



# The Writer's Compass

## Turning the Next Page

Rich text:

A guide for poets publishing their work in ezines

Chris McCabe

---

This guide is written with the aim of helping poets, emerging and established, gain a sense of the opportunities that online publishing offers them through the world of ezines.

---

## About the author

Chris McCabe was born in Liverpool in 1977. His poems have appeared in a number of journals including 'Manhattan Review', 'Magma' and 'Poetry Review' as well as online in many ezines. He has published three poetry collections: *The Hutton Inquiry* (Salt, 2005), *Zeppelins* (Salt, 2008) and *THE RESTRUCTURE* (Salt, 2012). He has also published two pamphlets, *The Borrowed Notebook* (Landfill, 2008) and *Gnomes* (with Tom Jenks; Red Ceilings Press, 2011). His work has been recorded and made available on CD from The Poetry Archive and he has been anthologised in *Identity Parade* (Bloodaxe, 2010), *The Best British Poetry 2011* (Salt, 2011) and *Adventures in Form* (Penned in the Margins, 2012). His play *Shad Thames, Broken Wharf* was performed at The London Word Festival and published by Penned in the Margins in 2010. He works as a Librarian at The Saison Poetry Library, London and often tutors for The Poetry School.

---

## Who is this guide for?

'In many ways the electronic environment mirrors the zine scene, in that there is the freedom to make your voice heard and the assumption that someone out there wants to read what you've created.' (Julie Bartel, *From A to Zine*)

This guide to ezines is aimed at any poet interested in publishing their work on the internet through the form of ezines. Perhaps you have been wary of doing so before – and still have trepidations – or you might think it's the most exciting possibility ever but you're just not sure where to start.



You might have never published a poem in an ezine or you may have some experience of this already and have already seen your work appear online. (*revised order of this para*)

In this guide, you will find out how ezines work, how they differ from each other and how to find the ones that are most suited to your style of writing and tastes in poetry. You will also pick up some tips on the best way to submit your work online. I have made the logical assumption that if you are considering submitting your work online – which is a natural step towards all kinds of further publications – that you will also, if you have not already done so, be interested in publishing a book of poetry. With this in mind I have spoken to editors of poetry presses to canvass their views on what makes for a good ezine and what they look for in the work they find in the ones they read.

---

## Why should I bother publishing on the internet?

The aim of this resource is to help you towards publishing your work in ezines. To even begin to take this step you will need to believe that publishing online is the right thing for you and a good platform through which to share your work...

The first obstacle to overcome – in your mind at least – is that you are not having to choose this method of publishing over that of print. Print is irreplaceable. Print is our longest-standing medium for conveying ideas and artistic expression in language and, as such, offers a satisfaction when your name is pressed onto a page that cannot, straightforwardly, be replaced with the feeling of publishing online. So to begin with, let's remove the idea of one medium replacing another. As Julie Bartel says in *From A to Zine*: 'To say that the Web will replace print zines, either by publisher choice or reader preference, is to oversimplify and under-analyze both formats; print zines and e-zines are simply not the same creature.'

Ezines have now been around for well over a decade and have become an established route towards building a reputation as a writer and developing audiences for new work. Peter Philpott, the editor of the ezine Great Works ([www.greatworks.org.uk](http://www.greatworks.org.uk)), had published for years using traditional page-based materials until he was drawn to publishing instead through a website. In his piece 'Why I Publish on the Internet' (available on the Great Works site), he articulates his main reasons for doing this. He talks of how, in online publishing, the publisher is less controlled by markets and how distribution is 'global and immediate'. He also extols the web's flexibility and ability to present texts (and sounds and images) in a non-linear way. The web uses hyperlinking which works through an endless process of directing a reader from one link to another in a way that is far less straightforward – and often much more surprising – than the traditional linear journey through a print magazine.

Philpott argues that different audiences are open to engaging with poetry online than in printed forms – especially younger people. Philpott is an educator and has seen how his students respond intuitively to well-presented online writing. It is interesting to think of a web audience as a potential 'new audience'. The person looking at your latest poem on a screen in Australia would be unlikely to be reading it if you'd published the poem in a local UK journal. This is a very exciting possibility for a writer.

If you're a lover, as I am, of printed materials, then begin on this journey through ezines by removing any sense that online publishing is in conflict with the printed page. In both kinds of publishing, there are similarities and a shared set of benefits, and there are differences too as we will see. But both can be enjoyed at different times by the same writer and embraced as alternative options towards the end point that every poet is working towards: being read.

---

## What's in an ezine?

Ezines (pronounced Ezeen like 'bean') is the name given to magazines distributed through an electronic method. Occasionally you will hear the synonyms 'Online Magazine' and 'Webzine' used, but mostly amongst poetry networks you will hear these referred to as ezines. For the purposes of this guide, I will make no distinction between blogs ('web logs' – these are often provided free i.e. there is no hosting fees but you are then restricted to the structure provided and have to include the provider's name e.g. 'blogspot' in the title), more traditional websites with multiple pages and more complex layouts, and other free publishing forums such as tumblr.

When blogs first began, they were often more straightforward prose accounts of peoples' lives and passions and would be displayed in the order of most-recently-published so that older updates disappear into an archive. A website usually has a broader structure which allows the user to travel across its pages and as such is not as time-sensitive as a blog so there is greater emphasis on permanence. Blogs have proved a perfect medium for poetry lovers to share their tastes and takes on new and old poetry. And if prose could be published effectively in this way, poetry had also found a perfect new platform – the simplicity of carefully selected words on a clean web page is all that's needed. Many of the best poetry blogs combine prose with poetry. In a way, those involved in creating ezines have combined both meanings of the word 'journal' i.e. they can be diaristic, personal and passionate, and be involved with the publishing of poetry and reviews that you would expect in a print magazine.

There are three criteria I am looking for that make all of these function in a way that is useful for you, a writer looking to have your work published in a place that will allow it to be read by as many people as possible:

- 1) Does the site have an editorial policy, similar to that of a print journal? If so, there is usually a sense of kudos in being accepted for publication. Sites such as these – whether blog or ezine – will be read by people who are interested in finding new interesting work and then making it known to the world.
- 2) Is the site renewed or updated with new work on a periodic basis? Sometimes this might be in the form of new issues or sometimes new work fed to the site in an ongoing and less formulaic way.
- 3) Is the site linked to by other sites? This is important in the world of blogs and ezines – it is what drives traffic through to the site you are looking at, and provides the fertility to the whole world of poetry publishing online. Since starting work on this guide, there are no doubt new ezines that have been set up and are yet to be linked to and listed, but if they are not interested in linking to others – and being linked to – their ezine will remain in isolation. For the purposes of this guide, I refer to ezines that exist in a network of other ezines and have been around long enough to be listed and to become known as good examples of online publishing.

---

## Will ezines one day replace print magazines?

No. Print has a massive history dating back to the Egyptians, who wrote on papyrus 5000 years ago. Since then books and magazines have evolved in ways to suit the convenience – and elicit the most pleasure – in readers. Ezines (as part of the World Wide Web) are a new phenomenon, emerging since the 1990s. They have been around long enough to be embedded into our culture and to have developed a whole set of expectations around them, but the argument you often hear that ezines – and ebooks – will one day replace all printed matter is hard to validate. Books, and magazines, are phenomenal pieces of technology in themselves – portable, tactile, durable, visual and dense. Whilst it is true that the cheapness and DIY possibilities of publishing on the web might lead some editors to choose this method over print, there will always be another editor who prefers the pleasures of the traditional approach of printing.

In fact, advances in digital technology have made publishing books and magazines much easier. With 'Print on Demand' technology, for example, it's possible to print an item as and when it is ordered using a computer-generated file. This has freed up smaller presses to be able to take chances on publishing the kind of poetry they like – and many magazines, such as Shearsman, are now published in this way.

Print on Demand is an example of digital and traditional printing working together to create a new approach to publishing. It is very much possible that all kinds of exciting new developments combining computer and paper-based publishing will emerge. As this happens, people will no doubt have preferences and align themselves with particular approaches.

---

## What are the advantages to publishing in ezines compared to print magazines?

Ask any poet with an experience of publishing in both online and print journals what the overall difference between them is and it won't take long before the word 'readers' appears. Readers of poetry are often invisible to the author. When publishing in ezines, the scope for quick feedback and the building of communities around different kinds of poetry can be exhilarating. Some ezines go out of their way to facilitate interaction with social networking sites because they know this is how a lot of readers will access their output for the first time.

Often people who publish in ezines talk about 'new readers' or 'different audiences'. This claim is hard to prove, though the following points do, I think, have some truth in them:

- If you have only ever published in local UK magazines, by publishing in an ezine you have a much stronger chance of finding your first reader from another continent.
- Although it's hard to be sure that there are more 'young' readers of poetry online specifically looking for new contemporary poetry, a young person is more likely to accidentally come across your work online – and young people are very good at liking what they like because they like it!
- If you have some very specific tastes in poetry, and enjoy some quite obscure poets, then you're much more likely to come across people with the same tastes by engaging with poetry online than waiting to meet them in person. Whenever poets meet – online or in person – the first thing they talk about is poetry, so there is the opportunity to engage with people from around the world with similar passions, and new and exciting collaborations

and movements can often emerge from such conversations. It is worth bearing in mind also that your ability to reach out and be received by different audiences is something appreciated by potential publishers. As Brian Lewis of Longbarrow Press says, “Ezines have been useful in situating the work of some of [my] poets in other contexts, which in turn helps to shape an audience for their publications.”

---

## Does it matter where ezines are geographically based?

Compared to a printed magazine, it matters less where an ezine has been put together. For a start, distribution – the major challenge of print publishers – is not an issue. The ezine you’re looking at might have been put together in the UK or the United States or Australia and you wouldn’t necessarily know. The majority of ezines mentioned in this guide are UK-based, but not all of them. Part of the excitement of ezines is that a poem written recently in a far-off place can arrive onto your screen as if uploaded by someone in the next room – the technology can facilitate that quick impact of language that we enjoy so much in poetry when it’s working well.

---

## How do I find ezines?

The most common ways to find ezines are:

- through browsing the internet,
- through a recommendation from someone else interested in poetry;
- through a list of links such as that provided by The Saison Poetry Library ([www.poetrylibrary.org.uk/magazines/emagazines](http://www.poetrylibrary.org.uk/magazines/emagazines)).

Most ezines have links to other ezines that they are pleased to be associated with. Once you start on your journey of looking at one or two ezines, you will naturally career off on a path to others. Part of the excitement is that you are never sure what you’ll find next.

There was a time when creative websites seemed to be desperate to be linked to as much as possible in order to climb up the Google rankings, but this seems to be the case less these days. Many of the better ezines are more concerned with defining their niche place in the sphere of what’s available. Readers of ezines will often find themselves reading the same range of sites, and likewise, poets who have appeared in one ezine will often appear in another ezine that is associated with it. This sense of linked communities within the web is what was once called the Blogosphere.

That said, there are as many different kinds of ezines as there are approaches to poetry, so it is also important not to become too settled and to follow up suggestions and explore new ones. There is an argument that making the decision to show your work to an editor you’ve not worked with before brings out the best in your work. Automatic publication by an ezine editor you’ve worked with many times can take the sting from your writing, so be active in seeking out exciting new ezines.

---

## How do I discover new ezines?

New ezines appear all the time. One good way is to subscribe to the Poetry Library e-bulletin ([www.poetrylibrary.org.uk/register.cfm](http://www.poetrylibrary.org.uk/register.cfm)) which will inform you of any new ezines that have been

listed on the site in the previous two weeks. You may also see new ones being discussed in the ezines you read and emerge in the lists of links.

In reality there is little point in Googling for new ezines as a) you would need to know what it was called to retrieve it from the rankings (Googling 'Poetry' + 'ezine' will yield some results but not necessarily the most relevant for you – for a start, poetry ezines don't often call themselves 'ezines') and b) a new ezine can take weeks to begin to make a presence through search engine rankings. By searching in this way, you will be taken to sites in which people are sharing their passions for Emily Dickinson's sartorial decision-making and Coleridge's choice of recreational highs.

The best way to discover new blogs is through word of mouth – when somebody mentions an interesting article/poet they saw online, ask them specifically which site they saw it on. If you know people who submit work to online sites, ask them which ones they rate. It's very easy to get word of mouth recommendations through social networking sites too – communities on Facebook can be very quick to spread the news of emerging sites that people are getting excited about.

To start you off, take a look at the suggestions at the end of this guide.

---

## How do ezines 'publish'?

Ezines vary massively in this respect. Arguably the most well-read and respected ezine up until recently was Jacket (now in its second incarnation as Jacket2 – <http://jacket2.org>). Jacket was published in 'issues' which were drip-fed content over time – so issue 37 might have been nearly complete but issue 38 would also be in existence, with an outline of what the main features would be, and content being added slowly to its pages. This gave a real impetus to the reader to keep checking for the new content. Jacket2 follows the well-established ezine format of having its content divided into different types – articles, features, interviews – and adding the most recent work in each category to the top of the list.

The ezine Great Works ([www.greatworks.org.uk](http://www.greatworks.org.uk)) simply piles up its content on the homepage and as new ones arrive, older works are then dropped into the archive, which is still searchable online and browseable on the site from beneath the home page. The Argotist Online ([www.argotistonline.co.uk](http://www.argotistonline.co.uk)) marries together the structure of both these ezines.

The most familiar kind of ezine structure, and the one that most strongly mirrors that of the printed magazine, are those that run in issues. Shadowtrain ([www.shadowtrain.com](http://www.shadowtrain.com)) works in this way, calling each of its issues 'carriages' and releasing a new one each quarter. As there are only about eight poets on board for each carriage, this gives a real live sense of excitement in discovering who we're journeying with this time around. Spine ([www.spinewriters.com](http://www.spinewriters.com)) also works in this way – remaining static for a number of months and then unleashing a new issue of interesting and highly varied poetry into its pages.

Once you have identified which sites are the ones that you really want to follow, be sure to add yourself to mailing lists informing you of the latest issue and, if available, sign up for RSS feeds which will give you notification of any new material added to the site, often in the specific areas you have asked to be informed about.

---

## Which ezines are for the kind of poetry I like?

Thinking about the kind of poetry you usually like, and how this might be reflected in the different kinds of print publications you read, will give you some leads to the kind of ezines that would most interest you. This is not to say that there are clear demarcations indelibly drawn between the different kinds of ezine i.e. turn left at Google for mainstream and right for experimental. There are many ezines that embrace the plurality and variousness of different poetries and allow the clashes and synchronicities to fructify healthily. Salt Publishing's magazine *Horizon Review* ([www.saltpublishing.com/horizon/index.htm](http://www.saltpublishing.com/horizon/index.htm)) is a very good example of this.

Yet there are also cases of ezines that have clearly set out to embrace a certain kind of poetry. If you are mainly interested in traditional sonnets and villanelles, there is little point in submitting to an ezine that revels in the Poundian tradition of allusion and condensed language, such as *Blackbox Manifold* ([www.manifold.group.shef.ac.uk/](http://www.manifold.group.shef.ac.uk/)). If you are an experimentalist, pushing the boundaries of what can be done in poetry, then you wouldn't want to submit to a magazine like *The Flea* ([www.the-flea.com/index.html](http://www.the-flea.com/index.html)), which is interested in "strong poems in Formal Verse". At the end of this guide, you will find some suggestions of ezines aligned with different approaches and traditions of poetry. If you don't wish to be limited in thinking about ezines – or indeed poetry in general – within these categories, then feel free to skip these and use the general links as your springboard.

---

## Does it matter how the ezine looks?

"What's important to know about ezines is that they are electronic, not print, and that they run the gamut with regard to quality, content, subject matter, and ease of use." Julie Bartel, *From A to Zine*

Jan Fortune, editor of Cinnamon Press, uses one phrase to sum up what she looks for in an ezine: "Ease of navigation". This is a common longing. Yet some ezines work in massively different ways than others. Before submitting your work to an ezine, you might want to think about the way that the site looks and works. Do you like the design of the site? Is it easy to navigate? Is this as important to you as being associated with the poets who are published in it? Brian Lewis of Oystercatcher Press has a clear view on this: "Design is critical – if the navigation is obscure or bothersome many readers won't get much further than the home page." And as you want your work to be read by as many people as possible, this might be something to bear in mind.

Sometimes it is not just a question of how the site looks which you will connect with, but also how it operates. For example, how difficult is it to find what you are looking for? Can you link through to whatever looks interesting from the home page or do you have to dig ever-deeper for the promise of the content that brought you to it in the first place? I often find ezines frustrating that have displayed on their homepage simply 'Issue 1', 'Issue 2' etc. with no indication to what the theme might be for each issue or examples of who the poets are. When you click onto 'Issue 2' you sometimes get taken to another page with yet another link for 'Contents'. Unwanted flash graphics can be very annoying, and large images that take forever to download. I like sites that are clean and easy to use but most importantly have thought about the best way to allow the *poem* on the page to be enjoyed.

Sometimes the aesthetics of the ezine's design also impacts on how published work will be searchable. For example, some ezines, such as *Five Dials* ([www.fivedials.com](http://www.fivedials.com)) appear as a straightforward PDF. When you click on the issue, the PDF opens to be read.

These issues are nicely designed and have very attractive graphics. However, it is important to be aware that the content of PDFs are not searchable through the internet in the same way as a HTML-based website. This doesn't always translate into more or less exposure to an audience – a nicely designed PDF format ezine might have built up its own readership and have its own niche following. They may also use other forms of social networking such as Twitter and Facebook to disseminate what they do. Five Dials also has an attractive HTML author page within their ezine so authors are searchable through a search engine – though not all PDF ezines do this, so it's worth checking before you submit your work.

Be sure, also, that the ezine is capable of handling the intricacies of your poem. If you have written a projective poem that will require patience and commitment on behalf of the editor to fully realise online, will they be able to do a good job of this? I once had a poem accepted by an ezine that then reproduced it online with all the pauses and the spaces stripped out – it was a flattening experience to see a poem that I'd laboured over stripped of all its nuances. Likewise, if an editor turns down a poem because they say they can't work out how to publish it properly online, you should take that as a warning for the site in general – but accept the honesty and take your poem elsewhere.

---

## It seems that some ezines have more credibility than others – is this true?

Credibility is, I believe, something that is more easily measureable than 'quality'. Quality in poetry is a hot issue – one person's quality leaves another person cold. It could be argued, however, that credibility is something that transcends subjective taste. As an extreme example of this, a poet who has little interest in more mainstream poetry, and is fruitfully ensconced in the underground of the avant-garde, might still concede that Faber and Faber – though not their cup-of-tea – has credibility. In one sense, credibility might be the measure by how difficult it is to be published somewhere. Ezines, like print magazines, can receive hundreds of submissions within a short space of time and often only a fraction of those submissions can be used for publication.

One option is to look in the Acknowledgement pages of books from poetry book publishers that you particularly respect and see which ezines the poets have been featured in. This will give you an idea as to what ezines the published poet thought worth publishing their work in what ezines the editor of the press might themselves read.

As with print magazines, it can often take a little while for an editor of an ezine to get back to you about your poems. Just because an email can be sent and received within seconds doesn't mean the reading of the poems is any quicker. For an ezine that receives a lot of submissions, you can wait a long time to be both read and considered. Jan Fortune of Cinnamon Press offers the following advice: "Don't publish with ezines that will automatically accept you – this might feel good at first, but it shows no respect for the work ultimately." Occasionally an editor of a very credible ezine will open an email, instantly connect with the poems and fire off a response of acceptance, but this is not the norm and a good deal of patience – as with all attempts at publishing poetry – comes with the terrain.

---

## Have you any tips for submitting to ezines

Brian Lewis of Longbarrow Press offers clear advice on the importance of doing your homework before submitting to an ezine: 'Try to develop an understanding of the editorial criteria and the readership of each ezine before submitting poems for publication i.e. read current and back issues and the ezine's submission guidelines.'

Always read the submission policies – as you would with a print magazine. Some ezines only accept submissions at certain points in the year. The ezine foam:e ([www.foame.org](http://www.foame.org)), for example, accepts submissions between January and July but if your submission arrives in July then it won't be considered and you'll have to wait until the following year for the next submission window to open. Some editors ask you to submit using a certain word or phrase in the subject bar – as this is obviously to help them separate ezine emails from the rest of their emails, it makes sense to do as they ask and to not annoy them before they've even read your poems. The importance of this is obvious: you are asking someone to read your words in detail, so make sure you have read their words in detail.

As with print magazines, a lot of ezines ask for a certain number of poems, as a maximum, to be sent. If they ask for no more than five, then they won't look too kindly to their inbox being filled with your version of the Cantos in PDF format. The main point is that you need to be sure that the place you're sending your poems – the poems you've laboured on and fine-tuned to your satisfaction – are going to the best potential home. Ultimately you will only know that if you've read all of the information on the ezine you're considering and spent some time getting to know what it's about.

### **A note about attaching documents – the pitfalls:**

Nothing will upset an editor more than sending poems in the format that they have specifically request they don't accept. Some ezines, such as Free Verse (<http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/freeverse/index.html>) don't accept submissions as attachments due to the potential risk of viruses. As they are based within the English Department of a university, this is something that is important to them. Including poems in the body of an email, however, does have its pitfalls as your carefully honed formatting can often scramble as it arrives in the inbox of a different program. One tip is to make sure that you are using Rich Text option in your email program and always check your 'sent items' to see how they looked in the body of the email to be sure they've at least left home in the right shape.

---

## How can I get published in ezines that only solicit submissions?

You will often be drawn towards ezines that are extremely dynamic and interesting but don't accept submissions of new work. Such sites will often solicit – or commission – new work at the editor's request. When you are first looking for places to publish, it is easy to be put off by sites like this. In one sense this is instinctive – you are trying to get your own work into the world and it seems like sites like this have little interest in it. However, every writer should want to nourish the reader within them. After all, it's through the pleasures and surprises of reading that anyone goes on to try writing for themselves.

Looking closely at sites that don't accept submissions such as onedit ([www.onedit.net](http://www.onedit.net)) and Hand + Star ([www.handandstar.co.uk](http://www.handandstar.co.uk)) can be a great way to develop your work. What defines the writing on show? If this is the quality writing that is solicited by an editor, what makes this stand out as 'quality'? When you find favourite sites that work in this way, you should imagine yourself working towards being asked to submit poems for it. How would that feel? Would this mean a lot to you and your writing? Remember that the commissioned writers on these sites began at the same point as you. Being commissioned or solicited can happen to any writer once the hard work begins to pay off.

---

## How can I control how long my poem is available to be read? And what about copyright?

The audience for a poem that is published online is potentially infinite – for as long as a web page is searchable online there is always the possibility that the poem will be read. If this is on a particularly well-established ezine, then there is a strong chance that your poem will be read for years to come. With print magazines there is more of a distinction between the 'current' and past editions. Although this is true of many ezines too, it is worth remembering that your poems in an online environment don't yellow in their pages or gather dust. Readers can use a search engine to land on a webpage featuring a poem that you published ten years ago. This is a good thing – your work will always look fresh and immediate and be discoverable to new readers. On the other hand, as your work develops and matures and – as often happens – a distance opens up between early and current work, you may lose control over those far-from-fully-formed poems that are drifting around the internet like a satellite in space with your underwear attached to it.

The rule of thumb, as with any form of poetry publishing, is to have one hundred per cent belief in your poems at the point of submitting them. If you have doubts, then hold off and work on the poem. Publishing your work is a tremendously exciting thing but only when you have no niggling doubts that you haven't been at your best in a particular poem.

On the issue of 'control', you should never give up the copyright on your poems when you publish them online. Copyright should always remain with you. However, all magazines – whether print or online – prefer to have work unpublished elsewhere, so be sure that when you send your best poem to an ezine that you're happy that this is the ideal place for the poem to be published. One question to ask yourself: If this ezine accepts my poem, will it be a cause for celebration? All publication should be a cause for celebration.

---

## Are there crossovers between print and online publishing?

Many publishers of printed magazines will also have a sister blog. Often this is a website on which they will publish some of the poems from the magazine, or a blog that features different poems and poetry discussion. A wonderful example of how different publishing options can be combined within a single magazine is Fuselit (<http://www.fuselit.co.uk/>). Fuselit demonstrates a creative flair across printed publications (each issue often being an assemblage of smaller handmade items) with an attractive website that includes downloadable ebooks and an editors' blog. From issue 17, Fuselit have been simultaneously publishing an online (e-broadsheet) edition – as their name suggests, Fuselit are not about giving primacy to one form of publishing over another.

The magazine Magma also has a website that archives some of the poems it has published and also includes a blog (<http://magmapoetry.com/blog/>). Although these printed magazines are not offering a straightforward ezine that works in the same way as some of those discussed above it is worth bearing in mind that often when you send off work to a print magazine you will also end up in an electronic version of the magazine itself as well – the digital and printed world are often very often combined in the approach of a poetry editor.

---

## Can anyone set up an ezine?

Ken Edwards, editor of the poetry book publisher Reality Street, offers the advice: 'Consider setting up your own website or blog – even if it doesn't get many readers at first, at least it's an online presence.' The poetry scene allows editors who are also poets to move seamlessly through their different roles. For those who live and breathe poetry, being both a publisher of others (and their own words too on the pages of the ezines) and a poet trying to publish, offers no clash of interests.

If you look at the links to other ezines section of any ezine you will patterns emerging of who is linking to who – a kind of electronic hyperlink version of the way in which alliances and friendships emerge in the poetry world. The level at which you might want to be interacting with other poets will vary from person to person. If you want to make friends and discuss your passions then perhaps Facebook and Twitter are enough for you. If you want to air your views on what makes certain kinds of poetry great then perhaps a blog in which you post thoughts and reviews of poetry would be a way of doing that.

If, however, you want to set up an ezine of your own and publish other people's work then think very carefully beforehand about why you want to do it. Do you have the patience to engage in a long email discussion over the relevance of a place of a comma in somebody else's poem? Do you have the time to be able to read submissions and gently reject work that you don't like? Do you have the skills to be able to accurately replicate poems you've accepted in electronic format? Poetry publishing should always be about offering a new take on what is possible within the art. Ezines can be started by anyone but the ones that stand out and endure tend to have a singular vision of what it is they want to do. The big question that you might want to ask yourself is: am I setting up an ezine so people can find about me or because I want to read and publish great new poetry? If it's for the second reason then this might be something to consider, immersing yourself in the world of ezines through publishing an ezine yourself.

---

## What about ezines and social networking?

Publishing in ezines is not a form of social networking – it is a form of publishing. However, there is often an overlap between the two. An ezine might have a forum where people can post comments, either about the poems they've read or poetry in general. A lot of the more up-to-date ezines will have a 'share' menu which allows users to spread the word through Facebook and Twitter about things they've read and liked. This is the whole point of the internet – it is never static. Through hyperlinking, sharing and word-of-mouth your work can travel far and wide with little extra effort on behalf of the poet or editor. If people like something they tend to tell other people, and the related social networking aspects around ezines allows this to happen easily. In a sense, the marketing for your work will be the work itself. Rather than telling people to like something their response will speak for itself. This is something that can happen as an added bonus around your online publishing. If you set off wanting to write to reach people in this way it is unlikely to succeed – as

Keats said, 'we hate poetry that has a palpable design upon us'. Yet genuine exciting new work often sends ripples out across ezines and social networking sites, linking back to the place where the excitement initially came from: the poem. In terms of the possibilities for viral, unpredictable spreading of work, ezines that use tumblr can be a very exciting platform as readers can literally re-post content on their own tumblr, and content can be very quickly shared across a new readership.

One question to ask when you look at sites that have a social networking aspect is whether there is much action on the posts, likes, share and comment functions? This is a good way to gauge whether there is a buzzing audience for the ezine you are about to submit to. Do you sense there is a vibrant community and potential for interaction to the work being published there?

---

## Will being published online help me to publish a print publication?

Possibly, yes. As Peter Hughes of Oystercatcher says, 'I have had a first glimpse of certain poets on ezines.' and Ken Edwards of Reality Street: 'It's undoubtedly true that online publication in whatever form is the now the mandatory first step for poets and writers seeking print publication.' Tony Frazer of Shearsman has at points in the history of his press approached poets after first reading their work online: 'There have been a couple that I've approached after having spotted them in ezines.'

There is another major element you'll need to add to this – in all of the hundreds of poets seeking publication online, you will have to try and stand out! Peter Hughes goes on to say that the poets that stood out for him 'seemed to be doing their own thing, rather than following a fashion. Their work seemed not to be the product of a workshop. They exhibited energy, but also craft – an awareness of how sonic, semantic and rhythmic forces relate one to another. There was a sense of making something, not just saying something.' There is no ezine in the world that can inject your work with those aspects that make for great poetry – ezines are the fun and exciting publishing opportunities that come when the hard work has paid off in your poems. When I asked Tony Frazer what stood out about the work of the poets he'd discovered online he said: 'Actually, nothing but the words. Thus, in this case, the e-nvironment played no role.'

For some editors, their place in the whole world of reading, interacting, marketing and discovering new work is so completely enmeshed with the online world of zines and social networking that it can't be seen as a separate 'tool' they use to scout out new poets. As Tom Chivers, editor of Penned in the Margins, says: 'My approach to commissioning books and approaching authors is so completely integrated with social networking etc. that it's difficult to pick out particular authors as having been 'discovered' through Facebook or an ezine.' Tom was persuaded to publish Emily Critchley's *Love- all that- & ok* through reading her work online: 'Reading some of her newer poems which she posted on Facebook certainly convinced me that I'd like to publish a book of hers. I thought they were incredibly beautiful, intimate and lyrical poems which had a totally unique voice. The format (Facebook) wasn't important to me, but it certainly enabled me to access brand new work which wasn't already filtered through the vindicating mechanisms of magazine/ezine or book publication.' Penned in the Margins also published Gemma Seltzer's *Speak to Strangers* which started its life as a blog.

Sam Riviere allowed his series *81 Austerities* to grow on a tumblr site before this was published by Faber – importantly he was already published in the New Faber Series, so the use of a blog was highlighting new work after he had already developed a clear and distinct voice.

This is significant: you don't want readers to see your work growing up in public, so work privately in a notebook or using a laptop, and use online publishing as a way of disseminating the finished thing. As Peter Hughes says above, what is important is that the work is already doing exciting things and has a distinct voice that the technology serves to bring into the editor's line of vision.

---

## How is online publishing regarded by poetry publishers?

Be aware that some book publishers have little or no interest in online publishing and even if you follow the guidelines in this guide, will remain unimpressed by your successes in some of the most well-known and popular of ezines. One editor put it like this: 'When I receive an unsolicited MSS, I look at the magazines where an author has previously been published. There are no reliable guarantees about editorial consistency, authority or quality control in something that is only 'published' electronically.' This is by far the exception than the rule but it is worth preparing yourself for this reaction in your ongoing journey of poetry publication of which ezines will be one of the most exciting parts. The most fruitful way to push your work into the world is through a balance of print and online publishing – the balance can sway more towards one than the other, but you would be missing out on a lot of the joys of publishing if you only pursued one of these routes.

---

## Can you recommend some good ezines to start me off?

Here are the ezines that were mentioned as favourites of the poetry book editors I talked to:

Great Works (<http://www.greatworks.org.uk>) (Peter Hughes, Oystercatcher Press)

Jacket2 (<http://jacket2.org>) (Ken Edwards, Reality Street)

Tarpaulin Sky (<http://www.tarpaulinsky.com/>) and Drunken Boat (<http://www.drunkenboat.com/>) (Tony Frazer, Shearsman)

Stride (<http://www.stridemagazine.co.uk/>) and Blackbox Manifold

(<http://www.manifold.group.shef.ac.uk/>) (Brian Lewis, Longbarrow Press)

Antiphon (<http://antiphon.org.uk/>) (Jan Fortune, Cinnamon Press)

### Lists of ezines:

The best place to find a comprehensive list of ezines is on the Poetry Library's website here: [www.poetrylibrary.org.uk/magazines/emagazines](http://www.poetrylibrary.org.uk/magazines/emagazines)

You'll find further lists on the following sites:

[www.poetrykit.org/ezines.htm](http://www.poetrykit.org/ezines.htm)

[www.modernpoetry.org.uk/lists.html](http://www.modernpoetry.org.uk/lists.html)

[www.everywritersresource.com/bestonlineliterarymagazines.html](http://www.everywritersresource.com/bestonlineliterarymagazines.html)

### Ezines mentioned in this guide:

Argotist Online: [www.argotistonline.co.uk](http://www.argotistonline.co.uk)

Blackbox Manifold: [www.manifold.group.shef.ac.uk/](http://www.manifold.group.shef.ac.uk/)

Five Dials: [www.fivedials.com](http://www.fivedials.com)

The Flea: [www.the-flea.com/index.html](http://www.the-flea.com/index.html)

F:oame: [www.foame.org](http://www.foame.org)

Free Verse: <http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/freeverse/index.html>

Fuselit: <http://www.fuselit.co.uk/>

Great Works: [www.greatworks.org.uk](http://www.greatworks.org.uk)

Hand + Star: [www.handandstar.co.uk](http://www.handandstar.co.uk)  
Horizon: [www.saltpublishing.com/horizon/index.htm](http://www.saltpublishing.com/horizon/index.htm)  
Jacket 2: <http://jacket2.org>  
Magma: <http://magma-poetry.com/blog/>  
Onedit: [www.onedit.net](http://www.onedit.net)  
Shadowtrain: [www.shadowtrain.com](http://www.shadowtrain.com)  
Spine: [www.spinewriters.com](http://www.spinewriters.com)  
Horizon: [www.saltpublishing.com/horizon/index.htm](http://www.saltpublishing.com/horizon/index.htm)

**Ezines with a mix of blogging and poetry:**

Intercapillary Space: [www.intercapillaryspace.org/](http://www.intercapillaryspace.org/)  
Litterbug: [alan-baker.blogspot.co.uk](http://alan-baker.blogspot.co.uk)  
Ron Silliman: [ronsilliman.blogspot.co.uk/](http://ronsilliman.blogspot.co.uk/)

**Ezines interested in experimental poetry:**

Blazevox: [www.blazevox.org](http://www.blazevox.org)  
Fascicle: [www.fascicle.com](http://www.fascicle.com)  
Great Works: [www.greatworks.org.uk](http://www.greatworks.org.uk)  
Signals: [www.signalsmagazine.co.uk/](http://www.signalsmagazine.co.uk/)

**Ezines that only publish solicited work:**

Hand + Star: [www.handandstar.co.uk](http://www.handandstar.co.uk)  
Jacket2: <http://jacket2.org>  
Onedit: [www.onedit.net](http://www.onedit.net)

**Ezines that publish collaborations:**

Like Starlings (<http://www.likestarlings.com/>)

---

## Acknowledgements

Thanks to all the editors who took the time to answer my questions about ezine. They are:

Tom Chivers, Penned in the Margins [www.pennedinthemargins.co.uk](http://www.pennedinthemargins.co.uk)  
Andy Croft, Smokestack Books [www.smokestack-books.co.uk](http://www.smokestack-books.co.uk)  
Ken Edwards, Reality Street [www.realitystreet.co.uk](http://www.realitystreet.co.uk)  
Jan Fortune, Cinnamon Press [www.cinnamonpress.com](http://www.cinnamonpress.com)  
Tony Frazer, Shearsman Books [www.shearsman.com](http://www.shearsman.com)  
Peter Hughes, Oystercatcher Press [www.oystercatcherpress.com](http://www.oystercatcherpress.com)  
Brian Lewis, Longbarrow Press <http://longbarrowpress.com>

The following publication has also been referred to: *From A to Zine: Building a Winning Zine Collection in Your Library* by Julie Bartel, published by ALA Editions in 2004.

© Chris McCabe  
June 2012

---

**Turning the Next Page** is a programme of work being undertaken by literature organisations in Scotland with investment from Creative Scotland to support writers living and working in Scotland, especially those who are at an early stage of their careers.