

## Crowdfunding Your Novel

by James Ellis.



Writing novels is an odd occupation. You spend a lot of time imagining worlds and events that don't exist, and then even more time capturing those imaginings in printed squiggles hoping that when people read them, they might imagine something similar. Very odd.

Of course, when you're deep in the final third of your book and wondering whether the preceding sixty-thousand words make any sense at all, the bit about people reading your work is a secondary consideration. Your assumption is that if you like it then somebody else will like it too. Perhaps a lot of somebodies. Perhaps even those somebodies on the Man Booker committee. Because what you're writing is good stuff, it's great stuff; it needs to be read. Right?

### Perhaps.

It would be nice to have some real-world affirmation along the way. It would also be nice, in a time of diminishing margins, fewer high street outlets and little window space for debut novelists, to find a well-respected publisher willing to be a bit more adventurous.

### Cue Unbound Books and crowdfunding.

Unbound is the trading name of United Authors Publishing and they are a curated crowdfunding publisher. They distribute through Penguin Random House and have an impressive list of authors. The 'curated' aspect of Unbound means that they are as choosy as any mainstream publisher but because the



production costs of structural editing, copy editing, proofreading, graphic design and printing are raised by people investing in the project, they are less risk-averse and more willing to take a chance on an unknown writer.

Which is just as well for me, because I am an unknown writer and they are publishing my first novel, *The Wrong Story*. This is very exciting and quite scary. The process was straightforward: I pitched my idea, waited about six weeks, and then they emailed me with their decision. In my experience that's pretty fast. Thank goodness they liked it. We signed a contract and I was given my own pages on the Unbound web site and access to their experience and knowledge in publishing.

### That's the exciting bit.

The scary bit is seeking the investors who will pledge money to the project, the people who will fund the production of my book. Unbound are very active on my behalf but the bringing in of pledges is largely down to me. And I have an innate



aversion to asking anybody for anything. I deal with it by bearing in mind that it's not about me. It's not me being funded, it's the project, the book. And like you with your writing, I want my story to be read too.

So I ask my family and friends, my colleagues and ex-colleagues, neighbours, book clubs, reading groups, creative writing students and yes, writing magazines. I tweet, email and I am planning to stand in the town centre and hand out flyers. It's hard work but enjoyable and energising because I'm involved in the whole process. It's my book, after all.

Would I recommend this new paradigm in publishing to other writers? Absolutely. The knowledge that Unbound believe in *The Wrong Story* as much as I do is hugely encouraging. It's one thing to write a story in the hope that it will be read, quite another to know it *will* be read. It also puts the author in touch with readers in a way that would otherwise be unlikely to happen. Who better than the author to explain to the world what the book is about and why it needs to be read? Those printed squiggles mean a lot. They're all we have.

I signed the contract with Unbound five weeks ago and as I write this, I have reached 53% of my target. Pledgers are making my book and the books of others, happen.

And that's the beauty of this model. It's not about publishers or agents and outlets. It's about readers and writers. It's about readers and writers taking control of the fiction and allowing it to flow.

**And in my book, that's not odd at all.**

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James lives in Bath and writes fiction. He is a graduate of Oxford University's MSt in Creative Writing and has had a number of flash fiction and short stories published as well as a travelogue of his journey through Central America. For more information on James, visit [www.ellisdae.com](http://www.ellisdae.com) and to pledge for his novel, *The Wrong Story*, visit <https://unbound.co.uk/books/the-wrong-story>.

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