

Unpublished Manuscripts at Bologna Book Fair

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/unpublished-manuscripts-at-bologna-book-fair/>

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One of the coolest things I got to see at the Bologna Book Fair was the hardback mock-up of an unpublished manuscript by Julia Donaldson. Here's what I discovered about mock-ups at the fair.

You might wonder how I would be able to flip through the pages of an unpublished manuscript – let alone from someone as famous as [Julia Donaldson](#).

I went to the publisher's Information Desk. Yes, an *actual* Information Desk – or Welcoming Desk – or Security Check (depending on how friendly) can often be found at the entrance to a publisher's particular section of the book fair.

Many of the large publishing houses have such expansive “stands” (had to be put in quotes, because some of them are larger than my apartment) that they require a special counter where 2-3 assistants greet those who approach and then help them find who it is they need to meet. They also send people away.

Discovering Unpublished Manuscripts.

Very early in the morning on the second day of the fair, I cruised around the book fair earlier than most. Many stands were roped off, or covered in tarps. A few people were gripping cups of coffee and juice as they quietly walked through the expansive halls, now expansive only because there were so few people. Later that day, those same hallways would feel very cramped and difficult to maneuver.

Early mornings at special events are the times I savor. I can soak in the atmosphere and prepare my mental notes about what I need to do that day. But there are always surprises. I was about to get a *big surprise*.

Among the newest and the soon-to-be released titles at the Bologna Book Fair, there are also Unpublished Manuscripts to be discovered. Those unpublished manuscripts are presented in the form of a Storybook Mock-up and you'll find these all around the book fair.

Random House at Bologna.

When I got to Random House, there were only 8 people working that early. Three of them were at the Welcoming Desk. I asked if I might look around before any of the days' meetings start. One gal wasn't certain. Another said it was the perfect time for me to look around, because the day hadn't gotten started yet.

I meandered around the many tables that had been set-up so that editors could sit down in personal talks with distributors, agents and other publishers. Bookshelves lined the entire area, and there were shorter, library-styled shelves with wheels next to some tables. That caught my interest, but there was one item on one shelf in particular.

A plain white hardback book with no title on the spine was inviting me to pick it up. So I did. The cover was wrapped in a plastic sleeve, the type that reminded me of my childhood. I hadn't seen a plastic sleeve like that in a long time. It was exciting. I felt like I was the first to find my Christmas packets waiting under the tree, the first to be awake and sneak and peek at what was there.

[Julia Donaldson. That was the name on the cover. What? I thought. It was too exciting.](#)

I won't divulge the title or who the illustrator was. But here's what we can all learn from what I saw that day:

1. Mock-ups really are Vital. Really!

Even the famous writers and illustrators make [storybook mock-ups](#). That's a specific creative process you should always take the time to do – for *every* storybook.

2. Focus on concept & tempo.

The mock-up was a hardback, but it was very simple. Very rough sketches above and below the story text gave a general idea of what would be seen on the page. What was clearly most important here was the story tempo and [impact of the page-turn](#).

3. Color is optional.

If your story concept is solid (and not a novelty item), you don't need a color mock-up. The entire mock-up was monochromatic (just black and white). There were no color images at all, but I do think that's

because the illustrator is *also* famous.

For anyone else, create **three finished images** for the mock-up, in color. The rest can be rough sketches. (Of course, if you have the entire piece illustrated, terrific! But sketches that support the text and timing of the story are what's key.)

4. It's pragmatic and structured.

This was clearly *not* a finished product.

- Every page was numbered.
- There was no official [copyright page](#) - just a place-holder page stating That Page would be the copyright page. It had *only* the words, "Copyright Page," printed in the center of it. Nothing else.
- There was no contact information anywhere, but I'm certain it's because of the way this particular mock-up is being used. If you as a writer or illustrator create a mock-up to show an agent or editor, then your contact information should absolutely be in there – in the front and in the back.

That day, I was able to visit many publishers and view many storybook mock-ups. They were not all like this. Their purpose was different, and so the mock-ups were different too.

Publisher to Publisher.

Some were half done. Meaning, the books were in full color with a finished, quality feel – but there was only half a story. About half way through the book, the story stopped and then there were just blank pages where story should go.

This is a certain kind of mock-up that publishers show other publishers. It isn't what a writer or illustrator would show anyone.

These mock-ups were meant to entice - and they succeeded. I can't wait for those books to come on the market. I want to know how the stories end!

Agent to Publisher.

I have seen unpublished mock-ups that are very impressive, in full-color on all pages - and saw some like this at the Bologna Book Fair as well. This is especially important if the creator is unknown or if the project is a novelty item. That said, not all novelty item mock-ups are completed. Sometimes they have missing details, especially if complex paper engineering is involved (as for a pop-up book).

Writers and Illustrators.

When you as the story creator want to pitch/show your storybook, you should plan on B&W sketches for all the pages except for 3 full-color pages. Decide carefully which ones you want to showcase. They should show the protagonist's character and they should convey key moments of the story.

There were thousands of creative people filling the halls of the 5 buildings that make up the Bologna Book Fair. The focus (outside of the contracts being signed) is on *illustrators*, no question. But for anyone interested in telling stories with pictures, this is an amazing place to be.

I've much more to cover about the Bologna Book Fair. Send me your questions! There is so much to share about what I saw and heard, it's hard to know what I should cover first. Write below and let me know! Would love to hear from you - and if you've been to the fair too, share that as well!

Keep creating, no matter what.

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