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Every issue we bring you special interviews with Publishers on the Internet. This month, [Poetry Today Online](#) is proud to present an interview with

Sour Grapes

and its Editor/Publisher - [Sandy Bernstein](#)

Q: Please share with us your background... and what your present position and responsibilities entail.

A: I think of myself as a writer and poet first and editor/publisher second. The idea for [Sour Grapes](#) started as a joke when a writer and artist friend, Sheila Foley and myself were having lunch one day discussing our usual woes with the writing life, namely rejection. Having subscribed to countless writing publications, I couldn't think of one that dealt specifically with the problems all writers encounter. One thing led to another as we tried to imagine what such a magazine would be like. The result was a newsletter based on the theme we knew only too well. While we allow writers to gripe openly, we do it with a sense of humor, hence our column titles. We also give editors a fair shake and promote markets for all writing endeavors.

Since its inception in 1995, [Sour Grapes](#) has undergone some changes. We started out as a 16 page hard copy newsletter, but opted for an all web format in 1997. After unresolvable technical problems with our service provider, we got a new URL this year. Our roles changed as a result of revamping the site, especially when Sheila returned full time to teaching art at a local middle school. Until this recent change, we shared all the editing and publishing responsibilities. Presently, I'm at the helm alone with Sheila's workload reduced to art editor. Basically, it means I handle the technical aspects of managing the site and its promotion as well as reviewing most of the submissions while Sheila focuses on artwork submissions. We still consult one another and make decisions together. The workload is less stressful since we've gone online, especially now that we publish haphazardly, allowing

ourselves more time for free-lance pursuits. The hard copy was quarterly, therefore governed by deadlines. Also, there was more leg work involved. Needless to say, we're both happier with the way things are now.

Q: What kind of opportunities do you see available for up coming poets?

A: I think the internet has already had an impact for beginners looking to publish their work. Also, there seems to be a resurgence of poetry readings in coffee shops and book stores. Small press publications are always springing up, and with the advent of desk top publishing, poets can self publish at a minimum cost. The opportunities abound like never before, but publishing in the main stream still seems out of reach for most of us.

Q: What course of action do you recommend to the new poet who is looking to be recognized?

A: First know the difference between success and recognition. Success is much harder to come by, but recognition can come from many sources, great and small. Assuming the poet has studied the craft and is diligently working on that craft, success will come as a result of perseverance and hard work. I would recommend doing poetry readings as a way to connect with other poets and gain ground on a local level. Joining critique groups and organizations are also advantageous and should provide opportunities to network with other writers and publishers. Doing readings and getting published, even on a small or local level, is gratifying and will bring some recognition.

Q: What kind of coverage do you see your publication offering?

A: Considering SG is on the internet, the coverage should be vast. At the moment we do not have a counter or other means to monitor the traffic at the site, so I can only guess what our readership is at this point. I will say, however, that the potential for "world" exposure is there. One thing is sure, the amount of people viewing an electronic publication far exceeds that of the printed version.

Q: What are your publication requirements and standards?

A: That's an essay question. Actually, given our theme, it just means anyone who is thinking about submitting work should read the guidelines first and view the site to see what we've done. But that's true of any publication. Our requirements do not pertain just to experienced writers, poets, and artists. We also provide an opportunity for beginners to get their work in print or to read our market section in the hopes of doing so. The only requirement I expect to be met is that appropriate material be submitted. By this I mean two things: First, work should fit our columns, theme wise and length wise. Don't send us silly gripes about life in general. We are not the national complaint department, despite our name. Work should also be appropriate for writers and artists of all age groups, so bear in mind language content. And, I'd like to add one more thing... please show us you care about your work and submit it as professionally as possible, i.e., follow basic submission rules. This especially applies to those who send in their work by snail mail.

Q: What do you look for in a poem?

A: As the guidelines state, poems don't have to be gripe related, in fact, I prefer they are not. Any length is fine, except epics. As for form and style, we're open to all and most subject

matter is acceptable too. Above all, show us insightful, thought-provoking verse that creates a mood or image. No "gratuitous profanity," show us poetic language - not street talk.

Q: What are your submission guidelines?

A: I think that remains to be seen. Guidelines can be obtained from the site.

Q: What is your best source of inspiration?

A: For me, inspiration comes in everyday life. [Sour Grapes](#) philosophy may be more on the bitter side, but we also enjoy seeing articles and poems with a sweeter ending. Simply put, take a negative situation and turn it into a positive one.

Q: What pieces of inspiration or motivation would you like to pass along?

A: Just go with whatever inspires you to write or create. Dare to be different. It's the only way we can learn and grow and maybe even prosper. Motivation is more difficult to maintain. I would suggest finding what interests you, or ignites your passion. Go with that and you can't go wrong.



<http://members.xoom.com/Sandyberns/sourgrapes.htm>

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