

## INTERVIEW WITH LISA MANGUM

I'm sitting on the manuscript of my first novel. What do I need to do to get it published? What are the first steps?.

Publishing can be a long and winding road, so it's best to think about your goals and your manuscript before you start down the road. One important question to ask yourself is do you want to be published by a traditional, national market publisher (Random House or Simon & Schuster, for example), or do you want to be published by a regional publisher (Deseret Book, for example), or do you want to self-publish your story? Knowing where you want your book to end up is critical in choosing the path to take.

If you are taking the national market road, then the first thing you'll need is an agent. Many (if not all) national publishers do not accept unsolicited manuscripts, so your agent will be the one who gets your work in front of an editor to buy. Finding an agent can be hard and will require some research on your part. AgentQuery.com is filled with tips and advice on how to find an agent and how to craft the perfect query letter.

If you choose a regional publisher, you may or may not need to find an agent first. Many regional or small presses work directly with the author to acquire a manuscript. Read all the submission guidelines for each publisher as there may be subtle differences from company to company. Following the guidelines is your first chance to make a good impression on a publisher (or an agent for that matter).

If self-publishing is the road you choose, then the work is up to you. Unlike with national or regional publishers, a self-published author will need to find and hire a professional editor and designer to work on the book. Again, some research will be required. (Some valuable websites

include [wattpad.com](http://wattpad.com) and [createspace.com](http://createspace.com).)

Another early step in the publishing process is crafting a query letter. You'll need such a letter to find either an agent or submit to a regional publishing house. A query letter can be intimidating—How do I sum up all the cool things about my book in a one-page letter?—but it can be done. One good method to get started is to write a paragraph answering the following four questions: (1) Who is the protagonist? (2) What is the goal? (3) What is the obstacle preventing success? (4) What is the consequence of failure?

Finally, remember to be patient with the querying and publishing process. It can take up to a year to submit your manuscript and hear back from a publishing house. Don't worry if it takes a long time—just get to work writing your next book.

There are a lot of books and writers out there. Is it unrealistic to have the goal of publishing a book?

There are many important differences, iAbsolutely not! Yes, there are a lot of books and writers out there, but there are also a lot of publishers and ways to be

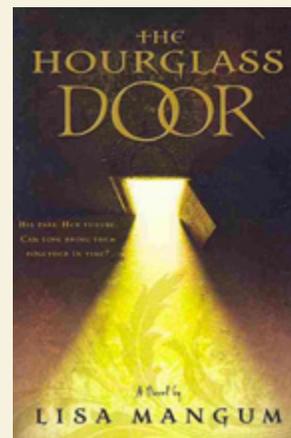
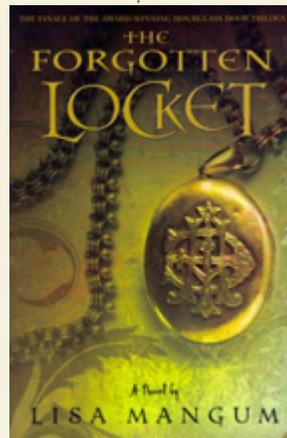
published. Every writer was, at one point, a first-time, unpublished author looking for a break. Yes, the journey can be hard, but I've been in the publishing world for more than 15 years now, and I still believe that the best books rise to the top and find a path to publication. Set your goals, keep writing, and celebrate every success you achieve.

What advice do you have for aspiring writers seeking to improve the quality of their writing?

I think all authors continue to strive to improve the quality of their work; you always want your next book to be your best one. But how do you do that?

First, read. Read everything you can get your hands on. Read books in your genre; read books out of your genre. Read well-written books and poorly written books. The more you read, the more you develop an instinct for what works and what doesn't. It also helps you know what kinds of stories are being published and which trends are waxing and waning.

While instinct is helpful, it isn't everything, which is why the second bit of advice is to write. The more you write, the



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more practice you have writing. Perhaps that sounds too basic, but sometimes the only way to become better at a skill is to just practice it every day.

The corollary of this advice is to be patient with yourself while you are practicing. Don't tell yourself that everything you write has to be perfect the first time; that way lies madness. Be flexible and forgive yourself when you write something that you later have to delete. Writing is a process, not perfection.

Also, I am a big believer in attending writing conferences and networking with other writers. Conferences are wonderful places to learn more about the craft of writing, or to take a class in a specific area where you feel you need help (dialogue, characterization, plot/pacing). Two of my favorite conferences in Utah are LDStory-makers.com and "Life, the Universe, and Everything" (LTUE.net).



Lisa Mangum has loved and worked with books ever since elementary school, when she volunteered at the school library during recess. Her first paying job was shelving books at the Sandy Library. She worked for five years at Waldenbooks while she attended the University of Utah, graduating with honors with a degree in English. An avid reader of all genres, she has worked in the publishing department for Deseret Book since 1997.

Besides books, Lisa loves movies, spending time with her family, trips to Disneyland, and vanilla ice cream topped with fresh raspberries. She lives in Taylorsville, Utah, with her husband, Tracy.

She is the author of the award-winning Hourglass Door trilogy and After Hello.