

Rebel Writers

A new guide for writers offers this advice: Don't sweat the small stuff

BY CHERYL DELLECESE Queries, simultaneous submissions, SASEs.... If you're a freelance writer, you're probably well aware of how these mainstays of the publishing profession can be the bane of your existence. But they needn't be. A new guide for writers encourages freelancers to worry less about the formalities and, instead, pay more attention to what matters most: the writing and reporting.

The Renegade Writer: A Totally Unconventional Guide to Freelance Writing Success debunks many writing-submission myths and provides countless tips on finding success as a freelance writer. "The majority of books for freelancers push tired old 'rules,'" says coauthor Diana Burrell '88. "I have seen

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Diana Burrell '88 and
Linda Formichelli
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more beginning freelance careers come to quick ends because writers get obsessed by how wide the margins should be on their query letters."

Burrell herself almost succumbed to perhaps one of the greatest myths of free-

lance writing: that it's nearly impossible to make a living at it. After graduating from Smith, she worked as an assistant at a small ad agency in Connecticut and then continually jumped agencies as she climbed the advertising/marketing success ladder. But more promotions meant less hands-on creativity, and Burrell's dream to write nagged at her more than ever. "The good news is that motivated me to change my life," she says. Burrell enrolled in a graduate writing program at Wesleyan University and gave her first article proposal to a fellow student, who was an editor at a regional magazine. A few weeks later, she had an assignment—despite the fact that her proposal was two pages long, single-spaced, and didn't come with an SASE.

Now a successful freelance writer (as is coauthor Linda Formichelli) living outside of Boston with her husband and toddler son, Burrell's credits include *Psychology Today*, *Parenting*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *The Writer*. She's also conducting workshops based on the book's concepts throughout New England, and, this winter, in Florida.

"Being a freelancer is always tough," admits Burrell. "But if you turn in solid, well-researched proposals, deliver interesting articles that are well-reported, and don't flake out during edits, you're doing great. If you go beyond that, you'll never hurt for work—and to find out how to do that, you've got to read our book!"

