fewest questions. Why? Because you’ve anticipated an answered them all. Remember, your aim is to write a proposal so gripping that after reading it an editor will get on the phone and offer you a contract for your book.

**The Manuscript**

There is a certain irony in the fact that an editor can tell a writer quite a bit less about what she looks for in a completed manuscript than what she’d like to see in a query letter or proposal. In part this is because editors are not writers and do not know how to write a book; we soon learn that every single writer approaches his or her task in a different fashion. And when a completed manuscript is submitted to an editor, it is quite close to being finished and should persuade an editor of its value on its merits: the content and style of the work. You should, however, make sure that your manuscript, whether fiction or nonfiction, does not indulge in sloppy thinking or careless writing. Ask yourself: Is my plot or argument persuasive; is it well executed; does each scene, character, conversation, and idea make an important and effective contribution to the work; is it original; will it keep people outside of my family and closest friends reading through the last page?

It may take a while, but a well-written and -conceived manuscript, proposal, or query letter presented with enthusiasm and professionalism will find a publisher. In the meantime, consider carefully the responses you are getting from editors and use them to continue honing and sharpening your work for future submissions. Keep in mind how difficult your task is. After all, you’re trying to catch the attention of extremely busy individuals who read enormous amounts of material daily while they try to balance acquisitions with their editorial, production, and marketing responsibilities.

But despite their being overworked, remember that editors are always looking for new material. There is nothing quite so thrilling for an editor than coming upon an original, exciting, and thoroughly professional author. Your expertly prepared and presented query letter, proposal, or manuscript can convince her that you are that author.

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**The Editor and the Author at the Writers’ Conference**

**Why They Go, What They Do**

**Michael Seidman**

**Michael Seidman**, the mystery editor of Walker & Company, has more than thirty years of experience in all aspects of the publishing industry. A winner of the American Mystery Award as Best Book Editor, Mr. Seidman is the author of From Printout to Published: A Guide to the Publishing Process. His latest book, Living the Dream: Writing as a Way of Life, was published in November 1992. Mr. Seidman attends at least ten writers’ conferences a year.

Are you looking for “a large and varied support group waiting not only to ensure that you are not lonely, but to provide the kind of help and lessons the writer needs in order to grow”? According to Michael Seidman, “All you need to do to make contact is attend a writers’ conference.”

There are hundreds of different writers’ conferences held during the year in every part of the country. Mr. Seidman’s fact-filled, hands-on essay recommends practical guidelines for choosing the right one for you and tells you how to get the most out of attending it in terms of value for your time and money. He shows you how to make the most of workshops, select a reading, and find the right one; and how to network effectively with other attendees to get the most out of their list. They’re as eager to meet you as you are to meet them. That’s what writers’ conferences are all about. So turn off your computer (or, if you just can’t stop writing, take along your laptop) and recharge your creative
The Editor and the Author at the Writers’ Conference

Why They Go, What They Do

The pundits say that we teach most that which we most have to learn. After more than a decade of being invited to conferences as a speaker and managing to attend as a writer, I’m not about to start arguing with the pundits. They’ve got it right.

They also say that you’re supposed to write, write, and write, that time taken away from the writing is time wasted, that the only way to learn how to write is by writing. Right?

They say that writing is the loneliest profession, something done alone, just the writer and the words. Right?

“They.” Ambiguous, amorphous, and always quoted. But what they say is not always right.

If you sit alone and write, with your only feedback coming in the form of noncommittal rejection slips (“. . . not right for our list at the present time”), you will find yourself repeating the same mistakes. You learn from your mistakes, after all, only if you know they are errors of some kind. Unfortunately, reading and attempting to emulate the writers you enjoy is not the answer; the work you produce that way is simply an echo of someone else’s ability.

As for the loneliness—well, at the very worst you always have the company of your characters, coming to life on the page, telling you what they’re going to do, and to hell with your outline. At best, though, there is a large and varied support group waiting not only to ensure that you are not lonely, but to provide the kind of help and lessons the writer needs in order to grow. You’ll have to take a couple of days away from the typewriter (perhaps after all, there are portables), but the time is not wasted.

All you need to do to make contact is attend a writers’ conference.

There are hundreds of writers’ conferences held every year. Some of them, like the Golden Triangle Fiction Writers Conference in Beaumont, Texas, or the Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers Conference in Denver, Colorado, are sponsored by writing groups and workshops; others, like the University of Oklahoma Short Course on Professional Writing in Norman, Oklahoma, are presented with the direct support of university writing programs. Some are seminars, offered by various experts in the field; Gary Provost, for instance, presents a series of programs around the country.

There are conferences designed for writers in a particular field: satellite organizations of the Romance Writers of America sponsor meetings (most of which, these days, deal with all forms of writing); the Chicago chapter of the Mystery Writers of America offers a program called “Dark and Stormy Nights”; there are conferences for those who want to write children’s fiction and for those who want to write for the Christian inspirational market. If you want to do it, there’s someone out there ready to help you.

How do you choose the right one, then, from this abundance of riches? Every spring, Writer’s Digest publishes a list of upcoming conferences, as well as ads announcing the speakers scheduled to attend and participate. It’s a good place to begin.

Friends can also provide information that’s useful. If they’ve attended a particular conference, and pronounced it good, that recommendation should be taken seriously.

Finally, librarians—either at a local branch or at a local school or college—are often aware of upcoming conferences and can put you in touch with the organizers.

Having found several conferences that are convenient—travel expenses won’t be prohibitive, you can attend without losing too much time from your day job—your next task is to find the one that is most suitable for you. The answer there lies in who will be attending and what will be discussed. If you are specializing in science fiction and none of the speakers (editors, agents, or writers) is going to deal with the subject, you might decide to pass. Of course, there may be someone there who will be of help: a writer whose work you’ve admired, an editor known to you by reputation for publishing insights—you have to make that decision based on your needs and what you want to gain.

Find out whether there will be an opportunity to arrange individual appointments with the editor or agent you want to meet. Some conferences arrange ten-minute meetings as part of the program; others offer a roundtable at which a speaker will meet with a group of people at one time. At some, you are expected to arrange the meetings on your own. Most of the people speaking at a conference go out of their way to make themselves available, so even if you can’t get an appointment, it doesn’t mean you won’t have a chance to talk with a guest.

Most of the conferences at which I speak (and I try to do eight to ten a year) also offer the opportunity for critiquing. At some, this is in the form of a contest (generally with an extra charge per submission). Following the organizers’ guidelines, you submit material that is read and judged by
professionals and prizes are awarded. Even if you don’t win, however, you receive a sheet of comments pointing out your strengths and weaknesses.

Once you arrive at a writers’ conference, you may find as many as three hundred people waiting to check in and receive their conference packets (schedules, speaker bios, publishers’ guidelines, meal tickets—if meals are part of the program—and an evaluation sheet for your comments at the end of the meeting). Or there may only be seventy-five. Some may be regulars, people who attend this conference every year, or they will be people who attend two or three different ones as their schedule permits. And there will be those for whom this is a trip into uncharted waters. No matter their particular writing interests and needs, they’re all there for the same reason: to learn, to meet other writers and exchange information and experiences, and to become part of a network with its heart in the offices of publishers and agents. That’s right: they’re there for exactly the same reason you’ve shown up.

Bring notebooks and pencils and, if it is appropriate, three or four copies of your proposal, partial manuscript, or other materials. Most editors and agents don’t want to take manuscripts home with them and they don’t have the time to read at the conference. That’s most; there are exceptions, and if you meet one of them you want to be ready to reel that fish in right away.

If you’re staying at the conference, and you’ve brought that portable typewriter or computer I mentioned earlier, all well and good: conferences have a way of being energizing. You don’t need a keyboard, though. Most of what we call literature wasn’t created on a machine and the old-fashioned way still works perfectly well.

And don’t forget comfortable clothes. Those meeting rooms have a way of getting very warm over the course of a day. If there’s an awards banquet you may want something “dressy,” though that’s by no means any more necessary than a typewriter—even if you’re lucky enough to be one of the finalists.

There’s little that bothers me more, at a conference, than seeing someone sitting alone in a corner, watching groups of people but never approaching them. (Editors get lonely, too.) Shy’s okay, but don’t ever think that the other people aren’t interested in what you have to say. So, once you arrive at the conference, start making friends. Go up to people and say hello, ask questions. Participate. Yes, you’ll get something from the meeting if you just sit back and listen; you’ll gain infinitely more by giving as well as receiving.

And there’s lots to receive. Maybe too much. Take a look at the schedule: there might be nine or ten panels going on at the same time! Before you arrived you probably received a program; if not, check your registration package and start planning your day.

You’ve come because of a particular need or because you want to hear a particular speaker; find those panels on the schedule first, so that you don’t miss the events that mean most to you. Then, find other sessions of interest and mark them. Uh-oh, a conflict, two at the same time. What will you do?

Many of today’s conferences provide recordings of all the sessions at a nominal charge. So, you can begin by picking the session you want to attend (because it is the one in which you are most likely to have questions . . . and ask them) and buy the cassette of a panel you can’t attend. Or, you can ask someone who is going to the one you’ll miss to share his notes and insights with you later.

Bring your own cassette recorder if you own one. I’ve never heard of them being banned from a meeting room, even at the conferences that provide recordings. Before you use one, though, make sure that they’re permitted and that the speaker doesn’t object. Simple courtesy dictates that you get permission: the speaker has no idea what use the tape will be put to; the speaker may want—or need—to sign a release; the speaker may not want his or her words recorded for any number of reasons. It’s rarely a problem (though there are times I’ve worried about exactly what it was I said), but there’s no reason to cause one when asking beforehand can prevent it.

Between sessions, or at any time during the day, you’ll undoubtedly meet one or another of the guest speakers in the hall or in a lounge area. Respect her privacy to the extent that you don’t interrupt her if she’s deep in conversation with someone else; otherwise, always feel free to come up, introduce yourself, ask if she might have a moment, and let things develop naturally. If the speaker is a mystery editor, don’t go on at great length about your horror novel; tell her what you’re working on, say something about enjoying one of her sessions (you do write fiction, don’t you?), ask if she’s enjoying herself (not every conversation has to be about work), and, if appropriate, ask if you might submit something for consideration.

You may be asked for some details—how long is the manuscript, does it fit into a particular subgenre, or any one of the hundreds of other questions editors ask about any submission—and then invited to send the manuscript or a partial. When you do—as quickly as possible (I’ve had some arrive on my desk the same day I got back to the office)—mention the meeting you had in your cover letter, thank the editor for her attention and consideration, and keep your fingers crossed. (As long as that doesn’t interfere with your writing.)

If she says no, don’t try to change her mind. Agents and editors aren’t always right, but we always have reasons for our decisions. We know our needs, what we can do something with in the marketplace, and what will
work for us. You can’t “sell” us anything. You can, though, ensure that we’ll remember your name if we find you difficult. This business is hard enough without antagonizing the people who can help you.

The speakers are there for you. Some of us are going to be easier to approach, to speak with, to get along with, than others, and only rarely will you meet someone who ignores you. If you do have that misfortune, make a note of it on the evaluation form that was in your packet of materials. Every conference provides one, asking what you thought of the meeting, of the speakers, of the panels; what you liked best and least—questions that will help them produce an even better meeting next year. Answer honestly, and if someone was arrogant, unhelpful, curt, or otherwise didn’t live up to your expectations, mention it. And if something or someone was particularly helpful, worthwhile, or otherwise enhanced your time, make sure to mention that, too.

The speakers aren’t your only source of help. You’ll be meeting writers not only from your area but, possibly, from around the country. Like you, they’re there to learn, to gain those insights that are going to help in their careers. Like you, they’ve had disappointments, downtimes, blocks, and successes, accomplishments, and experiences worth sharing. It won’t take long for you to discover those who share your particular writing interests, and lifelong friendships can develop out of taking a moment to say hello. The person next to you has less or more experience, different insights, different knowledge, and is just as eager to exchange that information for yours as you are.

There are writers who worry that someone they speak with at a conference is going to steal an idea. But think about it for a minute: these are writers, too; their heads are teeming with ideas they don’t have time to work on. The conference should be a place for openness and sharing.

And having shared, having exchanged ideas with people (and addresses), having learned that you’re not alone in your efforts, having listened and asked questions, having participated at every level, every step of the way, you come home.

But it isn’t over: mail the manuscripts that have been invited; send query letters to those editors and agents you weren’t able to discuss your work with but who said things that you liked, that made you feel comfortable with them.

If someone was particularly nice in some way or another, send him a thank-you note, let him know how much you enjoyed meeting him. Tell him you’re looking forward to seeing him again. (Don’t tell him that you’re looking forward to submitting something to him someday. But when you do, remind him of how much you enjoyed meeting him once upon a time.) Keep in touch with the other writers, too. Ask for their advice and offer your help. Exchange ideas about writing, about work habits, editors, publishers, agents, and possible markets.

You may be physically alone at your desk when you are working on a story, but you’re not alone in the real sense; there are thousands of us right behind you, ready to help, to lend a hand. All you have to do is ask.

And you can find us easily enough by attending a writers’ conference, by taking a few hours off and talking to people about writing and about publishing what you write. Nothing may be created on the page during that time, but the knowledge gained, and the support received, will make the next page you type that much better.

. . .

Just as you choose carefully before deciding to go to a conference, I do much the same thing with the invitations I receive to speak. There are conferences I particularly enjoy and those to which I will never go again. The first thing I do is find out who is on the program, because when I have the time, I audit other sessions. There’s always something for me to learn, either about writing or about publishing.

If I don’t know the conference, I ask other editors or agents whether they’ve spoken there and whether or not it is well run. By that I generally mean: Do the sessions start on time? Do registrants have access to speakers? Are individual meetings or small roundtable discussion groups held, so that I can talk one-on-one with people who need that kind of contact? Is there a contest or critique service offered? Is there a pleasant bar or lounge in which we can all meet later in the evening, to have the kind of long, rambling conversations I find the most productive because by then all the barriers are down and all the pretensions left behind?

And that’s when I remember the pundits and the thought that I teach most the things I must have to learn, as an editor and as a writer.

At one conference I attended recently, I overheard some of the speakers complaining about all the people coming up to them during their “off time.” My feeling is that when someone is willing to speak, he or she is willing to give as much time as possible to the conference. Whether you meet me or one of the others, though, a little common sense and courtesy will make the experience more pleasant and rewarding for everyone. We know—or should—most of your needs. We try to be kinder, gentler people, but we also tell the truth. We won’t encourage you to submit something that isn’t ready; we will—or should—give you the kind of feedback in a critique that you don’t receive when you get that cold, informal rejection note.

When you’re meeting with an editor, you have every right to expect his full attention. But remember that you have the appointment; there’s little that’s more frustrating to us, or unfair, than agreeing to a meeting and then
The Editor as Negotiator

Martha K. Levin

Finding the writer hasn't shown up. The editor's time is wasted, someone else has lost the opportunity for a meeting, and you haven't done very much for yourself, either. If you can't keep the appointment, cancel it. Everyone will appreciate it.

Getting the most from a writers' conference is really simple. Acknowledge that you're there to learn; pay attention; be open. And remember that the editors, whether they know it at the time or not, are getting as much from you as they are giving.

That's one of the reasons I enjoy the experience of lecturing as much as I do—because of the things I learn from you. It's easy to get lost in the clouds that surround the towers of New York City and forget that America begins west of the Hudson and north of the Bronx. Meeting with you, seeing the things you're writing, is a way of discovering not only your concerns but the interests of our customers, the folks who never buy enough books to keep any of us happy. I may gain an insight into a category I should exploit as an editor (or as a writer). I may achieve a deeper understanding of the needs of writers (but I'll never be able to read manuscripts any more quickly). Or I may even discover a new writer for my list.

Yes, that happens too, and frequently enough so that you shouldn't discount that possibility when you attend a conference and start talking with editors and agents; picture yourself and them as members of a team looking for the same thing. I've bought ten or eleven manuscripts as a result of meeting writers on a weekend away from my desk and have been able to help unnumbered others make the contacts they need. It is what I hope to do every time I board a plane for somewhere in this country where there's a writer looking for information and answers.

Each of us attends a conference looking for something different. And most of us find what we're looking for. Or, at least, discover a map that is going to lead us to the next stage of our development.

You never know everything. You never know enough. The creative process is always changing. The needs of publishers change with the seasons. New editors come along and begin to leave their mark both on the publishing industry and on the art of writing.

Take time away from writing to learn something about writing so that you will not be the only person who reads the words you've so carefully crafted.

And you can gain strength from the knowledge that you're alone no more, that there is a large, vital, and exciting network of people waiting to help you, to welcome you.

Including the editor who will buy your next work.

MARThA K. LEVIN is currently vice-president and publisher of Anchor Books, the trade paperback imprint of Doubleday. Ms. Levin sold subsidiary rights for ten years, most recently as the director of the subsidiary rights department of Random House. Authors she has worked with include Edward T. Hall, Naguib Mahfouz, Donald Spoto, and Mark Richard.

Ms. Levin defines a negotiation as "the discussion that takes place between two parties... that will result in the drawing up of a contract for the purchase of some type of book rights."

Starting with two basic rules, "(1) in a negotiation, either party has the right to ask for anything—just be aware that the other party has just as much of a right to say no; and (2) don't presume anything—if it hasn't been discussed and it's not written down, it's open to totally different interpretations by either side," Ms. Levin's essay goes on to offer the editor valuable, workable, creative suggestions on how to make that negotiation an equitable, happy, and financially rewarding experience for author, agent, and publisher.
An Open Letter to a Would-be Editor

M. Lincoln Schuster

M. LINCOLN SCHUSTER, along with Richard L. Simon, founded Simon & Schuster in 1924. They gambled everything on their first book—Margaret Petherbridge's first compilation of crossword puzzles—and won! That kind of imagination and innovation was typical of Mr. Schuster during his long reign at Simon & Schuster (1924–66).

"An Open Letter to a Would-be Editor" was written for the first edition of this anthology, in 1962. It is really a collection of pessaries, their sum total being a distillation of Mr. Schuster's many years as one of trade publishing's most creative and unconventional editors. In just twenty-four trenchant comments, he offers a lifetime of advice to any young editor ready to read them, remember them, and, when possible, act upon them.

Since their first appearance over thirty years ago, I have heard many of these comments quoted at publishing seminars, sales meetings, editors' symposia, and wherever publishing people meet to discuss the latest metamorphosis of the publishing industry. Except for a reference to "the moment of truth . . . when you ask yourself the $64 question," they have not dated; they could have been written this year, this month, or this week. Even in our current age of bigness and emphasis on the bottom line, some things in publishing just don't change—things like editorial integrity, taste, and dedication. And I hope they never will!

*A reference to a popular 1940s radio quiz show, upon which The $64,000 Question television show of the 1950s was based.—Ed.

The great danger in applying for a job is that you might get it. If you are willing to take that as a calculated risk, I will set down some possibly helpful suggestions in the form of a few short sentences based on long experience.

II

You ask for the distinction between the terms "editor" and "publisher": An editor selects manuscripts; a publisher selects editors.

III

An editor's function doesn't begin with a complete manuscript formally submitted to him, all neatly packaged and ready to go to press. Almost the first lesson you must learn is that authors (or their agents) frequently submit not manuscripts, but ideas for manuscripts, and give you the privilege of "bidding blind." You are lucky if you can see an outline and a sample chapter first. Sometimes you don't even see a single word.

IV

A good editor must think and plan and decide as if he were a publisher, and conversely a good publisher must function as if he were an editor; to his "sense of literature" he must add a sense of arithmetic. He cannot afford the luxury of being color-blind. He must be able to distinguish between black ink and red.
V

It is not enough to "like" or "dislike" a manuscript, or an idea or a blueprint for a book. You must know and be able to tell convincingly and persuasively why you feel as you do about a submission.

VI

Don't pass judgment on a manuscript as it is, but as it can be made to be.

VII

Forget all clichés and myths about a "balanced list." If you think in such terms you will soon be stricken with hardening of the categories.

VIII

The greatest joy and the highest privilege of a creative editor is to touch life at all points and discover needs still unmet—and find the best authors to meet them.

IX

There are times when you must finally say: "Although this is a bad idea, it is also badly written."

X

Learn patience—sympathetic patience, creative patience—so that you will not be dismayed when you ask an author how his new book is coming along, and he tells you: "It's finished—all I have to do now is write it."

XI

Master the art of skimming, skipping, scanning, and sampling—the technique of reading part of a manuscript all the way through. You will have to learn when you can safely use this technique, and when you must read every single line, every single word.

XII

Learn to read with a pencil—not simply to note possible revisions and corrections, but to indicate both to yourself and to your colleagues ideas for promotion and advertising that may be activated many months later. Such ideas will be infinitely better if you spell them out while you are excited and inspired with the thrill of discovering the author or the book.

XIII

Deliberately practice the art of reducing to a short sentence or two the basic theme or impact of a book. You will have to learn to put the quintessence of the book on the back of a visiting card. This will later give you the nucleus for your editorial report, your jacket copy, your publisher's preview, your letters to reviewers, opinion-makers, salesmen, and booksellers.

XIV

Don't worry too much about mistakes you make deliberately; that is, disappointments and failures that may come from taking a calculated risk. Editing and publishing are risk-taking professions—sometimes they are wild gambles.

XV

Don't follow current vogues and fads, and never think of doing "another" book imitating the best-seller of the moment. Start trends, don't follow them.
XVI

Give great weight to an author's potential for growth—and to the long-life "survival value" of a given book for your backlist—a criterion far more crucial than immediate sales appeal.

XVII

If you are prepared to cast your affirmative vote for a book because of its prestige value—treating it realistically as a succès de fiasco or a flop d'estime—spell out the reasons for your enthusiasm, and calculate the fiscal arithmetic, so that you know just how much you are willing or prepared to lose.

XVIII

If you feel you must enlist the aid and advice of a recognized authority or specialist on a given subject, remember that an expert frequently avoids all the small errors as he sweeps on to the grand fallacy. A truly creative editor must become an expert on experts.

XIX

Don't be dismayed or disheartened if you learn that another publisher is getting out another book on the same subject. Far more important than being the first, be willing to settle for the best.

XX

Welcome suggestions and recommendations from your sales staff and your promotion and advertising colleagues, but resist any pressures that will be exerted by them for "sure things" and easy compromises.

An Open Letter to a Would-be Editor

XXI

Forget or disregard any glib oversimplifications about "the reading public." There is no such thing as one reading public.

XXII

Learn to win the confidence of your authors before the book is published, during the publication process, and after the book is released. Unless you inspire and enlist such confidence and cooperation, you will find yourself going back to the early days when the booksellers were also publishers, and the relationship between an author and a publisher was a relationship between a knife and a throat.

XXIII

For an editor the moment of truth comes when you ask yourself the $64 question: Would you buy this book if it were published by some other firm? This challenge, this test, can be expressed in many rule-of-thumb formulas, such as these: Stab any page and see if it bleeds. Do you feel that if you skip a paragraph you will miss an experience? Does it make the hair on the back of your neck stand on end (this test was suggested by A. E. Housman). But all these criteria come back to the two basic questions: Would you put your own money on the line to buy the book you are considering and, even more important, would you want to keep it in your own library—so much so that you will be happy to find it there years later, and look forward to the joy not only of reading it but of rereading it?

Always remember that you are being watched and judged by your colleagues and by your publisher, by authors, agents, booksellers, critics, and reviewers. They will rate you not on any single success or failure, but on your overall batting average. Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, Mickey Mantle, and Roger Maris became world-famous champions by batting between .300 and .400—or somewhere between three and four hits for every ten times at bat. Therefore, within reasonable limits, you can luxuriate in integrity by acting with courage, with imagination, and above all, with the creative motivation that means fulfillment.
Are Editors Necessary?

Richard Curtis

Richard Curtis has been a successful literary agent for over thirty years. His monthly column has appeared in Locus, a science-fiction trade publication, for over a dozen years. It has served as the basis for two books, How to Be Your Own Literary Agent and Beyond the Bestseller. He is also the author of some fifty other books of fiction and nonfiction. He has received an Edgar Award nomination for his first mystery novel and two awards from Playboy for his humor pieces.

"It takes as much courage to love a book, in many ways, as it does to love a person, and sometimes there is as much at stake. But there can be no love without responsibility, and no responsibility without fortitude," says Richard Curtis in this revision of his controversial, trenchant essay, which is every bit as challenging as its provocative title. Noting that today the trade book editor spends more time acquiring than line editing, he finds that "whether we like it or not, the responsibility for well-edited books is shifting to authors." Mr. Curtis recognizes that the multiple roles editors must play in today's complex publishing industry make them "professional company men and women" but urges them to maintain their editorial integrity and convictions by fighting hard for the writers they believe in, for the books they feel must be published. "If editors are to remain more than entertaining luncheon hosts, if they are to be not merely necessary but indispensable, they will have to continue resisting the pressures toward homogeneity and mediocrity that are arrayed against them by the monolith of Big Publishing."