



## **The 7 Question Interview with Jonathan Lyons**

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Please let us know who you are, your company, and some of your clients:

My name is Jonathan Lyons. I am a licensed attorney and President of Lyons Literary LLC, a full service literary agency in New York. I provide comprehensive assistance to writers in all areas relating to their intellectual property. I represent authors writing in a variety of genres, including narrative nonfiction, sports, pop culture, biography, history, food, crime/mysteries, urban fantasy, science fiction, and literary fiction. Some of my clients include: Lorraine Bodger, Larry Fondation, Ed Wright, David Oppegaard, Joe Starita, Jaye Wells, Holly Denham, Eric Miles Williamson, and the Estate of Sloan Wilson. I am also co-agent in the United States for three British literary agencies.

So our readers may fully understand the role of an agent, please tell us how you make contact with an editor at a major house once you have a manuscript you are interested in.

If I am interested in representing a manuscript I'll first enter into an agency agreement with the author. From there usually I'll ask for a few rounds of revisions, and once the manuscript is ready I'll start contacting select editors at publishing houses and then submit the work (I'll usually have a good list of editors formed in my mind already from reading the work). I'll send the manuscript along by email or hard copy along with a cover letter that summarizes the work and provides an author biography.

When reviewing a submission, what do you look for:

I reject most of the material I receive quickly and easily - either it's just not in my range of interests or in my opinion the writing just isn't good enough. From there I start looking for other things – character development, pacing, voice, etc. – and how I personally feel as a reader as I review it. Finally, I'll evaluate the viability of the project in the marketplace. I then weigh all these factors and decide whether to offer representation.



Any suggestions or comments on how a writer can break into the publishing industry:

Write, write, and write some more. It almost always takes a few tries before you start finding your voice. I also suggest researching the industry thoroughly, and submitting widely to agents. Finally, perseverance. That story you heard about that person who wrote and sold their book in their spare time for a million dollars is not the norm! It usually takes time, lots of practice, lots of rejection, and sheer stubbornness to become a successful writer.

Aside from excellent writing skills, what are the literary factors that make an author successful?

Writing about something that you're interested in and that you think others will be interested in too – I can tell when reading if you're not passionate about the subject. Also, conduct yourself professionally at all times – you never know who might be in a position to help or hurt your career in the future.

What are your feelings concerning traditional publishing houses versus smaller vanity press houses or self-publishing?

At the moment I still feel that the best outlet for publication in most cases is with traditional publishing houses. Simply, authors will get the editorial, marketing, and sales support that is unavailable with vanity presses and self-publishing models without paying extensive fees. However, I do believe that traditional publishers need to make improvements to their business model to address long-standing problems and those arising as a result of the new digital age, and failure to do so will result in more business shifting to vanity presses.

Are there any upcoming releases associated with your agency that you would like to tell our readers about?

Bantam Dell will be releasing Kelly Meding's debut urban fantasy *Three Days to Dead* in November. It's one of the most inventive and fantastic debuts I've seen in a long time, and it's gotten wonderful blurbs from bestselling authors Patricia Briggs, Gena Showalter, Jeaniene Frost, Jackie Kessler, and more. Also, Bram Stoker Finalist David Oppegaard has a new novel coming out, *Wormwood Nevada*, and early next year Chronicle will release *Straight Down the Middle*, Josh Karp's hilarious quest to explain the link between golf and spirituality while improving his golf swing and personal life.

WritingRaw.com would like to thank Jonathan Lyons for taking the time out of his busy schedule for this interview.