

Article AB-101

594 words

[DanPoynter@ParaPublishing.com](mailto:DanPoynter@ParaPublishing.com)

1-800-PARAPUB

## **. . . and Last But Not Least: Fact Checking**

by Dan Poynter

Nonfiction writers have long realized that they have a responsibility to their readers, to their own credibility and to history to check all the facts they repeat in their books. The challenge increases today due to the fast growth in our knowledge base and the quick changes in our technology. An interesting recent example will encourage us to add one more item to our checklist before we go to press.

At Para Publishing, we produce several publishing-industry books, reports, mailing lists and other databases. More important, we “maintain” them. This maintenance is becoming increasingly time-consuming.

We recently returned to press with the *The Self-Publishing Manual*. Just prior to sending the revised pages off for typesetting, we spot checked some of the addresses. Alarmed, we asked the editor Karen Stedman to contact each supplier listed in the 62-page Resource Section. She discovered an astounding 85% of the addresses had changed in just 13 months!

Most changes were area codes. We all know that after a few months, the telephone companies replace the “change” recording with “That number is no longer in service.” Most people assume the company is out of business. It takes some detective work to find the new code and test it. Next to area codes, email addresses change often too. We found that many more companies have web sites to list. We even found some companies had new street addresses and some had gone out of business.

The lesson? Do not copy resources out of other books and directories and assume they are current. You must call to check every one.

If you do not verify addresses, you will receive calls (to your toll-free number) asking for new addresses. Now we all like to hear from our readers but we do not need "non-revenue calls".

Mailing to them for verification will not work. Over 50% will not get around to replying. Use the telephone but you will save time and money letting someone else do it. People love to talk to authors so fact checking often turns into some long conversations. The caller may also ask for additional information about products, services and anticipated area code changes. That will make your new book or revision even better.

This sudden realization about fact checking could be called "the bad news" but "the good news" is that the small press is winning out over the big publishers once again. It takes a large (New York) publisher 18 months to turn a manuscript into a book. In a year-and-a-half, the references are hopelessly out of date. Secondly, larger publishers rarely issue a revision of a book. They may reprint but they usually avoid the cost of new typesetting. Smaller publishers keep their books alive for years by revising each printing. We invest the time and money in revising because we want our readers to have the latest information and because we want the best for our offspring (a book in this case.)

In your final editing and proofing, just before going to press, call every person and company listed in the text. If the project is delayed more than 30 days between calling and going to press, call again.

---

### **Writing periodicals:**

**Dan Poynter** does not want you to die with a book still inside you. You have the ingredients and he has your recipe. Dan has written more than 100 books since 1969 including *Writing Nonfiction* and *The Self-Publishing Manual*. For more help on book writing, see <http://ParaPub.com>.

© 2003

or

### **Book Publishing periodicals:**

**Dan Poynter**, the Voice of Self-Publishing, has written more than 100 books since 1969 including *Writing Nonfiction* and *The Self-Publishing Manual*. Dan is a past vice-president of the Publishers Marketing Association. For more help on book publishing and promoting, see <http://ParaPub.com>.

© 2003

or

💡 **Professional Speaking periodicals:**

**Dan Poynter** has written more than 100 books since 1969 including *Writing Nonfiction* and *The Self-Publishing Manual*. He is past-chair of NSA's Writer-Publisher PEG and the founder of the PEG newsletter. For more help on book writing, publishing and promoting, see <http://ParaPublishing.com>.

© 2003

-30-