

# Creative-Hyphenate

An article by Hazel Edwards OAM

Booksbywomen.org  
June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015



'What do you do?'

I used to say 'I'm an author'. Now I'm not sure.

The challenge for many free lancers in the creative arts is to describe their occupation. Usually they have several skills in their portfolio for artistic challenge, variety AND in order to pay the bills. Last week, a 4 year old told me that an author was a book teacher. True.

And recently I was given the obscure term ' Creative Hyphenate.'

My business card has 'Authorpreneur' and that's been a great talking point which sold copies of 'Authorpreneurship; The Business of Creativity'. And also upset a few who thought I couldn't spell.

Multi-tasking is the norm for most writers. Usually they have families, 'other' paying jobs and maybe even a romantic life. In between they acquire digital media skills, marketing, formatting, actually write books or scripts, fill in their BAS or tax statements, keep their books and write them. Event management of book launches, photo shoots, web-self-management, newsletters, transferring visuals between various systems and managing Skype webchat interviews, legal rights or contracts and speaking on panels or radio is the norm. Not to mention, researching in odd places so their facts will be accurate about outback, Antarctica or forensic science.

Recently I was asked to take on an intern and needed to list the kinds of skills necessary in my occupation. A bit of a shock for me but not for her. The skills diversity was why she was interested.

So what were my occupational skills? Mainly I write books. Or I used to. Now much of my life is literary administrivia of creative projects which cross new media. It's a bundle of skills and is constantly changing. Learning the 'process' of how something works, especially if you are self-taught' takes more time than creating original material.

Options are teach your self, delegate, pay or out-source.

So last week I decided to analyse how I spent my time and the kinds of skills involved;

Day 1. (Sunday) Updated my author talks USB which I wear as 'electronic jewellery' Two copies to replace the previous 'generic 2015 ' USB, bent in the laptop at a hosts' talk the week before. Spoke on an enjoyable panel, read 'Feymouse' picture book to camera and ran a 2 hour collaborative writing workshop at a Literary festival in a city hotel. Autographed books. Caught train so tidied emails en route as confined in train seat.

Skyped with colleague doing author tour of USA.

Start reading sample books from Queermance Lit Festival.

SKILLS: public speaking & use of digital devices.

Day 2. Fan dropped in to get Hippo book signed for not-yet-born first nephew. Did follow up Twitter PR re festival with link to my website books. Pitched 'Hijabi Girl'project via e-mail to publisher met at festival. Followed up on a few book proposals. Polish re-printed translation of 'Difficult Personalities' arrived. (Knew it was Polish because the accompanying note was in English and bookcover matches first edition).

Always a thrill to have a book translated and/or reprinted.

Requested techi help of web-master re newsletter archive on my site. Invoices & banking. Sorted story & photos for grandson's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday book on trains.

Hassles with formatting. De-cluttering files to donate manuscripts to Lu Rees Children's Literature Archives at end of the month. Started to update files and delete old e-mails.

Friends to quick lunch and game of cards. With a home office, I tend to work on 'bitsy' administrivia until guests arrive.

Skyped with New Zealand colleague about comparable business.

Sample Copyright Agency 'author in workplace' photos arrived for approval.

Great, BUT the 'quirky' one of me (clothed) in the bath as a place of getting writing ideas, was not used. Pity.

Admin e-mails relating to future interstate talks and Book Week schools. All info on my website, plus downloadable bio and hi res author photo ,but...more e-mails.

Bellydancing class, dinner and bed.

SKILLS: Web management, formatting, PR, marketing, filing, financial, PATIENCE!

Day 3. Got up at 6 am and did two hours writing for a commissioned educational project. My 'virtual intern' Corrie Skypes me on Wednesday mornings, but I had to postpone at last minute as needed to research 90 minutes drive away.

Listened to intellectual property lawyer on ABC radio en route, talking about

piracy.

Stuck at Frankston railway gates for 20 minutes, so got out of car and photographed a country train & the DING DINGS as my grandson calls the crossing warning. Later used in his birthday book. Try to do two visits in any geographic location, so met ex-teacher colleague for a coffee and exchanged educational advice on picture book about detained asylum seeker children. Walked for an hour on Frankston beach and pier. (lack will- power and once at end of pier you have no choice but to walk back.)

Daughter skypes from Copenhagen conference & sends photos of the children. Maybe if I call a plane, an air train, I can use them in his birthday book?

SKILLS: Research. Photography.

Day 4. Regular walk date with friend for an hour. (Different park every week). One hour paid consultancy on Skype with aspiring writer and sent follow up references. Contacted Islamic Museum re our Hijabi Girl project and got a courteous, instant response.

Packed 'talks' bag on wheels. Writing workshop 2.-4pm in nearby suburb. Put up Good Reads review and updated my own details there. Checked on a piracy issue and informed my publisher.

Did some online research.

SKILLS: Writing, Photography, project planning, trialling, consultancy, teaching.

Day 5. Proof-read Train photo book but unhappy about font size. Updated message tag on my e-mails (Re-learnt, as had forgotten how to). Co-writer request about rights reversions meant an hour of paper chasing and phoning. (Must improve my filing).

Swam and chatted with university colleague for an hour. Detour to library to learn uploading I books via Overdrive to compare with other systems on my own website.

London Writers' Circle want to reprint my 'Memorable Memoirs' article from my newsletter but need it in another format. Takes an hour to sort. Some of my tweets linking to the Authorpreneurship e-book have been picked up by various groups. Hopefully translates into extra e-sales.

Surveyed my proposals and about 10% get responses. E-books sales via participant copies for workshops.

Mentored a couple of my former 'hazelnuts' via e-mail comments on ms.

SKILLS: Social media, mentoring writers, proof reading, e-books. Legal.

Day 6. Judge entries for a competition. Radio interview on phone. Replied to fan mail from children including one in hospital.

Monitoring hashtags and learning how to evaluate effect.

Design PD session on Writing Non Boring Family History.

Book flights & accommodation and renegotiate times & fees.

Quick visit to Aldi because they are selling my books there, discounted along with the food. Food of the mind?

SKILLS: Travel & booking agent, Judging, interviewing, social media PR, Talks preparation.

Day 7. Wrote 4 hours of original fiction.

SKILLS: Writing books.

Total Weekly hours: Too many. Heavy reliance on Skype.

My colleague says I should be costing the income against the hours spent, as lawyers do with chargeable minutes. But writers don't, and just occasionally a quality piece of writing will have a long life and significant impact. We just don't know which ones.

'Doctors know what's inside people.' says a 4 year old.'That's their job.'

So what is MY job title?

Author-Speaker-Educator-Mentor-Authorpreneur?

—

With over 200 books published, Hazel runs **non-boring writing workshops** and **mentors aspiring writers online**. An enthusiastic **Reading Ambassador**, Hazel has a comprehensive range of resources for **teachers and children** to encourage reading and writing within the classroom. **Hazel's online store** also offers e-books including a downloadable **literacy mystery series** for independent readers, and '**Authorpreneurship: the Business of Creativity**'  
Follow Australian author Hazel Edwards on Twitter **@muirmoir**  
Visit Hazel Edwards' website **[www.hazeledwards.com](http://www.hazeledwards.com)**.