

GUIDE FOR AUTHORS

Diane Kistner



Guide for Authors

by

Diane Kistner

Director, FutureCycle Press

*being a warm welcome and passel of information for poets
who have signed with FutureCycle Press and others who are interested in our process*

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Published by FutureCycle Press

Athens, GA, USA

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Welcome Aboard

This guide was written for authors whose book manuscript has been accepted for publication by FutureCycle Press. (It should also be of interest to those submitting to us.) The editors handling acquisitions are finished with their work. We may have shared some of our comments with you with an eye to how the manuscript might be improved, and I've asked you to go over it one last time before emailing the final document file to me. I now request, and expect, you to read over this guide to smooth our way through production and publication of your book. Unless I tell you otherwise, it will be just the two of us working together going forward.

WHAT'S NEXT

Depending on where your book falls on the schedule, I may not (and should not) begin working on it for quite a while post-acceptance. This gives you time to nail down any updates to your acknowledgments and also work toward getting together the materials I'm going to need to produce your book.

July 1st prior to your tentative publication date (as specified in your acceptance letter) is your deadline for sending your final book manuscript to me.

Not later than a month or so before the tentative publication date we gave you, but probably sooner, I'll comb over your manuscript, doing more rigorous line-by-line editing and proofreading. When I'm finished, you'll have the opportunity to accept or reject any edits I have made. At this stage, except in response to my queries, you must resist the impulse to make changes. During this time, I will also design your book cover and program your Kindle edition, so the earlier you can get cover materials to me, the better. (Refer to *Your Book Interior* and *Your Book Cover* for details.)

Ultimately, after some back and forth to ensure everything is perfect, you'll sign off on the final interior and cover PDF proofs and I'll upload them to our print-on-demand printer. I'll put your Kindle edition up for pre-sale and, on your publication date, I will "pull the trigger" to publish your paperback book. In 72 hours or less, both editions should be up on Amazon; expanded distribution access can take longer.

When the two of us do start laboring in earnest to give birth to your book—that's a good metaphor for it—we'll be rather intensely involved until, suddenly, the book will just seem to pop out with an *Ahh....* Then, just as suddenly, we'll be in touch far less often as I shift focus to other books and you show off your new baby.

I know how exciting all of this can be for an author, and I am excited with you. In anticipation of your questions, and to engage you in the process of making your book the best that it can be, I have prepared this guide to give you an idea of what you can expect from here on out.

ABOUT YOURS TRULY

You know that old TV commercial with the messy-haired woman working in her pajamas, trying to duck the web cam? Well, except for being shorter and a bit tubbier, that's pretty much me, so you can eradicate any notion you might have that I am sitting in a fancy office somewhere wearing a chic designer suit. I always warn new authors that I work on the press pretty much around the clock; that they may get emails from me at 3 a.m. that weren't perfectly proofread; that sometimes I come across as formal, sometimes temperamental (grouchy?), sometimes quite laid back and friendly, and sometimes like I'm wandering around in the Dreamtime. This is because I work all the time and wear so many hats, each of which requires a different way of thinking and being.

As a creative writer who also has to live in the workaday world, I expect you understand how it is to have to constantly shift between the two hemispheres of your brain. I have to be an editorial stickler one minute, a creative designer the next. It's such an odd combination of obsessive fastidiousness and coloring outside of the lines, I know it can seem confusing or wacky to someone expecting only an editor's precision and formality. The important thing for you to understand is that, no matter how I seem, I'm always "on it"—well, almost always—but I need you to complement me as I work so your book will turn out beautifully with no errors. If I'm in stickler mode, I need your flexibility. If I'm in creative mode, I need you to watch out for the sloppiness that creativity often entails. Most of all, I need you to relax and just be yourself.

Most of our authors tell me it was a pleasure to work with me and that they were delighted with the care and attention their book received. My goal is for this to be your experience as well. I drop the ball sometimes, like all humans do, and things beyond my control do go wrong, but I do my best to smooth any bumps along the way. There is nothing in this world that I love more than editing and publishing really good books, and I'm very much looking forward to working with you on yours!

*All best,
Diane*

About FutureCycle Press

FutureCycle Press is dedicated to publishing lasting English-language poetry books and anthologies in both print-on-demand and digital formats. Founded in 2007 by long-time independent editor/publishers and partners Diane Kistner and Robert S. King, the press incorporated as a nonprofit in 2012. A number of our editors are distinguished poets and writers in their own right, and we have been actively involved in the small press movement going back to the early seventies.

The FutureCycle Poetry Book Prize and honorarium is awarded annually for the best full-length volume of poetry we publish in a calendar year. Introduced in 2013, our Good Works projects are collections of individual works, sometimes devoted to significant issues, with proceeds donated to charitable causes. Our Selected Poems series highlights contemporary poets with a substantial body of work to their credit; with this series we strive to resurrect work that has had limited distribution and is now out of print.

We are dedicated to giving all of the authors we publish the care their work deserves, making our catalog of titles the most diverse and distinguished it can be, and paying forward any earnings to fund more great books.

We've learned a few things about independent publishing over the years. We've also evolved a unique, resilient publishing model that allows us to focus mainly on vetting and preserving for posterity the most books of exceptional quality without becoming overwhelmed with bookkeeping and mailing, fundraising activities, or taxing editorial and production "bubbles." To find out more, come see us at futurecycle.org.

Your Contract

No work can commence on your book until your contract (already digitally signed by us) is physically or digitally signed, witnessed, and dated by you and returned to us. Unless we tell you otherwise, the tentative publication date we gave you on acceptance will be your actual publication date. The schedule can slip to the final end-of-year publish-by date in your contract if deadlines are missed, but we don't like it when that happens. If your book is not out by the final publish-by date, the contract becomes null and void.

The contract offered by FutureCycle Press has been very carefully designed to provide the maximum value to our authors with the minimum risk to us as a nonprofit independent publishing house with no outside sources of funding. Our experience has been that seemingly small (to an author) expenditures of time and money can quickly swamp us, threatening our ability to edit and publish books or serve our authors well. We are not doing this to make money; we do, however, wish to stay afloat because it's not going to do any of our authors any good if we go under. So instead of paying authors 10% for typically paltry online book sales, we reserve (and match) that 10% for the FutureCycle Poetry Book Prize and honorarium that one author will win each year. Authors are given the option of purchasing, through us, deeply discounted copies of their own books that they can then gift or resell at a very healthy profit. A detailed explanation (*About Those Royalties*) appears at the end of this guide.

If you have been told that you should try to negotiate the best possible deal you can with a publisher, you should know up front that our contract terms are strictly non-negotiable. We would rather let a good book "get away" than add to our time burdens or give up the skinny little bootstraps of our contract. We already are giving you the best possible deal for poets.

What I need from you

- sign, date, and have witnessed your contract (digital preferred; printed acceptable)
- send the signed copy to us (by email or mailed to our address in your contract)
- be sure to keep a copy with your important papers for future reference

Scheduling and Task Management

Unlike large publishing houses with different departments for editing, design, production, and promotional activities, we—or, I should say, I—do everything all at once all the time. FutureCycle Press has an all-volunteer staff, and a handful of senior editors handle acquisitions and initial suggestions for editorial refinement. Once a manuscript is on the schedule to be published, it's typically all done by yours truly—although occasionally I'm lucky to find someone both skilled and willing to volunteer to help me.

HOW TASKS ARE ORGANIZED

As I'll explain in more detail later, each book involves two major production tasks: the book interior (“left-brained,” analytical, “stickler” work) and the book cover (“right-brained,” creative, initially sloppy work). Ideally, the interior is completed first and then the cover designed, but it rarely works out that way. I work back and forth between cover and interior depending on what I feel most drawn to work on at any given time. I am a better editor in the morning after a few cups of coffee and a better designer at the end of the day when I'm tired.

TIMING PUBLICATION

The schedule is ordered by the tentative publishing date we assign to each author's book when it is initially accepted, and we try very hard to stick with this schedule. Moving a publication date is like changing the course of a battleship, so unless there is a very good reason to do so, please do not ask us to change the schedule. Your book being on the schedule for a certain date does not necessarily mean that a book ahead of yours will be published first. Many factors are involved, such as how involved each author is in finding cover art, how thorough they are with proofs—and if they can resist revising—not to mention how unexpected events in each of our lives unfold. While the ball for one book is in that author's court, I'll be working on another one. If I get ahead on one title and behind on another because deadlines weren't met, the schedule may have to be adjusted accordingly, but I try to stick to the initially scheduled (tentative publication) date as much as possible.

Assuming your book is ready to publish and you've given your final approval to go ahead, we'll publish your book on the scheduled date. If for any reason we need to delay publication until after this date, I need to know this as soon as possible, but see the caveats below.

SUBMISSIONS TO MAGAZINES WHILE IN PRODUCTION

The rights to your work remain with you except as specified in your contract, so you can continue to submit individual works from your manuscript to serial publications (magazines, journals); we will not, however, hold up publication to accommodate another publisher, so be sure to let them know we are publishing your book and when. If we publish the work first, the magazine should credit us with first publication. If the magazine publishes first, you need to remind me to update your acknowledgments page before we go to press. Note that we do not include credits for forthcoming publications, so if an individual work is scheduled to be published in a magazine after we publish it in your book, it should not be included in the book's acknowledgments. Nor should you include reprinted poems; only original publications should be included in your acknowledgments.

ADVANCE REVIEW COPIES

I'd rather you not ask for a PDF “reading copy” for reviews before we are scheduled to begin working together on your book, but if you must have one for an important review source you have definitely lined up, I will prepare an

unedited, undesigned, uncorrected PDF file for you, labeled accordingly—but only if you send me your final manuscript earlier than the deadline and we work with that as our master file going forward. I will also have to work it in around my current production schedule, which takes priority.

MY DEADLINES AND YOURS

As director of FutureCycle Press, webmaster, book editor, designer, and the entire marketing and production departments, I always have more than enough to do, and I set my daily deadlines based on what is most pressing of what I have in house. If I see the schedule is getting so seriously derailed that meeting a contracted publish-by date is in jeopardy, I may have to get tough, but I usually give authors a lot of flexibility in when ongoing production tasks are accomplished. I do try to complete all, or almost all, of the work at least three weeks in advance of our scheduled publication date to give us time to troubleshoot the unexpected and unforeseen.

Essentially, when I've lobbed a ball into your court, you are pretty much on my back burner until I hear back from you. This means you can, and should, set your own realistic deadlines for completing tasks once we begin working in earnest. Don't put things off, but also don't hurry. It's better to be careful and thorough and run a little behind schedule than it is to make more work for both of us by rushing and missing things that are important. As the carpenters always say, "measure twice, cut once." Get it done right the first time, and much later grief will be spared the both of us.

What I need from you

- touch base with me as your July 1 deadline approaches
- track any new publications to add to your acknowledgments
- keep me posted if long delays are expected

Your Book Interior

Before we accepted your manuscript, we may have asked you to revise it to address any concerns or suggestions our editors had. When you send your final manuscript, please send the entire manuscript again, with any updated acknowledgments or small tweaks you happened to make post-acceptance. (But *nota bene*: Drastic revisions may require resubmission with no guarantee of acceptance.) Itemize in a separate file any changes you made beyond simple changes in phrasing, sequence adjustments, or acknowledgments updates.

I want a file that's as close to being publishable as possible before I start working with it, because that file is going to go through a lot of production-level changes before we're done. Once editing and production begins, I will be working with a different file that is a copy of the final file you send me. Any and all subsequent changes must be made by me—and only to the file in my custody. I must be sure the file meets specs not only for the printed version of your book but for the Kindle edition as well. Clearly, the more changes that are made after you send me your final manuscript, the more opportunities there are for errors to be introduced and the longer it will take to get your book out, so go over it with a fine-toothed comb before you send it to me.

REFORMATTING

The first thing I'm going to do with my copy of your final file is strip it back to plain text, move the acknowledgments to the end per our house style, and delete all the other front matter. (I've learned the hard and very expensive way that this is how best to control the manuscript-through-print/Kindle work flow and ensure that nothing blows up.) I hashtag for subsequent formatting unique elements like sections and poem titles, make the quotation marks “curly,” do temporary searchable kludge coding for tabbed or spaced-over lines that I will later code with non-breaking spaces to work in both print and Kindle editions, and make sure any special characters are coded properly.

Next, I pull the stripped file into a 6×9 book template and style it according to my rough design for your book. A lot of formatting control is built into the styles, and so is the basic structure for the Kindle edition. If not intended to be running prose poetry, I style every single line to effect a hanging indentation should it run over to a second line. This coding is especially important for the Kindle edition, which may be read on a “skinny” phone or have the type style or size changed by the user to enhance readability. Once all of this is done, I eyeball how the pages and lines are breaking, making adjustments in size or typeface for best appearance, then check overall length with an eye to the framework the book must adhere to. Last of all, I prepare the front matter and generate the table of contents.

As you can imagine, there is plenty of room for errors to be introduced at the initial formatting stage. The main ones I want you to be on the lookout for are dropped headings, subheadings, and italics; line-spacing (stanza) errors; and type that should not be in the book at all—like formatting tags (*e.g.*, #H1, #E) or page numbers and “continued on next page” comments that you may have manually typed into your manuscript that I didn't strip.

If you write with a long line, be on the lookout for “hung” lines. For example, the first example below shows how a long line might automatically break and wrap to the next line, indenting to indicate the next line is a continuation of the first; this is per *Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines for setting poetry. For the print edition, at least, you may wish to revise and/or deliberately break such lines differently, as in the second example, to keep each line flushed left and of a similar length to the lines in the rest of the poem. If you don't, however, and you are fine with the hanging indentations, it's perfectly fine to leave them as they are.

*A line that runs longer than will fit within the margins
required for the edition of the book.*

*A line that runs longer than will fit
within the margins required for the edition
of the book.*

Because of myriad factors, it is impossible to control hung lines in the digital edition. This is why we style all lines to hang if they don't fit within a device's margins.

EDITING AND PROOFREADING

I do most, but not all, of the copyediting of our books. (I do have a few trusted editors I call on from time to time to help me if I swamped.) After stripping and styling, I put on my editor's hat, turn on tracking of changes, and start reading through your book carefully from start to finish. Unless I know you have already addressed them, I revisit the other editors' comments, especially any suggestions for deletion or resequencing. Essentially, however, I make up my own mind about what I think needs to be done to hone the book.

As I work, I may add questions or explanations for you in side comments if I think they are needed, but mostly I do what editors do: find, and fix, whatever needs to be fixed in the text itself to make the book as strong and polished as possible. We adhere to the *Chicago Manual of Style* and *Merriam-Webster's Unabridged Dictionary* whenever to do so does not undermine your poetic intent. We also edit to American spellings per Chicago's recommendations for American publishers unless there is a very good reason not to do so.

Authors should know that we do not subscribe to the notion that "anything goes" in poetry. All volumes of poetry published by FutureCycle Press are fully editorially vetted. In short: If your manuscript did not receive a good scrubbing before you submitted it to us, you can expect you'll get one from me. I will be especially attentive to inconsistencies, punctuation errors, and anything else that might trip a reader. I am sensitive to a poet's use of the language in ways that a prose writer could never get away with, but I won't let errors slide. That makes both of us look bad. It takes me a long time to edit because I don't just assume place names, proper nouns, quotations and the like are correct as you typed them. If you use a lot of foreign language, I'm going to have to depend on you to be especially careful to get it all right.

PROOFS OF THE INTERIOR

When I finish editing your book, I will either arrange for you to review the changes online or send you two files, the PDF "master file" with any *suggested* edits already made and a PDF of the EDIT file with comments and editorial changes tracked. You will need a way to open and read PDFs. Tracked changes are hard to see and often look different from what was intended, so you should only use the EDIT file to help you locate where changes were made in the master. The best approach is to check the EDIT file for any comments—they may look like sheets of paper you can hover your cursor over to see the contents—and get those out of the way first. If you have a way to address any queries directly in the PDF file, feel free to do so. Then just start reading the master file, from start to finish, as if it is the finished book. If something jumps out at you as not what you want, refer back to the EDIT file at that spot to see if it's due to an edit or an error.

Some authors react to the first proof of the interior with some astonishment because, depending on how refined their final manuscript was (or, more accurately, was not), changes can appear on almost every page. Please remember that this is not an ego thing; nor am I your adversary. It's just that authors, no matter how skilled and

brilliant, should never be the ones to copyedit and proofread their own work. (That's why the Big Bang made editors.) I am simply trying to help you make your book the best it can be, and I only ask that you think about each revision carefully before rejecting it out of hand. Know that unless I've had some complete brain fart—which I have, admittedly, been known to have—I suggest each editorial change for a very good reason and with an eye to the consistency and flow of the entire book.

The initial proof is by far the most important, and you should take your time with it.

Go through the master file very carefully several times—pretend it's going to be your last chance to look at it—making a list (itemized by the master-file page numbers and lines) of all—and only—the changes that I still need to make. You can do this in the body of an email or in a separate file. Include in this list only those changes I've made that you do not—I repeat, do not—want made; I will assume that you approve of anything you do not mention. You do not have to justify rejecting a suggestion, and I will not fight you on it unless it's something that's wrong. (Even if I do fight you on a change, it will be a friendly fight!)

Once I receive your response to the initial proof, I'll do what needs to be done and generate a corrected PDF for you to approve. You should check this proof against your list to be sure I didn't miss (or misunderstand) anything you wanted changed. We will keep going through proofs like this (within reason) until no more changes are needed.

It goes without saying that, as you work through your book yet again, you are going to see things that you think could have been written a little better. I don't mind if you make a few minor changes to improve the work, but you should try to make these changes the first or second time around and then cease and desist. Anything that causes the total number of pages to shift should be avoided if at all possible because it will hugely affect not only the book's interior but the design and execution of your book cover as well. Know that I *will* get grouchy if every round involves corrections that should have been caught the first time or two or if you start revising late in the game. Don't be surprised if I say no to such changes.

When we are ready to finalize the interior, double-check the table of contents and the acknowledgments page to be sure any "forthcoming" publications are either updated to reflect publication has occurred or, if they are not expected to be published before we go to press, deleted. If you have new first-time publications (not reprints) of work in the book, these need to be added and mention of any deleted poems removed.

What I need from you

Initial Proof of the Interior

- review the master file at least twice
- double-check italics, line/stanza breaks, titles and section breaks
- inform me if you'd like any long lines that wrap down broken differently
- skim for anything awry (glitches that weren't there before)
- document by page number/line all changes I still need to make

Penultimate Proof of the Interior

- read through the entire proof at least once (for errors only)
- double-check that all your indicated changes were made
- double-check the acknowledgments page and contents for accuracy

Your Book Cover

Your book cover is not more important than the content of your book, but it is equally important. The book cover is the next best thing to personal contact with you when it comes to encouraging someone to read your book. Potential readers will eventually have access to Amazon's "Look Inside" feature and previews and excerpts on Goodreads to be able to see samples of your writing, but if the cover is not appealing, they won't bother to look.

COVER DESIGN

To the extent of my skills, I strive to capture the overall feel of your book through choice of artwork, color, tone, typeface, and juxtaposition of the elements. Unlike many designers, I enjoy collaborating with authors on their book covers—at least to a point. (I do not have time to engage in endless hours of searching for art and reworking cover after cover after cover, which is why our contract is firm in its limits.) Also atypically, I often will have had the benefit of reading your book as an editor, alert to its meaning and motifs, and this gives me a good subjective sense of what the cover should hint at.

Some authors ask if they or an artist friend can design their cover. The answer is yes, we are open to considering somebody else's cover design. I will need to see a full mockup ("comp") of the cover when I receive your final manuscript in July; then, if the press approves the concept, I'll need the high resolution original art that was used to create it. I prefer to do my own typography to complement your book's interior design. If I cannot easily replicate another artist's design, the artist should be prepared to provide an editable PDF for a wraparound cover, sans any type, to a template and specs I will provide once I know how many pages will be in your book.

If you know you want someone else to design your cover, please tell me immediately so I don't waste time designing comps for your book. (Also refer them to the *Resources* section.) Note, however, that we do not guarantee acceptance of an outside design. Important: Except for our Selected Poems series and Good Works projects, we do not put type on the spines of our books. A detailed explanation of why appears at the end of this guide (*About That Spine Type*).

If you are looking for artwork, be aware that many images you find online are not of a high enough resolution for print, and they cannot be sized larger without degradation of the original image. (Images that are too large can be sized smaller.) Our printer requires 300 dots per inch (dots are roughly the same as pixels), so converting a 72 dpi image to 300 dpi will shrink it down to a very tiny image. Refer to the layout grid at the end of this section to help you visualize the minimum sizes required for your art.

YOUR INPUT INTO THE DESIGN

The most important way you can help me or another artist provide you with a cover you love is to find examples of covers you like the looks of and any artwork you think would work well with your book's content. It takes a long time to find just the right artwork, at just the right size, and at just the right price (*gratis* with a credit to the artist or photographer). You and/or I must find the art before I can even begin to design your cover. Landscape orientation is best for wraparound covers; the right side of the image will be on the front. Sometimes, it works to "flop" an image—to put what's on the left on the right instead.

Amazon and Goodreads are great places to browse for cover designs. Just copy the links to covers you like into one email and, after you've gotten a handful you like assembled, send them to me. I won't copy these designs; I'll use them to get an idea of what you like. I have designed most of the covers for [books in our catalog](#), so let me know if any of them particularly appeal to you.

If your heart is set on artwork that must be purchased, I will consider using it only if you arrange to buy it yourself and send it to me in a digital format suitable for print; just don't buy anything until I've given you the go ahead. The royalty-free sites carry high-resolution digital files suitable for printing. Sites that sell posters and other printed artwork may not.

If you want to leave your cover design completely up to me, please at least give me a short list of keywords—for example, “blue and purple” “empty beach,” “mountains,” “abstract,” “jagged,” “irises,” “soft and subtle” or “golden retriever”—for the most important concepts, images, or tone of your book to help me narrow my search to something suitable. (Note “golden retriever.” You may have used a dog as an important motif without specifying what kind it is. If you do not clarify the breed for me, I may pick a photo of a terrier instead and you probably won't like it. Also, if you leave the task of finding artwork entirely up to me, I'm going to be less likely to respond well if you say you don't like any of the cover comps I give you.)

It is very difficult to find good photographs that capture childhood or family details because I don't know what the people who were important to you looked like. In cases like this, if you can send me high-resolution scans (at least 300 dpi) of actual family photos that you (and your family members) don't mind seeing published, I might be able to use them. (We'll need to credit the photographer on the copyright page.) Knowing the general location and time frame of your childhood can help, too, but because this kind of image is so subjective, I prefer that you find the artwork instead of me.

Sometimes a book has conflicting images that the reader is asked to integrate, so be sure to mention those that are most important to you. “If you do nothing else, try to capture X and Y on the cover” can spark my creativity, just as if you had given me a challenging writing prompt.

Finally, because good poetry works on multiple levels and sets off different associations in different readers, be aware that others may see things in your work that you don't. I think of a cover design I once did. One image in the book struck a very deep chord with me, reverberating through the book in quite a profound way. The image so stuck with me that later, when I was up hunting for artwork in the middle of the night, it was all I could think of. I searched and searched and searched until I found just the right image to capture the depth and breadth of that particular motif (which is how I saw it)—only to have the author tell me that it was a very minor detail that didn't work for the collection. This is why I want your input before I put too much time into your cover.

COVER COMPS

You will hear me use the term “comp” to mean two different things: a rough design for your cover and a low-resolution complimentary graphic such as those found on royalty-free art sites. I can do a rough cover design (a cover comp) with one or more graphic comps to give you a general idea of what your cover might look like using the high-resolution art without having to download or buy it first. This is why, if you decide you do want to purchase artwork, I ask you to send me the comp first. That way, if we wind up not able to use it for some reason, you aren't out the bucks. Art, even royalty-free art, can be quite expensive.

Unless we approve an outside artist's design for your book, I will provide up to three cover comps. These comps will all be different, and they will be rough. They will not likely have your photo or any type on the back cover, and the colors and positioning of elements are subject to refinement. Once you choose your favorite, I will develop that comp into your final cover. Please do not share any cover images publicly until after the book is officially published because unexpected things can go wrong at the printing stage that may force us to have to change the cover.

I will need from you a 100 words-or-less bio. Most authors want a photo (a head shot is best), but you don't have to have one. (Hint: It's nice when the colors complement the cover design.) Some people want blurbs; we'll use them if you insist, but we're not wild about them because they tend to limit our design choices and also hold things up while we wait for the blurbs to be written. Later, blurbs and a longer bio can always be added by you to your Goodreads author page or Author Central page on Amazon.

PROOFS OF THE COVER

As with the proof of your interior, I will generate an initial PDF proof of your cover, which you should treat as if it will be the last. Really spend time with it, print and tack a copy to your wall or refrigerator, and above all make sure there are no errors in the type. If it takes more than one, I'll generate an additional PDF proof or two until it's perfect. The cover is usually the last thing I finish. Once you've signed off on it, publication is likely imminent.

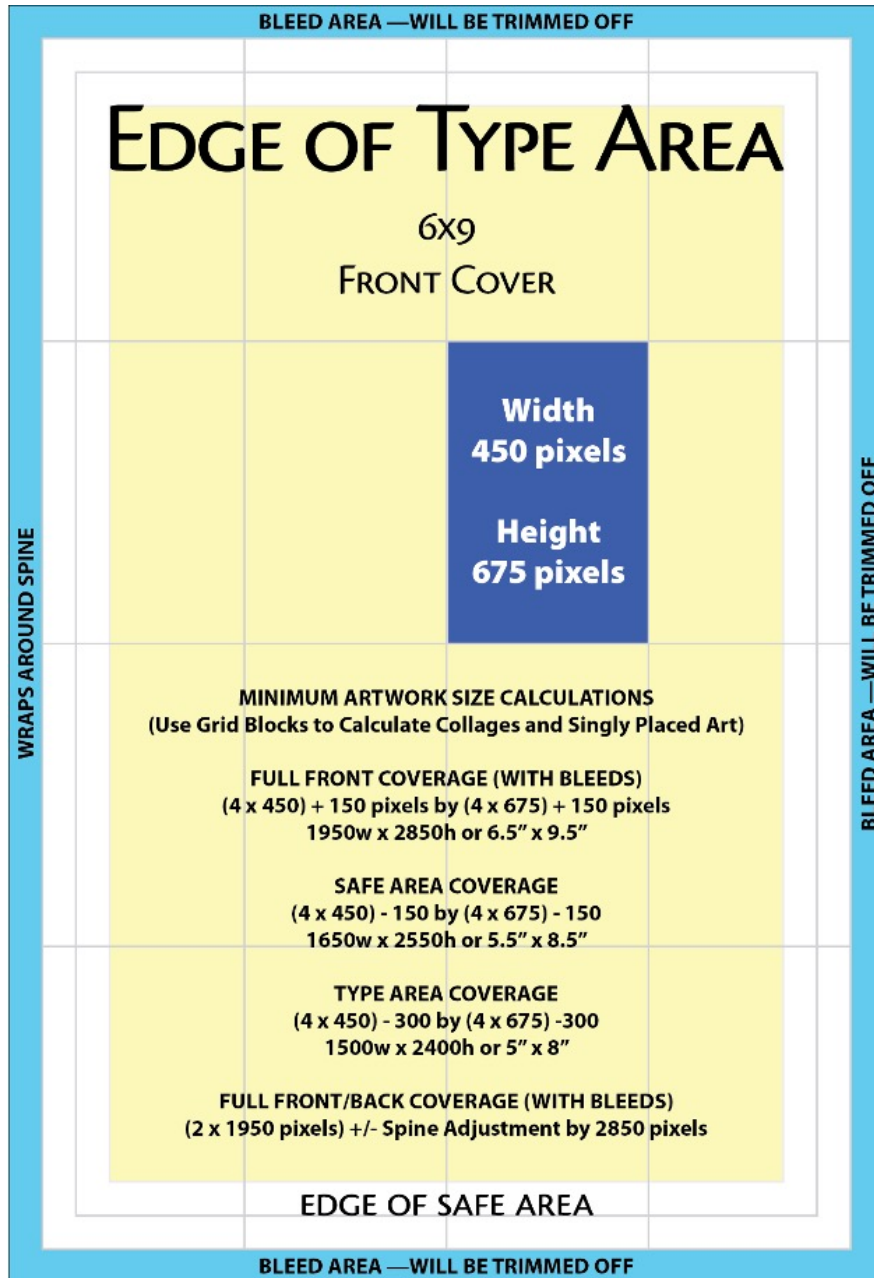
What I need from you

Your Input

- if desired, send a list of keywords, color preferences, links to artwork, etc.
- send your 100-word bio plus optional author photo and blurbs in one email ASAP

Proofs of the Cover

- proofread all type on the cover at least three times
- email any changes with "Cover Corrections" as the subject
- sign off on the proof if no changes are needed



If you plan to provide images for the cover, which is 6x9 when trimmed to the finished size, the above absolute pixel widths and depths show what an image will look like at 300 dpi (required for printing). For an author photo, please don't go smaller than 450 pixels wide to give us some sizing leeway.

The Book Description

Now, I need just one more thing from you before we can go any further: the description of your book that will appear on Amazon and Goodreads and in Bowker's book database that all distributors, bookstores, resellers, and libraries can access. This is what online browsers will see. It is your one chance to make a good first impression.

Everyone says writing the description is the hardest thing to do. Yes, it is. But I ask you to do it, not me, because you know your book and how you want the world to see it better than anyone else. Too, you are about to take this baby out into the world, so you need to take a good look at it and begin to see it for what it is in its own right, separate from you. It has a life of its own now; the description helps get it off on the right foot.

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What I need from you

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We are often asked about book fairs. On rare occasions, we may attend book fairs, arts festivals, and writing gigs within commutable distance of us, but these, too, have typically been a waste of time and money for us. People want to see flesh-and-blood authors, which is why we encourage readings. We don't have an academic institution paying our way to AWP. If you do, by all means go and do some networking. It's a fact of life that poets sell more books than their publishers do—at least until they die—and making personal contacts is more likely to result in reviews or course adoptions than sending out a ton of review copies.

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GETTING INTO BOOKSTORES

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Be creative with your gigs and make them fun to attend, whether that's digitally or in person. The more people love the experience, the more they'll love you and the more likely it will be that they'll buy your book. Some poets have tried charging a door fee that includes a signed copy of their book, hors d'oeuvres, and a few glasses of wine. Others do performance-type readings replete with costuming and sets, like a play. Still others have used their book as a means to raise money for important causes, much like FutureCycle Press does with its Good Works projects.

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- post links to reviews or blog postings on social media

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THE BOTTOM LINE

Our book authors stand to benefit in numerous non-monetary ways, but let's just talk here about earnings—ours and yours. We charge a modest submission fee to evaluate book manuscripts. No extra contest fee to be considered for the FutureCycle Poetry Book Prize and honorarium. No fees to reprint your work. No “collaborative” costs or requirements to buy or pre-sell X number of copies. Certainly no charges for the professional editing and design—so lacking with so many publishers these days—that we pride ourselves on. The most money you will ever have to give us is your submission fee, which ensures your manuscript is read critically but fairly by at least two experienced acquisitions editors—who may even freely share their assessments with you.

If your book manuscript is accepted for publication, you'll get five free copies when it's published to give as gifts or to send to reviewers or published-book competitions. Even at cost, this more than reimburses you for your submission fee. Then, but only if you ask us to, we'll order unlimited extra author copies for you (in multiples of 25) at our cost (what we have to pay our printer) plus 10% of the original list price. (You are, of course, responsible for the shipping, handling, and sales tax we are charged on your behalf.) You can resell your copies at any price you wish, however you wish, with no further obligation to us.

You stand to net an average of \$11 per full-length book if sold at the list price. This is a considerably better deal for poets than the much-vaunted but veritably insignificant (at least for poetry) “industry standard” 10% royalties on sales plus a meager discount on a limited number of author copies. The main reason we don't pay royalties, though, is because it's a time-consuming endeavor, for us and for you, for average annual earnings of \$10 or less. Even if we had a full-time secretary and bookkeeper, we don't think it's worth the hassle. Our time, and yours, we think, is much better spent.

“But,” some will say, “you're taking my money!” Well, no. No we're not—and here's why. First, we're already giving you much deeper discounts on your author copies than you'll get from that “industry standard” publishing contract, with potential for greater profits than you're ever likely to earn on royalties. If you have an Amazon seller account, you can even qualify for wholesale pricing and sell books printed on demand at point of sale and shipped out by Amazon—just like we do—bypassing your publisher entirely. Importantly, because your contract will auto-renew until you instruct us otherwise, and because we are entirely self-funding, your book is far less likely to go out of print.

If we did nothing else, all of this would be quite generous, but we do more. We put that 10% of the royalties received from all online book sales into the FutureCycle Poetry Book Prize honorarium, then match it dollar-for-dollar. We're not “taking” 10%, we're giving 10% along with you and the rest of the poets we publish to crowd-fund the honorarium. (There are no contest fees, remember? No grants or endowments. That prize money has to

come from somewhere.) If your book wins the prize, you'll receive the entire 20%; if you don't, one of your fellow poets will.

OH, AND NEWS FLASH

Seasoned poets know better, but I still find myself having to explain this over and over again to relative newcomers. Publishing poetry is not lucrative; it is what is referred to in retail as a "loss leader"—except those retailers expect to make up the loss through sales of more popular or expensive items while you are in their store. A very few for-profit publishers will sometimes publish a poetry book or two because they have a blockbuster novel with movie rights to sell that makes the loss seem like a drop in the bucket. Some publishers instead depend on government or institutional grants to subsidize poetry, and others (as happens more often now with academic presses) expect the authors themselves to subsidize some or all of the cost.

Not to mention the fact that publishing poetry is very hard work. Poetry is harder to edit than prose, the type is harder to set, layouts can be trickier than running text, and careful hands-on programming is required if a digital edition is also produced. We suspect that's why the big trade publishers don't publish much, if any, poetry and the smaller poetry publishers wink in and out so quickly. About 10% of our costs are covered by reading fees, meager earnings from online sales, and the 10% markup over actual cost on author copies ordered directly through us. The other 90% comes from perspiration: the many hours of skilled professional labor we dedicate to keeping poetry alive as a precision art form. Let's just say there's no way we could afford to pay the going rate for our time, and the number of publishers who can or do would fit on the head of a pin.

Finally, it comes down to this. We're not playing at publishing here. Our aim is to stay viable for the long haul and keep our work—the work we do together with poets—alive. If you've been paying attention, you know that many independent and university poetry presses have died either from a thousand little funding cuts or a brutal chopping-block whack. Because we refuse to become dependent on outside funding and are determined to keep doing this no matter what, we aren't going to go under and leave you with a dead book—at least not until we're in our graves or the planet burns up. We think the books we believe in enough to publish deserve to survive even if (as is likely) relatively few people ever buy them or read them.

So keep doing good work. *Be kind*. Help make the world a little better however you can.