

# Researching Small Publishers

Contributed by Sid Smith  
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As a new or first-time author it's almost impossible to get noticed by the major publishing houses. Sure, some people can find their way through the maze, but the odds are slim. First time writers, especially writers of children's books, should focus instead on the small publishers. This article contains a few useful suggestions and tips on how to get published as a first time author with a small publisher.

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But, what is a "small publisher"? How do you identify "smaller" and where does one find them? And, what themes a particular "smaller" house is open to reading.

These are common questions for authors, and Harold Underdown ([www.underdown.org](http://www.underdown.org)) has some useful suggestions. He says, "By 'smaller' I mean any publisher other than the Big 6: Random House, Simon and Schuster, HarperCollins, Scholastic, Time Warner, and Penguin Putnam. These companies all have several 'imprints,' each with a slightly different focus, but all of them will generally be closed to unpublished beginners. Sometimes mid-sized publishers like Candlewick act a bit like the big companies."

How do you research the smaller companies? Start with any standard market guide such as Children's Writer's and Illustrator's Market, and cross out the imprints that are part of a big company. What's left will mostly be the smaller publishers.

It can also be useful to use a list of independent publishers (Harold has such a list on his web site), and pull out the names of the ones that have divisions related to your genre.

To find out "themes," a guide like CWIM does have an index by subject, but probably the best way is to get to know their catalogs, or browse their books when they exhibit at a local convention, or just keep up with the reviews in School Library Journal or Booklist.

It can take some time, but eventually you will start to develop an intuitive sense of what works for which publisher.