INITIAL MANUSCRIPT QUESTIONNAIRE:
WHAT YOUR EDITOR NEEDS TO KNOW

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The BASICS

• What is your topic?
• Would you consider the manuscript fiction, nonfiction, or a mixture of the two?
• What are your goals for the project?
• What would you like your readers to come away with?
• Who do you imagine reading this book?
• Where do you expect a library or bookstore to shelve it?
• Do you see this as a printed book, e-book, or both?
• What are some similar books (in this genre) that you have read?
• How long is the manuscript (number of pages or word count)?
• Do you have a timeline in mind for publishing the book?
• Are you thinking of publishing through a traditional publisher or independently publishing?
• If you’re thinking of traditionally publishing, have you discussed the manuscript with an agent? And what feedback did you get?

YOUR BACKGROUND AS A WRITER

• Have you taken writing classes or workshops or worked with a writing coach?
• What are some of your favorite books about writing?
• Are you in a writers’ group? If so, has the group given you feedback on this manuscript?
• Have you published articles or books before?

EDITORIAL QUESTIONS

• How complete do you think the manuscript is?
• How long have you been working on it?
• Have you worked with an editor before?
• Do you have concerns about grammar or other writing skills?
• What do you think the strengths of the book are?
• Do you see weaknesses in the manuscript? If so, where?
• How much more work are you prepared to do on this manuscript? When?
- Do you have a rough budget in mind for editing?
- Does your book have an outline with a description of each chapter?
- How much of the manuscript is available for me to review (with the attached confidentiality agreement)?
- If you were to write a back cover blurb or summary of your book, what would it say?

INDEPENDENT PUBLISHING (SELF-PUBLISHING)

- Who do you see reading your book?
- How will your reader find your book?
- Do you have a way to reach your readers outside a bookstore?
- Is this manuscript the only book you hope to publish in the future?
- How does this book fit into your literary career?
- Are you comfortable with the idea of self-promotion?
- Do you have a website, blog or social networking presence (or plan to have one)?
- Do you have a budget for the designing, printing and marketing of the book?

(Credit: Partially adapted from An Editor’s Guide to Working with Authors by Barbara Sjoholm)