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A SURVEY OF PACIFIC PRESS AUTHORS
AND THEIR MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION HABITS

by

Glen Robinson
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May 11, 1989

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This survey was designed to find out why authors submit their manuscripts to specific publishers, what would make them change from one publishing house to another and what kinds of manuscripts are being sent to Pacific Press. Eight hundred authors were surveyed with a 14% response rate.

Responses showed that authors based their solicitation of manuscripts on past experience with their publishing house. Pacific Press scored a 56% response based on previous experience, and Review and Herald scored 67%.

The decision to change publishers is based on acceptance/rejection of the manuscript and the publisher's perceived ability or inability to market the book.

Subject matter chosen by authors was predominantly classified children (27.78%), biography (25%), and theology (16.67%). A comparison of subjects chosen by authors, chosen by editors for publication and chosen by customers for purchase indicate that authors should be encouraged to write more books on theology, inspiration, marriage and family and interpersonal relations and fewer on biography and self-help/how-to and fewer children's books.

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THE QUESTIONS UNDER STUDY

It is generally accepted that on-going improvement in author/editor communication is necessary to the success of Pacific Press, especially in the areas of trade book development and sales. The idea for an author survey is based on this premise, with the general goal of finding out how we can make more authors happy and therefore receive more manuscript submissions.

Specifically, the author survey was designed to find out:

1. Why authors decide to submit a manuscript to a specific publishing house;
2. What would make an author change from one publishing house to another; and
3. What kinds of manuscripts are being sent to Pacific Press.

This survey is considered valuable for three reasons:

1. It serves as a positive step in showing authors that Pacific Press editors are concerned about them and what they want/need.
2. It contributes to a growing data bank of information that can tell Pacific Press more in total than as individual studies.
3. It indicates what authors are doing, think Pacific Press should be doing, and why they submit or refuse to submit manuscripts to Pacific Press.

The next section tells how these questions were approached.

METHODOLOGY

The author survey was mailed in early March, 1989, to a mailing list of 800 authors presently receiving the newsletter Write On! from Pacific Press's editorial department. Approximately 50 of these surveys were returned as undeliverable or with the wrong address affixed.

The survey was printed on a 8 1/2" by 3 1/2" yellow card with a business reply permit printed on the back side. This allowed the respondent to fill out the form quickly and simply drop the card in the mail back to Pacific Press.

As of May 10, 1989, 106 cards were returned to Pacific Press with authors' responses, a response rate of 14 percent, when one considers the 50 surveys that were not delivered due to wrong addresses.

The questionnaire asked authors (1) when they last submitted a manuscript for publication, (2) what kind of book it was, (3) where they sent it, (4) what made them decide to send it there, (5) what would make them decide to send it elsewhere and (6) what Pacific Press can do to make them a happier author.

A sample of the questions included in the survey is presented in Appendix A. Written comments included on many of the returns appear in Appendix B.

The following section will discuss how authors responded to questions #3, #4 and #5 listed above.

FINDINGS

Figure 1 indicates the general response to Question #3--"Where did you send it [your manuscript]?" A total of 33.96% indicated Pacific Press, with Other Christian Publishers coming in second (22.64%), Other Publishers listed third (15.09%) and Review and Herald came in a distant fourth (11.32%). Some indicated they sent their manuscript to both Pacific Press and Review and Herald (3.77%), while a small fraction responded with Southern Publishing (.94%) and Self Publishing (.94%).

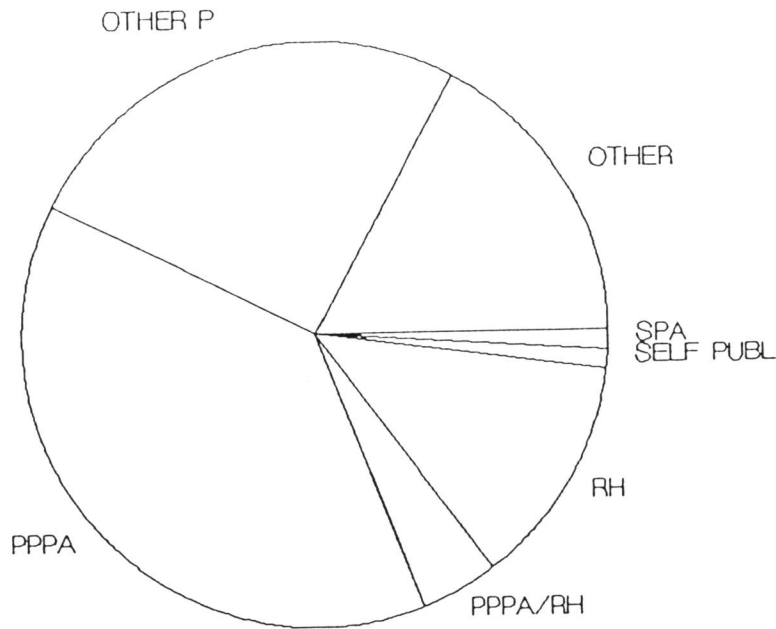


Fig. 1. Where last manuscripts were submitted.

When respondents who selected Pacific Press were isolated, their response to Question #4 (What made you decide to send your manuscript there?) sized up as indicated in figure 2. They Handled My Previous Manuscript showed up as the top response (33.33%), followed by I Know Them Better (22.22%) and Other (16.67%). Marketing and I Like the Way They Do Things followed with 8.33% each.

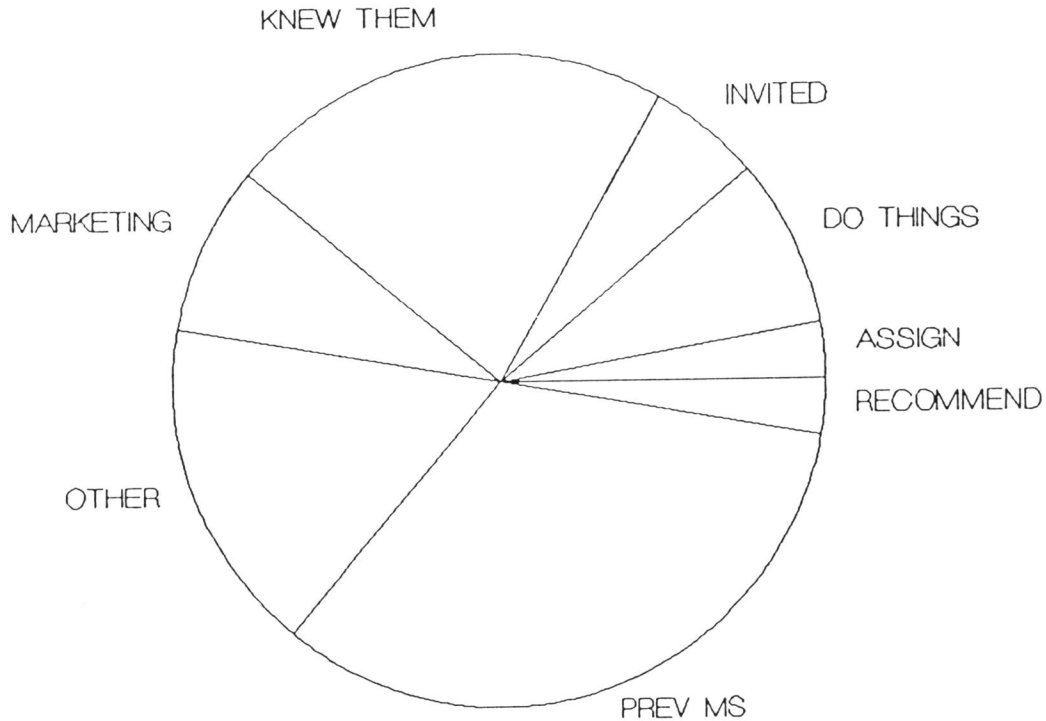


Fig. 2. Why authors send their manuscripts to Pacific Press.

Those who selected the Review and Herald to send their manuscript to, as shown in figure 3, responded first with They Handled My Previous Manuscript (41.67%), I Know Them Better (25%), and I Was Invited To and Other (16.67% each).

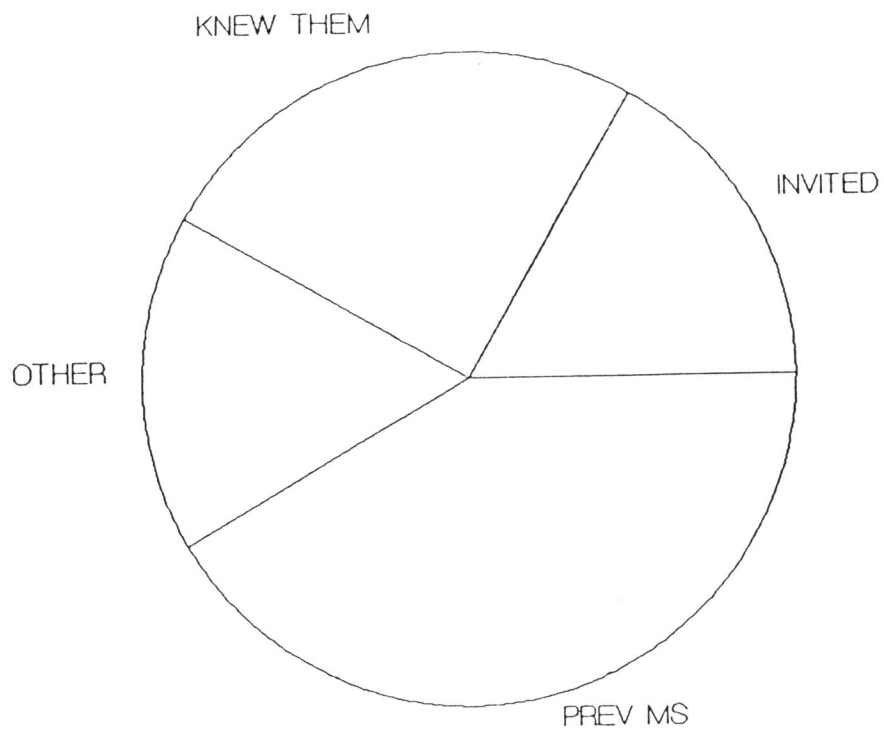


Fig 3. Why authors send their manuscripts to Review and Herald.

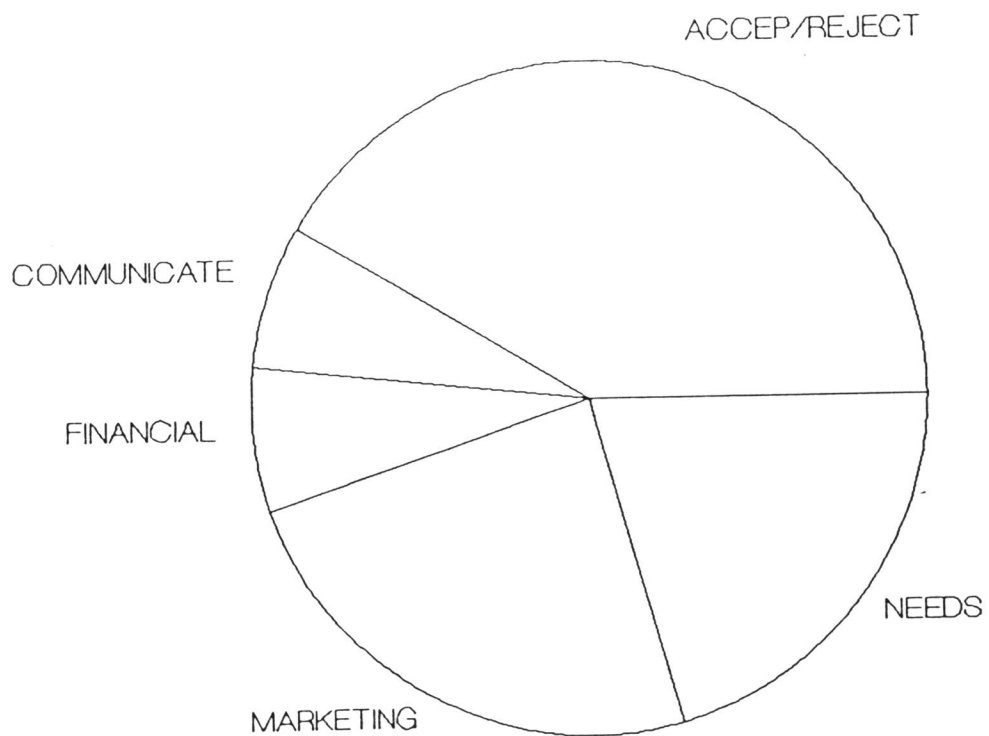


Fig. 4. Why Pacific Press authors would change publishers.

Those authors who chose Pacific Press were further examined in relation to what would cause them to send their manuscript elsewhere. Figure 4 shows the results. Acceptance or Rejection of a Manuscript was indicated as a determining factor in 33.33% of the responses. The Quality of Marketing and Needs of the Publishing House followed with 19.44% and 16.67%, respectively. Financial aspects (royalties and advances) and Communication summed up the responses with 5.56% each.

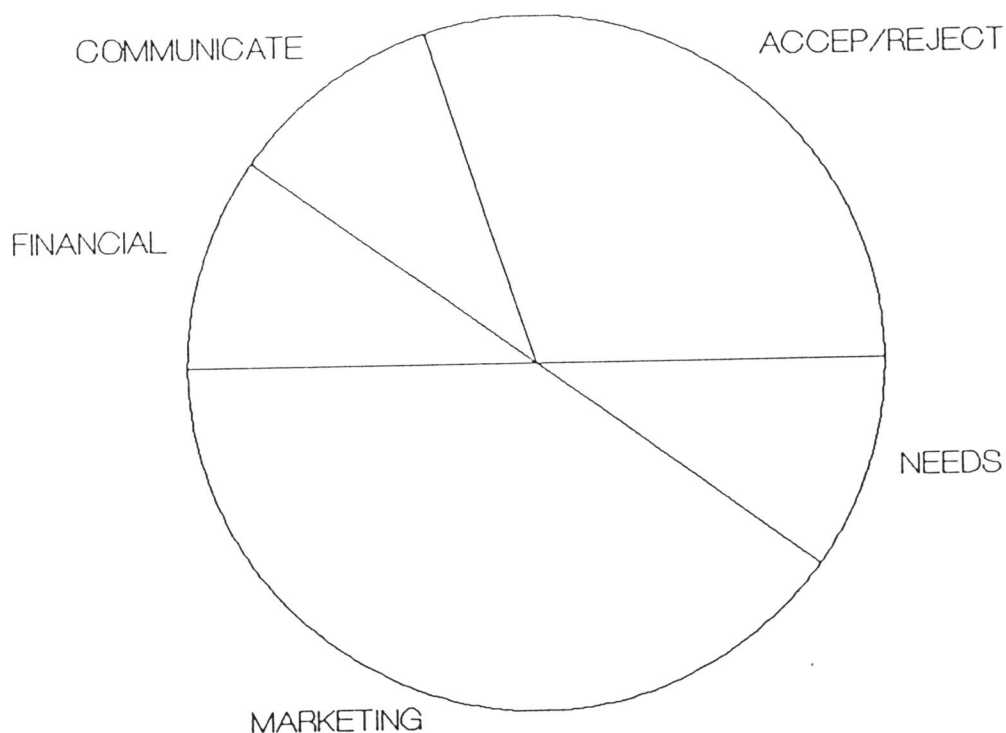


Fig. 5. Why Review and Herald authors would change publishers.

Those who chose Review and Herald (Figure 5) chose Marketing 33.33% of the time, Acceptance/Rejection 25% of the time, and Communication, Financial Aspects and Needs of the Publisher each received 8.33%.

When asked what their last manuscript was about, authors who

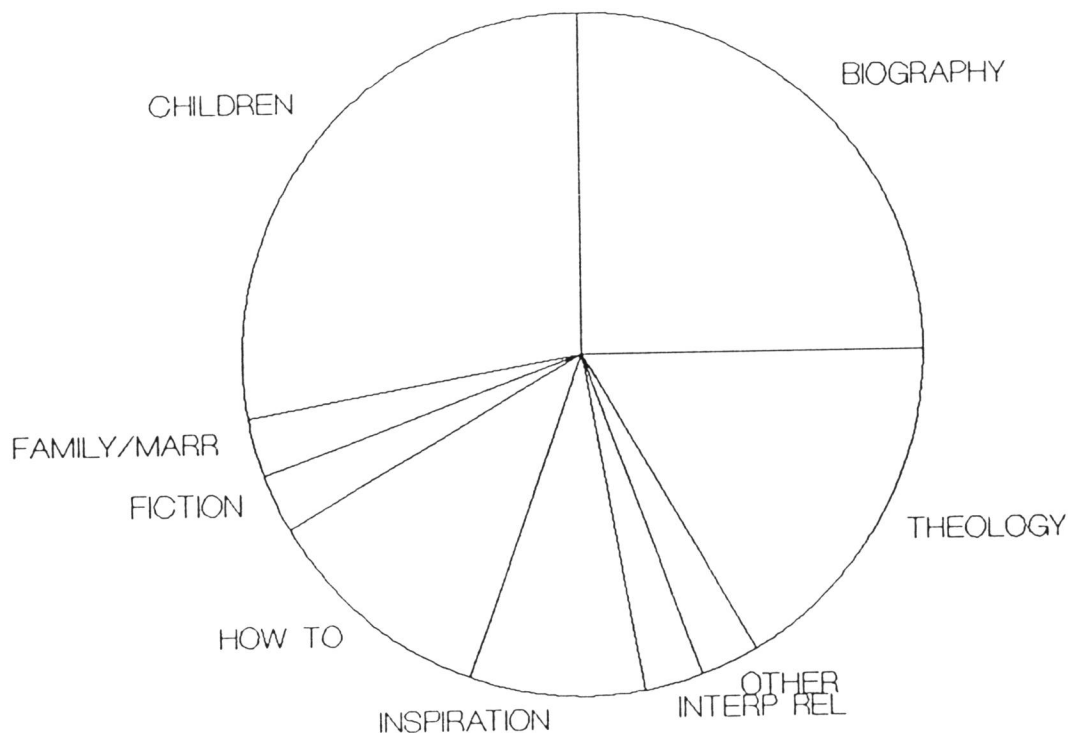


Fig. 6. Manuscripts subjects submitted to Pacific Press.

chose Pacific Press responded with the following subjects (figure 6): Children (27.78%), Biography (25%), Theology (16.67%), Self-help/How-to (11.11%), Inspiration (8.33%) and Fiction, Marriage/Family and Interpersonal Relations (2.78% each).

As stated on page one, one of the valuable uses of this study comes when we compare its findings with the findings of other studies. The figures from this study suggest a comparison with figures resulting from an earlier study, namely the book sales study presented by Pacific Press Research and Development on February 1. A three-way comparison of subjects sent in by authors, subjects accepted for publication and subjects most likely to show large sales has some merit, as shown here:

| | AUTHOR'S SUBJECT | PPPA SUBJECT | SALES SUBJECT |
|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Biography | 25.00% | 21.62% | 10.09% |
| Children | 27.78% | 13.51% | 4.38% |
| Theology | 16.67% | 20.72% | 36.68% |
| Inspiration | 8.33% | 14.41% | 13.81% |
| Self-help/How-to | 11.11% | 2.70% | 2.56% |
| Fiction | 2.78% | * | * |
| Marriage/Family | 2.78% | 9.91% | 9.15% |
| Interpersonal Rel | 2.78% | 9.01% | 10.03% |
| Health/Lifestyle | * | 8.11% | 13.46% |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| | 100.00% | 100.00% | 100.00% |

The three columns shown at the top indicate the percentage of subjects chosen as they appear in the author survey, in the book sales study as published manuscripts and in the book sales study in relation to total sales per unit. The horizontal rows indicate the subject matter listed by these three sources. For example, 16.67% of the authors responded that their last manuscript was about theology, while 20.72% of those trade books published in 1986 and 1987 fell into that category, and 36.68% of the trade book units sold in 1987 and 1988 were theological in subject matter.

This study will present its conclusions and recommendations regarding these findings in the next section.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study started by asking three questions regarding authors and where they send their manuscripts. Figure 1 shows a predominant number of authors sending their last manuscript to Pacific Press, as opposed to Review and Herald, Southern Publishing, Other Christian Publishers and Other Publishers. This large response is generally understandable, considering the fact that the subjects for the study were drawn from Pacific Press's mailing list for its author newsletter.

Figure 2 compared those who selected Pacific Press as a publisher with their reasoning for sending their manuscript there. In response to the first question of our study ("Why do authors decide to submit their manuscripts to a specific publishing house?"), figure 2 shows that previous contact with the publishing house was the number one response. They Handled My Previous Manuscript and I Know Them Better, both responses dealing with previous contact, combine for a response total of 56%. No other response comes close.

When one looks at responses in relation to Review and Herald, the preponderance of the previous contact reasoning increases even more (67%).

In regard to the second question on page one ("Why would an author change from one publishing house to another?"), the picture changes. Pacific Press authors rated the Acceptance or Rejection of a Manuscript highest with 33%, followed by the

Quality of Marketing (19%) and Needs of the Publishing House (17%). It would seem that their loyalty is tied, whether directly or indirectly, to the success of the author getting published at that house, and whether he or she feels comfortable with the house's ability to sell his or her book.

These responses were partially echoed by the Review and Herald authors, who chose Marketing (33%) and Acceptance/Rejection as their potential reasons for leaving.

In regard to the third question ("What kinds of manuscripts are being sent to Pacific Press?"), the study recommends a careful evaluation of editorial's communication with authors regarding trade book needs. If editorial seeks to follow the trend in sales shown in this study, the department should encourage authors to send in more manuscripts of a theological or inspiration nature, more on marriage and family and interpersonal relations and fewer biographies, children's books and self-help/how-to books.

Recommendations

The danger of basing decisions solely on numbers is that numbers sometimes give only a partial perspective. The fact that children's books, for example, are rated high on manuscript solicitation but low on sales may partly be due to a "self-fulfilling prophecy." If we believe that children's books won't sell, we are tempted to put less energy into acquiring, editing and marketing them than if we thought they would sell in great

quantities. One must consider possibilities such as this when examining the results of any study.

The responses tabulated here and their resulting implications are best used to stimulate discussion within the editorial department. It is recommended that editorial examine and thoroughly discuss these findings. Editorial should do so, however, with the understanding that these study participants are representative of authors who send manuscripts to Pacific Press, but are not representative of Seventh-day Adventist authors in general. The best way to get total representation would be to work in cooperation with the Review and Herald Publishing House and gain access to their mailing list. That may not be in the best interest of the study, however.

With responses in figures 2 and 3 showing that authors send manuscripts to publishers based on previous experience, it is important that editorial recognize that each contact with an author could be the beginning of a long-term, satisfying relationship or the last contact between that author and Pacific Press. Some revealing comments regarding author/editor communication are included in Appendix B.

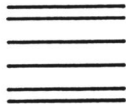
It is further recommended that editorial examine these findings in light of their five-year plan to develop an overall strategy and philosophy for author acquisitions and relations. How Pacific Press is viewed by authors will have a direct effect on the quality and quantity of manuscripts solicited here.

AUTHOR'S QUESTIONNAIRE

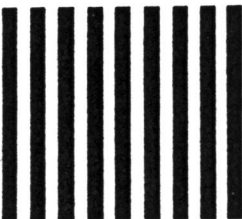
1. When did you last submit a book manuscript for publication?
198() Not applicable ()
2. What kind of book was it?
 - Biography/Autobiography
 - Theological
 - Inspirational
 - Devotional
 - Nature/Children's Book
 - Self-help/How-to Book
 - Church organization/Pastoring
 - Marriage and Family
 - Interpersonal Relationships
 - Other _____
3. Where did you send it?
 - Review and Herald
 - Pacific Press
 - Southern Publishing
 - Other Christian Publisher (specify) _____
 - Self published
 - Other _____
4. What made you decide to send you manuscript there?
 - They pay a larger advance.
 - They treat their authors better.
 - Their books are marketed well.
 - I know (of) them better.
 - They pay larger royalties.
 - I like the way they do things.
 - They handled my previous manuscript.
 - I get along well with editors.
 - Other _____
5. What would make you decide to send your manuscript elsewhere?

6. What, specifically, can Pacific Press Publishing Association do to make you a happier author?

From _____



NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY
IF MAILED
IN THE
UNITED STATES



BUSINESS REPLY MAIL

FIRST-CLASS MAIL PERMIT NO. 224 BOISE, ID

POSTAGE WILL BE PAID BY ADDRESSEE

PACIFIC PRESS PUBLISHING ASSOC.
EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT
P.O. BOX 7000
Boise, ID 83707-9965



APPENDIX B

* = RH SUBMISSION
~ = PPPA SUBMISSION

1. WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO SEND YOUR MANUSCRIPT THERE [TO A PARTICULAR PUBLISHING HOUSE]?

4--They pay a larger advance.

5--They treat their authors better.

11--Their books are marketed well.

18--I know (of) them better.

2--They pay larger royalties.

11--I like the way they do things.

17--They handled my previous manuscript.

13--I get along with the editors.

2. WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU DECIDE TO SEND YOUR MANUSCRIPT ELSEWHERE?

The feeling I have a "better than average" chance of pleasing the editor and/or publisher.

* Attractive layout, good illustrations, better marketing.

I've been writing stories for Our Little Friend and Primary Treasure at Pacific Press.

I only write juvenile stories and am very pleased with the three sold to you. That is, your articles--splendid.

~ If they do not publish the book.

~ Too many rejections.

Doesn't fit with Pacific Press needs. I do write teen self-help articles for other magazines but don't have a book-length idea for nonfiction.

Pacific Press rejects it.

Interest in topic and writing style.

~ A chance it might get published sooner.

~ To non-SDA markets.

Most publishers are over-loaded.

Finding a publisher willing to publish a fictional story about a hyperactive child, blessed by Jesus (in the Biblical account).

~ Not accept manuscript--still waiting to hear.

~ Larger market (non-SDA). Higher advance and royalties.

~ I feel it has a message of love and should be published.

~ An invitation to.

I, or my agent, send books according to content, to publishers who publish that type of material.

- ~ Larger royalties. Larger market. More professional approach.
- ~ If it is rejected by Pacific Press.
- ~ Larger readership audience. More money--not nearly as important as former.
- * SDA publishers have too small a market; they advertise too little; their royalty policy is (at least used to be) too static; as publisher's profits increase, author's do not.

I felt my three book manuscripts were not ones you would choose to handle. Reluctant reader, non-SDA biography, and girls primer storybook on menstruation.

* Good working relationship with an editor. Feeling that 'elsewhere' is more likely to accept my manuscript. Since I'm not writing a series, each book is different.

~ With this one, just a determination to get it published. With others, perhaps the wider market.

Opportunity to publish.

~ If Pacific Press refused to publish it.

* A possibility of their accepting it.

Rejections! Also a desire to reach a wider readership.

Doesn't fit PPPA guidelines.

~ Rejection.

Good possibility of being published.

All of the reasons offered in the previous question.

Attractive lay-out. Good illustrations. Better marketing.

Better advertising and marketing. We need to get our books out to other bookstores besides ABC's

Publishing needs would be studied.

Probably this is the worst publishing house around. Delays, mistakes, you name it. Never again!!

I do have other manuscripts out.

* ~ Rejection slips!

I just look for publishers of fiction, especially for young people right now.

I have two finished books. One set in Kansas in the 1800's. The other is a collection of true letters written by a female missionary in India.

* I might receive a royalty that's realistic.

Encouragement.

* Non-competitive advance, slow processing, lack of editor communication, poor marketing.

~ Lack of encouraging, "rally the-troops," "You're doing a good job" letters. These really help! Just some communication is really vital!

I'm in N.S. now and retired.

* Someone interested in it.

Expanded picture book publications.

~ If my manuscript fit the publishers interests and guidelines, I would send it there.

~ If I wrote a secular book.

~ Not getting it accepted here--or waiting a long time, hearing nothing, and being led to think that my book might be what Pacific Press wanted, then finally told it wasn't.

~ Seeking a suitable market.

~ You didn't handle those kind of stories.

~ A sequel for a book they published previously or a commissioned book.

More appropriate market.

~ Better sales volume. More exposure.

If I wrote something that would fit others better, and if they are interested in working with "almost new" writers.

~ Larger distribution. Rejection by PPPA.

It was rejected so I will try another publisher.

~ Rejection of material by both Pacific Press and Review & Herald.

Request of advance from editor.

Personal contact or relationship with editor. If I had an appropriate manuscript for you.

~ It is not the type book Pacific Press is interested in--I was told. Sending it to another publisher when I rewrite it.

~ If I could find a religious publisher who did a better job of marketing than PPPA.

~ If Pacific Press could not use it or I knew of other books currently on their list on the same subject I would want to market it where I could.

~ Pacific Press doesn't use fiction.

More publicity. Better royalties.

Better marketing.

* I have no book manuscript in sight for the next few years. Waiting for retirement.

If I feel there's a better market elsewhere--depends on what manuscript is about. I'd like to stick with Pacific or Review & Herald probably.

I have a manuscript in preparation which I will send to a non-SDA publisher for 2 reasons: larger potential sales, and it is written for both SDA's and non-SDA's and our publishing houses reach only SDA's.

I may sometime.

~ Chance for acceptance.

Hard to say: each book needs a good fit between subject matter and publishing house. Each project is different.

If they paid a larger advance, larger royalties and their books were marketed well.

~ Bigger advance--higher royalties

If there was a need of interest.

~ Poor marketing after the book is printed. Once over lightly and then let it die.

~ If Pacific Press rejects it!

The knowledge that they publish similar books and also that my ms. wouldn't go into the slush pile.

* Better advertising and marketing. We need to get our books out to other bookstores besides ABCs.

* If like book, print large quantity, have marketing plan to push its sales, give another input into design, market in Christian bookstores--even secular if apropro.

3. WHAT, SPECIFICALLY, CAN PACIFIC PRESS PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION DO TO MAKE YOU A HAPPIER AUTHOR?

Buy my manuscripts. Tell me what to write and how you want it done. Send me samples/examples.

~ A faster response. I waited 6 months then had to use my own follow up.

~ That they explain to me why they cannot publish the book and advise me on the better way to write the articles and books.

Pacific Press published my first story two years ago. It was so encouraging that I continued to write. Now I've sold to eight different magazines. I'll always love Pacific Press!

You are first rate.

They explained to me why they cannot publish the book and advised me on the better way to write articles and books.

~ Better communication of what is wanted.

I write for only one Pacific Press publication--Primary Treasure. The editor is always polite and helpful. I would be happy if they bought more stories!

~ Print my book!

Publish longer stories.

~ Better communication.

~ Some policies are still very mysterious to me. (Apparent) lack of advertising.

Advice of publishers or an agent.

~ You do fine! I would like to attend the workshop July 10-13. Please send registration information.

~ Start publishing some juvenile books.

I have not yet submitted a book to any of your affiliates. I have been sending stories to Guide and really like the relationship we have.

~ Book assignments with worthwhile advances. If you get serious with authors, they'll get serious with you.

~ Let me know where in the process my manuscript is--six months is a long time to wait for any word.

I like your newsletter and personal response. All authors appreciate personal response and suggestions.

~ Faster turn-around on proposals. More communication on the process or stages the book is in. Send author copies. Better advertising.

~ Update me more often on manuscript's status. However, I realize editors are often too busy to do this.

~ Is there any way we can get our literature out into the large marketplace of the world?!?!?

If you like the book, print a large quantity, have marketing plan to push its sales, give author input into design, market in Christian book stores--even secular, if appropriate.

Keep up the communications. I'm almost motivated again!

~ Consult author on cover concept. Let author read final proofs to eliminate typos.

* Keep on encouraging me. (In my case, aggressively.) But of course you don't want a flood of inappropriate manuscripts.

~ Buy my manuscript that nobody thinks will sell! I'd like to see your copy editing improve before you publish any manuscript of mine.

Buy my work! I think you are a very supportive group of professionals.

~ I enjoy the newsletter.

* Let me know the needs for short books in any area in which I would be qualified to write.

Publish every manuscript I send! More ideas on how to meet the US market.

You have encouraged me. Keep up the good work!

~ I'm already happy. Publishing books for people who are already Christians is important. But how can we reach the masses with our literature?

Keep up what you're doing. If the seminar is anything like the newsletter, I'll try hard to get there. And I'll keep writing!

I appreciate receiving Write On! Provide illustrator for children's picture book. Do you do this now?

Assure attractive books better advertisements.

* Be specific in the kind of books you have the greatest need of - the ones you feel will sell the best.

There is a great need for publishers and writers to communicate better. Strange statement? Pacific Press has accepted two of my stories. Thank you again.

You have made me happy with your acceptance of my stories and your great magazine "Write On!". Hope I can submit a book manuscript to you soon!

I'd be interested in learning of children's books needs of Pacific Press, if any.

* ~ Publish my book!

I don't believe you use fiction books, and that's mostly what I write.

I'd sure be happy if you would consent to reading my book Hera Doom, which is about true life missionary in India.

* Pay a realistic royalty.

Be specific about editorial needs in book line.

* Speedy processing, regular updates by the editor, progressive non-SDA marketing.

~ Keep sending Write On!

* Be more prompt and efficient in working with authors. Don't lose manuscripts and send authors copies before book appears in ABCs.

Appreciate receiving Write On!--thank you. My writing is still in the dream stage.

Publish more for children, I suppose, but I'm realistic. You're probably noting market demands.

~ You are most helpful and kind.

I enjoyed the Writer's Conference last summer very much. I am still writing and hope it is worthwhile.

I enjoy Write On!

~ Send 10 free copies.

~ Let me know what is happening with the book idea I sent. I have yet to learn what they think of it.

~ Even though manuscript was rejected--I appreciated the promptness and reply.

~ Would like more information on materials that are acceptable to you.

~ Buy more of my manuscripts, of course. Help me find ways to promote my books.

Pay royalties twice a year. Better sales to CBA market.

~ Sell more books--more copies per title--as well as be more Adventist. May be contradictory: do both then.

You're doing great already! A short comment following a refused manuscript is something newer writers could really use, however.

~ You are doing just great!! Keep up the good work.

Please continue to send Write On!

~ Cut decision-making time on manuscripts under consideration.

Publish something I've written, but I've so far not submitted anything to you.

Buy the book I'm planning to submit.

~ Give us specific subjects to work with. Then send it back for a rewrite if part is acceptable.

~ Use better marketing techniques and more vision in reaching out to wider audience.

~ I would like some input on my book covers--the illustration. Also books circulated in general Christian bookstores for better coverage.

~* Consider fiction-based on true incidents and characters, but that isn't really biographical.

I'm not sure! Do you handle picture books? This is what I write.

Branch out of the marketing limitation which simply places 5 copies on the shelves of the ABCs.

* I am very happy dealing with Ken Holland. He gives an answer almost by return mail. The checks are welcome too.

Would love to attend Writer's Conference but can't this year--money and transportation wise. Really enjoy the paper Write On!

Take some risks by being willing to publish good, vege-meaty theological material like our publishing houses were founded for. Don't let marketing run the show. There are many serious Bible students in the church also are looking for something more than stories and popularized fluff. They're reading F. Schenffer, C.S. Lewis, J. R. W. Stat, but what are our presses giving them to sink their teeth into.

Pacific Press has been good to me. Many stories, poems in Our Little Friend.

~ Return my proposal and ask to see the complete manuscript. Then buy it.

Serve coffee to your non-Adventist Writer's Conference friends! Really!

~ I'd write more if I had more time--and PP can't give me that!

You've been good with my books. Eventually, I'll be sending more your way--once I have a comfortable income with computer books. R. Blodgett.

~ Bigger advance. Higher royalties.

Keep sending your excellent newsletter with its tips and words of encouragement. Thanks.

~ You can't catch fish [when] you're not in the boat--Learn consistent and full-fledged marketing skills that not only reaches (sic) SDA's but others as well if the book warrants it.

~ Always keep Marvin Moore, Lincoln Steed and Randy Maxwell on your editorial staff.

I wish you would accept children's stories that are true to life but not necessarily actual happenings (I ran out of those long ago).

* Assure attractive books, better advertisements.

"OTHER" RESPONSES TO #1.

I'm not comfortable with marketing.

I like the way you do things.

They publish similar books.

Interest in local history.

I was asked to.

They are a children's publisher.

I had sold to Guide.

Commissioned to write.

Agent recommended and marketed.

~ I am a regular contributor to OLF and PT.

They solicited it.

~ I started with SDA (loyalty) and am now working my way down from top of evangelical publishers. It's at Broadman now.

That's where the writer I helped wanted it sent.

I worked there.

~ Manuscript rejected by R and H.

They were asking for books with positive black/white relationships.

Their invitation to.

~ A friend had a bad experience with the Review and Herald.

I try many publishers.

Contest.

They asked for a book idea.

Assignment.

Was working in Division offices. As part of my work.

They were sponsoring a picture book contest.

Just thought I'd try them.

Thought it fit their guidelines.

Appropriate market.

Requested by McFarland.

Fit my manuscript.

It was recommended highly.

The lure of Big Money!

They assigned the manuscript to me.

Book was "assigned" to me by M. Moore.

Depends on what I think is the best market.

They requested me to write it.

They publish self-help books and I've sold to Sunday Digest.

I am a full-time book author.

They specialize in this type book.

Mr. Moore asked me to write it.

I heard their children's editor speak and she agreed to look at ms. sent by people who attended the workshop.