I often say that a book app is "an eBook on steroids."

So What's the State of the App World?

The good news, it's never been easier to create books apps. Dozens of companies now exist that specialize in turning children's books into book apps. Some offer do-it-yourself services and many develop the apps for you.

The bad news, it's never been easier to create book apps. So the market is being flooded with apps of very mixed quality. As a result, parents are choosing the characters, stories and brands they know like Dora, Disney and Dr. Seuss. So now more than ever, working out how to cut through the clutter is a challenge.

But as a children's writer, you're used to how tough it can be to get your stories into the hands of kids!

To view an in depth interview with Karen, conducted by *Children's Book Insider* Managing Editor Jon Bard, go to:

<http://cbiclubhouse.com/2011/07/how-to-create-your-own-childrens-book-ipad-app/>



CBI Clubhouse App Publishing Expert Guide Karen Robertson's *Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island* book app launched in 2011 and has won recognition and awards including being named a Digital Storytime “Top 25 Most Essential Children’s Book App” and winning “Best in Category” for apps at the New Media Film Festival in San Francisco.

After launching her first book app, Karen was repeatedly asked to write articles and speak about how she turned her book into a book app. She found that articles barely scratched the surface of what people needed to know so she wrote her first eBook, *Author’s Guide to Book Apps* and launched her blog, *Digital Kid’s Author*. She’s now an international speaker on the topic.

To learn more, visit <http://cbiclubhouse.com/meet-our-expert-guides/karen-robertson-apps-publishing/>

When Moms Blog, Publishers Notice

By Laura Backes, Children's Book Insider Publisher

These days, instead of digging through the slush pile, many editors are turning to the blogosphere for their next big book. And the newest group to catch the eye of the children's book industry is known as Mom Bloggers. A recent article in [Publishers Weekly](#) highlighted how Simon & Schuster hosted 29 of the most popular mom bloggers at a luncheon complete with authors and goodie bags. Why all the fuss? Because moms blog about the books they're reading with their kids, and other moms listen.

But publishers don't rely on mom bloggers to simply spread the word about new books. They also look to them to help create future titles. Editors like Kate Jackson of HarperCollins peruse blogs on a regular basis, looking for writing talent and book ideas. These bloggers are also willing to spread the word on self-published books (sometimes their own), that then catch an editor's eye.

There are two lessons here for both aspiring and published authors: One, don't ignore these mom bloggers when sending out review copies or planning your next blog tour. And two, blogging about children's books, and doing it well, clearly gets you on the publishing radar. This might end up being easier (and

more fun) than sending out multiple unsolicited submissions and hoping to get noticed.

The Book Is Alive, Well & (Often) Self-Published

By Laura Backes, Children's Book Insider Publisher

It seems that reports of the death of books have been greatly exaggerated (with apologies to Mark Twain). As the numbers continue to roll in, it's clear that people still read, more titles are being published than ever, and eBooks are taking their place alongside print books, not replacing them. As reported in "[Is the Book Dead? Let That Myth Rest in Peace](#)" from *The Atlantic*, 288,355 new and reissued titles were published in 2009, and Bowker (the data agency for publishing) speculates that the numbers will be higher in 2010 and 2011. And — here's a really astounding statistic — an additional 764,448 titles fell into the self-published, micro-niche and print-on-demand categories.

Think about that for a moment. For the first time in publishing history, authors are self-publishing more books than publishing houses are producing. Considering that these numbers are over a year old, and advances in e-publishing are happening faster than you can download an app from the iStore, 2011 could potentially near the one million mark in self-published titles.

Upon hearing this, many seasoned authors (read: those with several traditionally-published books under their belts) worry about the lack of gatekeepers. If so many people are self-publishing, who's going to decide what's good? Who's going to create the buzz, tell us what to buy? Without the

taste-makers, how will we know what to read?

It's a seismic change, to be sure. And like all changes, it feels a bit scary. But the answer boils down to one word: you.

You, as the consumer, get to decide with your dollars what constitutes a good book. Sure, book buyers always voted with their purchases, but the pool of choices was limited by what publishers presented. And publishers often make decisions based on non-artistic criteria: Does this book cash in on a current trend? Is the market broad enough to make a substantial profit? Will it stay on the shelves of Barnes & Noble for more than three months? Is the author a celebrity? Many great books get published each year, but just as many great books get rejected because they don't quite fit the corporate plan. Readers have never had the opportunity to decide for themselves if those books deserve to exist. Now they can.

You, as the author, still have to put in the work, learning how to write, learning how to revise, and learning how to communicate with your audience. That age-old truth won't change. But now, after you've workshopped the manuscript, had it professionally edited and gotten the go-ahead from your writers' group, you have the power to see your words in print. Since self-publishing is rapidly losing its stigma as the last resort for rejected authors, you have a real choice of submitting to publishers or producing the book yourself. You also now have

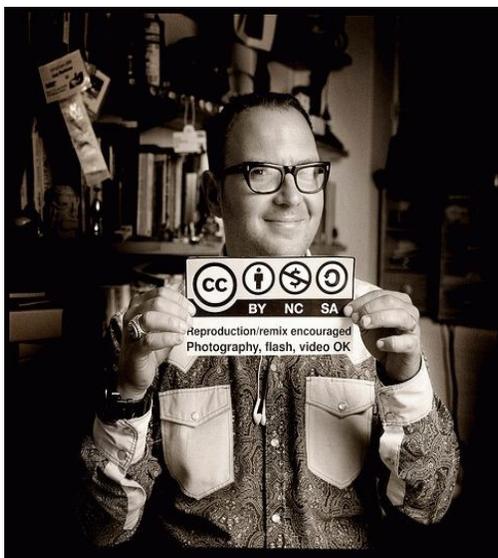
a choice of paper or electronic formats. Low-cost and no-cost options for eBooks mean you can make your dream a reality without a trust fund.

You, as the publicist for your book, can generate reviews, create a buzz, connect with readers and set up personal appearances in direct proportion to the amount of time you're willing to devote to marketing. You're not limited by the publisher's marketing dollars going to the big authors, or the *New York Times'* limited space in their book review section. The internet is the great equalizer, giving authors the same access to their audience as publishers have had. The more you reach out, the more sales you'll see. It's that simple.

The book is far from dead, and the opportunities for authors are more plentiful than ever. The only difference is that now both authors and consumers have more choices, which means they're responsible for deciding what constitutes a worthy book. As an author, you now have options: you can go the time-honored route of submitting to agents and publishers, waiting months for a reply, and hoping you're one of the lucky ones who gets a book contract. Then you can hope your book sells enough to get contract #2. Many authors still find success and fulfillment this way, and if you're one of those, then I'm looking forward to seeing your book on the shelves. But if you're tired of waiting, you believe in your book and you're not afraid to do the work necessary to get it out there, then for the first time you have equal (or very close) access to book production and marketing as the big publishers. And it's only going to get easier.

Has This Man Seen the Future?

By Jon Bard, *Children's Book Insider* Managing Editor



Portrait by Jonathan Worth <http://jonathanworth.com>

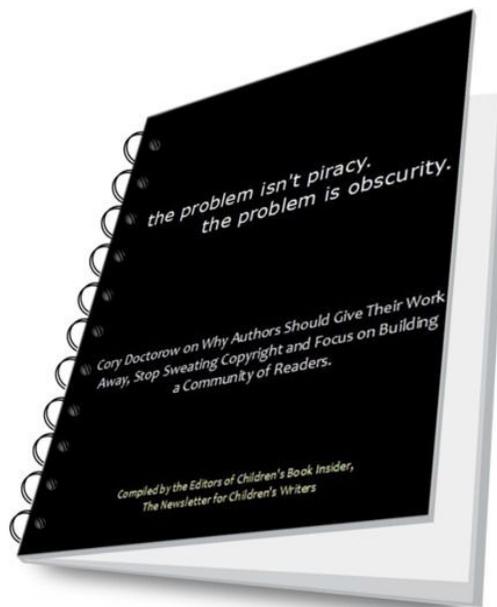
When it comes to publishing's future, there are two kinds of writers: those who shy away from change and those who embrace and benefit from change.

Among those in the latter group, Young Adult/Sci-Fi author Cory Doctorow is the undisputed king. His take on copyright, giving his writing away and the use of technology in publishing is controversial, provocative and, many would say, visionary.

Cory gives away electronic editions of all of his wonderful books and, so far,

it's worked spectacularly in terms of garnering renown, generating a huge following and, yes, earning income. Inside each of his books, he pens essays – manifestos, really – about publishing's future from a writer's perspective. They're often as compelling as the actual story that follows.

Recently, I contacted Cory and asked if I could collect all his essays and compile them into a single eBook to share with every writer I knew. He consented, and today, I'm proud to bring you:



the problem isn't piracy. the problem is obscurity.

Cory Doctorow on Why Authors Should Give Their Work Away, Stop Sweating Copyright and Focus on Building a Community of Readers.

In keeping with Cory's "free is good!" ethos, we're giving this eBook away, no strings attached. In fact, we encourage you to share it with every writer you know.

Be forewarned: this isn't "preaching to the choir" material. Cory has some ideas that go 100% against the grain of much of publishing's conventional wisdom. So be prepared to be nodding in enthusiastic agreement on one page and screaming "WHAT?!?!?!" on the next. And that's why it's so much fun.

You may agree with some of what he has to say, none of what he has to say or all of what he has to say, but **YOU NEED TO READ THIS AND DECIDE FOR YOURSELF**. Really, it's that important.

Me? I'm down with many of Cory's opinions, and I'm resistant on others. But he's a persuasive guy and his arguments are impacting my thinking, that's for certain. They will most likely do the same for you.

HERE'S YOUR FREE COPY. READ IT, AND SPREAD IT AROUND.....

(If the link doesn't work, go directly to <http://www.write4kids.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/doctorow.pdf> to download)

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