

WRITERS' RESOURCES

If we define a writer's resource as a place where one can find "information on the art, craft and business of writing" (Pack 1998, 24), then *Keywords in Creative Writing* is itself intended to be one of the best available writers' resources. Many of the entries in this book answer specific questions creative writers are likely to have about the profession (the reference list alone provides a wealth of articles, books, and Web sites to explore). "Conferences, Colonies, and Residencies," for instance, discusses how to connect with master writers, editors, and publishers and how to find the time and place to write. "Grants" considers avenues writers can pursue to receive funding. "Contests" examines the world of literary prizes and publications. "Writing Groups" makes suggestions for ways to link up with other writers. "Associated Writing Programs" looks at the umbrella organization for creative writing programs in American and Canadian colleges and universities. "Teaching Jobs" gives advice on finding jobs teaching creative writing. And on and on throughout the volume.

Outside of *Keywords* itself, there are a number of books that writers can consult. Almost every publisher with a line of composition textbooks also sells "handbooks," many of them with variations on the words "writers" and "resource" in their titles. These guides give advice on every aspect of writing: from how to draft an essay to how to construct a paragraph to the fine points of grammar. While creative writers will occasionally consult handbooks to make sure their work is "correct," they are unlikely to look to these books as sources of inspiration. A superior fund of information is offered by creative writing textbooks. Among the books the authors of *Keywords* have found particularly instructive are the following: in poetry (q.v.), *Writing Poetry* by Barbara Drake (1994) and *Writing Poems* by Robert Wallace and Michelle Boisseau (2003) (we also like our own textbooks, *Thirteen Ways of Looking for a Poem* by Wendy Bishop [1999] and *Poetry Writing: Theme and Variations* by David Starkey [2000]); in fiction (q.v.), *Writing Fiction* by Janet Burroway (2002); in creative nonfiction (q.v.), *The Fourth Genre* by Robert Root and Michael Steinberg (2004); for multiple genres, *Three Genres* by

Stephen Minot (2003) and *The College Handbook of Creative Writing* by Robert DeMaria (1999) and *Working Words* by Wendy Bishop (1991). There are literally hundreds more, and anyone who teaches or takes a course in creative writing will soon generate a list of favorites. Among the general books for creative writers that have guided, revived, and inspired us, we include *Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott, *Writing Down the Bones* (1986), *Wild Mind* (1990) by Natalie Goldberg, and *On Writing* (2000) by Stephen King.

One “resource” writers should avoid is agents, editors (qq.v.), and “book doctors” who charge excessive fees for doing their work. (See also “Vanity Press.”) Editorial consultant Jerry Gross points to the following indications that someone claiming to be a resource for writers is actually a scam artist:

- An editor who says you can’t get published unless you hire a book doctor. He or she insists that publishers demand that a manuscript be professionally edited before they will consider it for publication, or that agents won’t take on a client unless the writer first has it professionally edited.
 - An editor who guarantees, or strongly implies, that the editing will get you accepted by an agent and that the agent will definitely be able to sell your book.
 - An editor who has a “financial arrangement” with the person or company who referred him to you—meaning he kicks back part of his fee to the referring agent or company.
 - An editor who does not guarantee that he will edit your manuscript personally, or who tells you he will subcontract your manuscript but won’t tell you who will edit it, nor provide you with that editor’s background, samples of that editor’s work or references. Nor does he give you the right to accept or refuse the editor he suggests.
 - An editor who won’t provide references from authors or agents he’s worked with.
 - An editor who won’t give you samples of his editing and/or critiques.
 - A letter of agreement or contract that does not specify all the costs you will incur, what the editor will do for each of his fees, the schedule of payment and due date for delivery of the edited manuscript.
 - An editor who wants the entire fee before he begins any work.
- (Davis 2002, 34)

Getting published by a legitimate press or literary magazine isn't easy, and beginning writers should be wary of shortcuts and quick fixes. Caveat emptor applies in creative writing as much as it does anywhere else: If it looks too good to be true, it probably is.

Simply keeping abreast of the field is a good way to become a resource oneself. Several well-established magazines offer useful advice for writers in print and, to a lesser degree, online. *Writer's Digest Magazine* (www.writersdigest.com) and the *Writer* (www.writermag.com) are geared toward freelance nonfiction writers, but they sometimes provide helpful tips for literary creative writers. Zuzu's Petals (www.zuzu.com) has one of the best resources pages for online writing and writers. *Poets and Writers Magazine* (www.pw.org) is the first place many literary writers turn to find out what editors and publishers are interested in and who's saying what about whom. While very few *P & W* print articles appear on their Web site, the online version does contain updated listings for grants and awards and publication opportunities. Of course, the ultimate resource for twenty-first-century writers is probably the Internet itself. Type a query into Google, and you're likely to come back with information that's at least as current as anything in this entry.