

Steven Manchester, Your Friendly Book Editor

Contributed by
Monday, 22 May 2006
Last Updated Saturday, 29 July 2006

You've gotta love a man with a thick Massachusetts accent who obviously loves all aspects of writing, helping other writers and... well, life. Steven Manchester has been writing and publishing books for over 11 years. Though Manchester has edited the work of others for several years at no charge, last year he finally began charging, turning his skills into a business. "It's a lot of work, so I had to start asking for money" says the 38-year old husband and father.
Steven Manchester - Book Editing

You've gotta love a man with a thick Massachusetts accent who obviously loves all aspects of writing, helping other writers and... well, life. Steven Manchester has been writing and publishing books for over 11 years. Though Manchester has edited the work of others for several years at no charge, last year he finally began charging, turning his skills into a business. "It's a lot of work, so I had to start asking for money" says the 38-year old husband and father.

Manchester

edits an array of styles ("from horror to more spiritual") and charges two dollars per page. "There are lots of good editors out there charging this price. Others charge five, which is ridiculous." He strongly urges that before you send your manuscript to any agent or publisher that you have it professionally edited. "The only thing you should spend money on is your editor," he advises. "Don't pay an agent up front and don't enter writing contests where you pay up front. Put the money into your writing."

Say you-lucky you-have finished your manuscript and send it off to Manchester.

What journey does it take while you're at home pacing the carpet? "I do a line by line edit for grammar. Then edit for character inconsistencies, continuity and overall story... I'll give notes on story gaps."

When you send your baby in, Manchester offers some advice. {quotes}"Don't send out a manuscript with a coffee stain, dog-eared pages, and three different shades of paper-this says something about how you view your work."{/quotes} Manchester recommends double-spaced pages, in courier font at 12.5 points-there needs to be enough space for the editor to write notes. "Some people try to haggle because the manuscript is double-spaced-don't do that... The price takes that into consideration."

It's up to you to do what you want with the notes, but weigh each one before you dismiss it. Manchester also helps out with book proposals and press releases-key elements in getting the word out about your book once it's fine-tuned. Manchester makes himself available for questions and minor edits once he's sent the manuscript back to the writer. Some editors will cut you off when they're done. Writers should beware of that possibility.

Manchester

confesses that it took him a while to find his own voice. Not until his book, *The Unexpected Storm: The Gulf War Legacy*, a memoir about his experiences in the Gulf War, was he satisfied with his writing style. He'd written three previous books under a pen name before *The Unexpected Storm*. Manchester can spot writers who haven't found their voice yet. "I've sent checks back to people saying that what the manuscript needed was a rewrite, not an edit." He'll say up front that the writer hasn't found their voice. Though he says, "I'm probably friendlier than some other editors".

Aside from ratty-looking manuscripts, there are other common mistakes that bother Manchester.

"There is no excuse for misspelled words. Everyone has a computer that checks for that," he says. When teaching classes he recommends the Magic 3 Rule. "Write your manuscript then put it in a drawer for one month, preferably two. Then look at it with fresh eyes and do an edit. Do a third edit and then it should be ready for a professional editor to take a look at." He tells first time writers to aim for 260-300 pages. "Six hundred pages," he sighs, "is too much to ask. Keep it simple... don't go overboard with language."

Talking to the editors and asking other people questions about them is also recommended. "The best way to find an editor is through referrals. If you've written a horror book make sure the editor you choose likes that particular genre. Many people actually don't check for this. Seriously-you won't get a fair edit if you don't check them out... Some editors will do a hack job to your manuscript." A good editor will not get defensive if you ask them lots of questions-if they do-it's a red flag.

Manchester

leads a busy life. He has three kids, freelance edits, recently completed three screenplays, has a book coming out on Sunpiper Press, AND holds down a full time job! He writes when his two-year-old daughter goes to bed-gets in an hour or two here or there. "My number one priority is my wife and family, my job is second and that's to feed my first priority and then the third is writing." He says he doesn't have hobbies because of his obsession with writing. "I don't watch TV, like all this reality stuff-I don't feel like I'm missing out. I'd rather live reality."

Steven Manchester

The father of two sons and one beautiful, little girl, Steven Manchester is the published author of *The Unexpected Storm: The Gulf War Legacy*, *Jacob Evans, A Father's Love*, *Warp II*; and *At The Stroke of Midnight*, as well as several books under the pseudonym, Steven Herberts. His work has been showcased in such national literary journals as *Taproot Literary Review*, *American Poetry Review* and *Fresh! Literary Magazine*. Steven is an accomplished speaker, and currently teaches the popular workshop *Write A Book, Get Published & Promote Your Work*. Three of his screenplays have also been produced as films. When not spending time with his children, writing, teaching, or promoting his published books/films, this Massachusetts author speaks publicly to troubled children through the "Straight Ahead" Program.

See: www.StevenManchester.com