

Writing for partwork magazines

As Christmas approaches now is the time that all those partwork magazines begin appearing on the shelves of news agents and the cheesy TV adverts announcing their release start to dominate the commercial breaks. 'But what is a partwork magazine?' I hear you ask. The term 'partwork' in this literary sense relates to those magazines that are released as a series – where one magazine is released a week (the first is usually cheaper to get you hooked into collecting the remainder). Partwork magazines work wonderfully for children, as they can collect their magazine each week, slowly building up a collection of information on Dinosaurs, Fairies or Barbie. They also work well with adults who have a special interest in either a particular subject matter such as cooking, or who are particularly interested in collecting items, such as pennies or precious stones.

Three of the biggest publishing houses for partwork magazines are 'GE FABBRI', 'DE AGOSTINI' and 'HACHETTE PARTWORKS'. Recent partwork series' released by these publishing houses include: 'Dora Dress Up and Go', 'Doctor Who DVD files', 'Shrek's Quests', 'Hello Kitty Party' and 'Tiger Time'.

So, if you are interested in writing for or working with partwork magazines, how do you go about this? Well the first important fact to know is that most partwork magazines now outsource the writing and editing of their magazines to parties known as 'packagers' – primarily because this works out to be a cheaper way to work for the publishing houses. So, if you are looking to write or edit a partwork magazine, you are better off approaching the packager companies directly as opposed to those houses that publish the partwork magazines.

Packager companies do at times consider working with freelancers for writing and editing. Their advice is to send in your CV with clear evidence of your experience of writing and editing that relates to this project. They also ask that you make it very clear in your CV whether you are a Generalist writer or a Specialist writer when it comes to partwork magazines. A partwork writer can deal on the surface with most subject matters, whereas a specialist really knows their stuff in one or two specific fields. Both types of writers are needed when it comes to partwork magazines, but it is helpful to state which camp you fall into, so to speak.

If however you have an idea for a brand new partwork magazine then it might be worth approaching the publishing company directly, as they will hold the budget and thus will be the body that gives that crucial 'yes' response to a new partwork magazine idea.

When it comes to pitching a new partwork magazine idea to a publishing company make sure you have done your market research. Who will this magazine collection appeal to? Why? And can you demonstrate that this appeal is real? Remember, in reality your greatest market audiences for partwork magazines are;

- a) Children
- b) Nostalgia lovers
- c) Men and women who are prone to collecting

It is difficult to get a partwork magazine idea agreed. Partwork magazines are expensive to produce and usually require an advertising campaign bill of at least £1 million. But try not to let this fact completely put you off pitching an idea – just think of the satisfaction you'd feel if it were to be accepted!