

Connie McIntyre, M.Ed.



Author, Publisher, Bookmaker
Books from the Heart™ and Thumbprint Press
www.BooksFromTheHeart.com

SLWG Member Since 1999
SLWG Vice President 2000, 2001, 2002

SLWG: Judging by your website, you seem to have a varied and unique book business. Can you summarize what you do?

CMc: I'm happy to! I provide a full range of publishing services: interviewing, writing, editing, book design, printing, hand or commercial binding, and order fulfillment. My clients pick and choose the services that meet their needs. I have also published and marketed some of my own writing for children, under my Thumbprint Press imprint.

SLWG: How did this all get started?

CMc: I've always enjoyed writing. It was a favorite part of my work as an elementary teacher and as a special education teacher and evaluator. Later, when I stayed at home with my young children, I began to explore other types of writing and to experiment with bookmaking.

SLWG: What kinds of writing did you do?

CMc: I taught writing at a community college. I also wrote for two newspapers, the *New Jersey Herald* and the *Sparta Independent*. I had a biweekly column and wrote feature stories and education articles. And I wrote a lot for my children. In addition to our reading at bedtime, they began asking for bedtime stories. Specifically, they wanted to hear stories about me when I was a little girl. Their interest initiated a flurry of writing and bookmaking about my childhood and family history.

SLWG: How did you make the leap from bedtime storytelling to bookmaking?

CMc: I owe it all to my mother! *Truly!* My mother is an amazingly creative woman who will try anything. She had read a small newspaper article about making simple books by hand. When she decided to use the furry lining of an old coat to make a teddy bear for my oldest daughter, she remembered the article and decided to also make a book about the bear's journey from new coat to old coat to furry friend. I will never forget how powerful it was for my daughter—and for me—to open that birthday package and find a book made just for her.

SLWG: What a gift!

CMc: It was very moving. My mother went on to experiment with other creative outlets but I was hooked on bookmaking. I made books for my family constantly and feverishly, late into the night! My friends began asking me to make books for them, too, and then their friends began asking, and it just grew.

My hobby truly became a business when my local newspaper ran a story about my bookmaking adventures. I received a call from a woman who wanted to make a series of five books about her elderly mother, who had lived a full and interesting life and had lots of stories to share. She wanted her mother's stories to be captured and preserved for their family. We worked for several years to create the series of hand-bound books for her family and became best friends. Now, years later, we're working together again, producing the books commercially for several niche markets. She's marvelously creative.

SLWG: So that is how you began publishing memoirs by hand?

CMc: That's right. I have a lifelong love of hearing about "the good old days." I'm passionate about it, really. And people have a desire and need to capture their family stories. Publishing by hand makes it possible for them to preserve their stories in unique and beautiful keepsake books—"coffee table books" that can be passed on to their children and grandchildren.

SLWG: Do you still work primarily with families and family stories?

CMc: My business keeps changing. I publish a variety of work at this point. I've produced hand-bound books of travel or adventure memoirs and of the history of a child's art—the books can really be anything a person wants them to be. Through the years, I've worked more and more with people who have stories that are directed toward

a wider audience: poetry collections, children's picture books, educational books, business histories...

SLWG: Are these books bound by hand, too?

CMc: No, hand binding is only viable when making a few copies. These books are produced in volume, commercially bound, and sold through bookstores and elsewhere. I coordinate and oversee the commercial printing of these books for my clients.

SLWG: You mentioned earlier that you've published some of your own work.

CMc: My newest book was released in March of this year. *Flowers for Grandpa Dan: A Gentle Story to Help Children Understand Alzheimer's Disease* is loosely based on my family's up-close experience with this dreadful disease—it was a way to share this difficult chapter of my family's story with others who are living with Alzheimer's disease. I'm especially proud that this beautiful book is illustrated by my oh-so-talented mother and that it includes a section provided by the Alzheimer's Association, St. Louis chapter. We've had excellent reviews and a great response nationwide.

A few years ago, I teamed up with a talented local author to create a lively book of children's poetry: *Upside Downside Inside Out ~ Poems about Being a Kid*. Amy Glaser Gage and I wrote each poem together, designed and produced the book, and have shared it with thousands of kids through schools and libraries in the St. Louis area. Actually, it has gone far beyond St. Louis via videoconference classes through CSD [Cooperating School Districts]. We've had a great time writing and performing poetry with kids—they're so in touch with their creativity.

SLWG: It sounds like you enjoy your contact with children.

CMc: I've made sure to have opportunities to be in the classroom because I do enjoy working with children. In addition to the poetry classes and workshops, I will be teaching playwriting this year through a unique program jointly sponsored by Springboard to Learning and the Repertory Theatre. I also teach bookmaking classes for adults and children of all ages. It is such a joy to see a child, especially, begin with an idea, write and revise and edit a text, plan a book layout, print and illustrate book pages, and bind his or her creation by hand. It is a powerful experience that often awakens, and always deepens, a child's love of the written word.

SLWG: Children creating their own original storybooks—how wonderful!

CMc: Yes, I've developed quite a simple method of bookmaking that I've used with children as young as first grade. The same method is explained step-by-step in my *Handmade Books from the Heart Kits*, which I've been producing since 1998. The kits include all the necessary bookmaking materials and have been used successfully by experienced as well as beginning bookmakers of all ages. Anyone can make a book, really.

SLWG: Anyone?

CMc: Yes! It's a wonderful experience. Very holistic—from initial inspired concept to book-in-hand.

SLWG: Do you focus entirely on bookmaking?

CMc: I do other writing as well. I write a lot of poetry and occasionally I share it. My poems have been prizewinners in several SLWG contests and I sold a poem to *Mothering* magazine. I've written educational materials for McGraw-Hill and Scholastic, and I have enjoyed that. I designed and edited the 2003 and 2005 St. Louis Writers Guild Membership Directories and I'm just finishing work on the commemorative program booklet for "A Celebration of St. Louis Writing," the Guild's 85th Anniversary event later this month.

My primary focus is on books, though. It's a mission, really. Everyone has something important to say. I want people to have the opportunity to be heard...to have a voice.

CONNIE'S MEMBERSHIPS

St. Louis Writers Guild (Vice President 2000-2003)
Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (State Presenter, 2000)
St. Louis Publishers Association (Featured Author, Book Festival 2004)

CONNIE'S PUBLICATIONS

Flowers for Grandpa Dan: A gentle story to help children understand Alzheimer's disease: Authored and published, Copyright 2005, Published by Thumbprint Press, imprint of Connie McIntyre, Publisher.

Piggly Wiggly Lessons: Conversations for Transforming Schools: Edited and published, Copyright 2005, Written by Phil Hunsberger, Ed.D., Published by Connie McIntyre, Publisher.

Into the Unknown: Coauthored with Amy Glaser Gage, Copyright 2004, Published online by Build-a-Bear Co.

High Styles: Stories from a World Class Hairdresser, Coauthored and designed, Copyright 2004, Published by iUniverse.

Stares to Other Places, Roots and Paths, and Come With Me: Edited volumes of poetry, Copyrights 2003/2004, Publishers vary.

Dozens of custom handmade books, ongoing since 1994.

Upside Downside Inside Out ~ Poems about Being a Kid and *Upside Downside Inside Out ~ A Zippy Poetry Guide for Teachers—Grades K-5*: Coauthored and published with Amy Glaser Gage, Copyrights 2001, 2003, Published by Thumbprint Press, an imprint of Connie McIntyre, Publisher.

Old Marie: Wrote and published biography, Copyright 2002, Published by Books from the Heart™, imprint of Connie McIntyre, Publisher.

Stories and skills selections for Scholastic, Inc.: Reading Skills Kit, 1999, and Lesson plans for McGraw-Hill Reading 2000 teacher's guide, 1999.

Handmade Books From the Heart Kits™: Authored, designed, and continue to manufacture, Kit to create one hardcover handmade book, including text; Copyright 1998, Published by Books from the Heart™, an imprint of Connie McIntyre, Publisher.

"My Daughter at Age Fourteen," Authored, Poem, Published in *Mothering* magazine, 1998.

A Good River Day: Authored, Children's picture book, Ladybug Press, 1997

Numerous newspaper columns and articles, written for *Sparta Independent* and *New Jersey Herald*, 1995-1997.

CONNIE'S WEBSITE

Visit Connie's website at <http://www.booksfromtheheart.com/thumbpress.htm>