

## **Publishing Educational Books and Materials**

by Mary Ellen Lepionka 1/22/08

Many small and self-publishers are or were educators or professional practitioners and seek to parlay their experiences and expertise into writing and publishing educational materials. Many authors and small publishers have been successful at this, selling popular series, growing as companies, or being acquired as imprints of industry giants.

Overall, the education market is both huge and hugely diverse. The National Center of Education Statistics estimates a total of more than 38 million preK-8 students in 2008 and more than 16 million high school students. Of these around 6 million are in private schools. In 2007 there were around 15 million undergraduates, more than 2 million graduate students, and 335,000 students enrolled in professional schools. According to the U.S. Census there are presently 6.2 million teachers, about half in elementary and middle schools, and 1.5 million instructors in higher ed and professional ed.

Books for the education markets can earn a tremendous amount of money. According to the National Association of College Stores, in 2007 students spent over \$6 million on textbooks and \$420 million on trade books they bought in college stores. Or imagine if, for example, your book were adopted as a supplement for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade language arts in the state of Indiana. If Indiana purchased one copy of your book for every third grader, you would sell 77,546 books!

Each of the education markets further subdivides into specific market segments. Maybe you have created materials for the 442,000 preschool teachers, or for the 175,000 PreK-8 special education teachers or their students or their parents. Maybe you publish children's literature that you would like to see in classrooms, school libraries, and state reading lists. Maybe you want to publish study aids for students taking physics or a casebook on civics or a textbook on clinical practice. Or maybe you just want to see your nonfiction trade book or gift book in college bookstores where students will buy them.

Each of these market segments has its own players, rules, and sales channels, and these are not the same players, rules, and sales channels as are normally found in trade book publishing. Feeding press releases, booking radio and television interviews, getting reviewed on Amazon, advertising in *Publisher's Weekly*—these are not the best ways to spend your time or marketing budget if your intent is to penetrate the education market. What, then, are better ways?

This article is the first in a series that explores how to determine where your products fit in the education market, whether those products are market ready, who your real customers are, and how to reach them. My aim is simply to share some information and ideas based on what I have learned so far. I look forward to hearing from readers about their learning experiences as well.

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*Mary Ellen Lepionka founded Atlantic Path Publishing in Gloucester, MA, in 2002 ([www.atlanticpathpublishing.com](http://www.atlanticpathpublishing.com)) and is the author of professional books and articles on academic writing and textbook publishing. Mary Ellen is a member of SPAN and PMA and also a board member of the Independent Publishers of New England ([www.ipne.org](http://www.ipne.org)).*