

How do I research such a topic?

Spencer Jenkins

"What to write?" "How do I research such a topic?" These are two of the most difficult aspects of writing for aspiring authors; however, author Mary Yerkes has it down to a science. As a testament to her expertise on these subjects, Yerkes not only works under a demanding schedule of writing articles for various magazines and websites, but she also suffers from chronic illness; therefore, she must be efficient with her time. To accomplish this, she has the process of choosing and researching a topic down to a science. When asked how she comes up with ideas for her work, Mary Yerkes smiled as only those who have successfully gone through this challenging process can. She explained that there are two ways she goes about this task. The first method involves a little personal research. Yerkes will go to the library or bookstore and peruse the bestsellers, gleaning ideas of which topics are selling. She then adds her own twist to make the article new and fresh. The second way she arrives at a topic is available to her because of the amount of time she has spent in the writing field. An editor from one of the magazines for which she writes will approach her with an article idea that needs to be written, and Mary Yerkes will work on that assignment. Although she has written articles that tackle difficult issues, she firmly stated during the interview that she would never work on a piece that goes against her moral standards and beliefs, even if it meant that she would lose that particular job.

Great, so now Mary Yerkes has an article to write, but how does she research her topic? She says she looks at other authors' pieces on the subject to gain understanding. She brought up an example from an article she worked on concerning eating disorders. While she looked at recent pieces on the subject, Yerkes noticed that almost all the articles covered the same disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia; however, she wanted to take a new spin on the article. She then Googled on eating disorders to see what was new in the field. Yerkes came upon a disorder called orthorexia, characterized by eating so healthily it becomes a disorder. Yerkes decided to center her article on that condition. She called two different psychological centers and spoke with doctors and other employees there to gain a better understanding of the disorder.

Among writers, there are two different factions: outline or don't outline. When asked if she employed an outline while writing, Mary Yerkes grinned and promptly said,

"Never". She said it is very writer specific what one does with regard to an outline, but Yerkes said that when she tried to do one, "I almost pulled my hair out!"

During the interview, Mary Yerkes was happy and open to questions of all sorts. She was very supportive of aspiring writers and gave great tips about topic decision and research. When asked what she was planning in the future, Yerkes responded that she had several book ideas that had yet to be picked up by a publisher, but was determined to print these books. Whenever the books come out, you can be sure they will be on an interesting topic as well as being thoroughly resea

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