



BASIC PRESS KIT NOTES FOR INTERVIEWS & BACKGROUNDEERS

This document offers answers to some of the most frequently asked questions for interviews and media coverage. To make it easy, we have listed the questions at the top of the page. Use a keyword search or scroll button to move directly to the answer. To set up an interview, please contact Terry Doherty directly.

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What is the Reading Tub®?

The Reading Tub, Inc. is a non-profit corporation [501(c) (3)]. Its product is a Website (<http://www.thereadingtub.com>) that provides literacy services for families, teachers, librarians, and authors, to name a few. The Website offers three key services:

- in-depth profiles for children's books written for children from infant to thirteen years.
- Web pages providing visitors with information about literacy, including original articles; and
- links to resources that give visitors access to more in-depth information about issues affecting a child's ability to read.

The core product of the Web site is the collection of Reading Tub™ Profiles: in-depth reviews of children's literature (i.e., books written for children ages infant to 13).

For us, it is not about whether or not someone buys a book or borrows a book at the library. We just want them to find a good book and share it with a child.

What need does the Reading Tub® fill?

- We give parents a reliable resource for finding books they will want to share with their kids.
- People judge books by their covers. There are certain titles and authors that people know, and there are authors who make the talk-show circuit promoting their latest book.
 - Every year, there are more than 20,000 new titles added to the "children's literature" category.
 - If you take out the couple hundred that get featured in books and magazines and on TV, that still leaves thousands of books people DON'T know about.
 - We want them to give parents the ability to judge the content BEFORE they go to the library or a bookstore and to find books they would never hear about because that author wasn't on the morning talk-show circuit.
- When we wear our "parent" hats, we want to find *something* that doesn't have a TV or movie character as the protagonist.
 - I love Dora the Explorer and the Wiggles and Big Bird, but I want my child to see more of the world through the time we spend reading than what they already see on TV.
 - I don't think I'm the only parent that thinks that way.
- On the website, adults who read with kids (parents, teachers, librarians, grand- parents) can find information about literacy. We have original articles and links to resources that give visitors access to more in-depth information about issues affecting a child's ability to read.

What is the Reading Tub® story?

In June 2003, when my daughter was about eighteen months old, I was talking with my sister-in-law about children's books and reading. I was going on and on about how hard it was to find good books. Catherine and I would go to the library, and she'd pick up a book that caught her eye (and I did the same) but when we would sit down to read, she would lose interest in the book, or the story wasn't as good as the pictures.

So my sister-in-law suggested I create a Website that would review children's books. As an educator, she thought it could be a great resource for parents and teachers. I talked with two friends (also parents of young children) and we brainstormed some ideas. Then I went to a do-it-yourself Website company and, without any background built the first site.

The name The Reading Tub came from one of my friends. His Mom worked at an elementary school in Vermont. In their library they had a big yellow tub, stuffed with pillows. Kids would sign up to read in the tub. The idea of reading in the tub is a great visual image. Who doesn't like reading in the tub? It represents fun and relaxation!

The Reading Tub® started out as a hobby, but as people started to find us and send us books, I got more interested in changing the model from hobby to non-profit. I have always worked in public service, so it

isn't about making money for me. I look at reading as a public commodity: you shouldn't have to pay to learn how to read or even enjoy a good book.

When I started doing research to see if this was a viable plan, I learned that there were a number of professional book review services out there, but they were principally geared toward institutions, not families. Families can't afford to pay \$300 a year to find the perfect book to share with a child.

You can routinely find book reviews in parenting magazines, but again, you have to pay for a subscription. A major segment of our target audience doesn't buy parenting magazines. The magazines also tend to focus on new titles from the major publishing houses.

Just more than one year after launching that first website (October 2003), The Reading Tub Inc. was up and running. We are incorporated in Virginia as a non-profit corporation; we sought and secured IRS public charity status [501c3]; we have contracted with companies to upgrade the Website and its capabilities; and we are building partnerships with other reading and literacy-related organizations.

Why did you create the Reading Tub?

The Reading Tub is the tangible product of my love of reading. Although it sounds cliché these days, I am passionate about literacy and how important it is to our personal and professional success.

I am not the only parent who wants their children to share great stories. And I'm not the only parent who, when I sit down together with a book, *does not* want to see TV characters in their books. The Reading Tub® can help parents navigate past the media-driven titles to some terrific stories that meet their needs.

Not everyone loves reading. Growing up, my brothers and I had to read ten books every summer. It was easy for me, but not so easy for my brothers who saw it as a burden and chore. I remember my parents were always trying to help them find books on topics they liked in hopes that it would encourage their reading ... especially when they started moving beyond picture books.

I want the Reading Tub to do the same thing for other families. There is plenty of 'advertising' about how important it is to read with your child. Yet, 80% of US families did not buy or read a book last year [sources: <http://parapublishing.com/sites/para/resources/statistics.cfm> and <http://www.jenkinsgroup.com>].

There are probably myriad reasons why people aren't reading with their children. One of the simpler reasons may be that they don't know what to read. In 2004, there were 21,516 new juvenile titles [source: http://www.bowker.com/press/bowker/2005_0524_bowker.htm]. Although I love books, I can easily see a parent or grandparent being easily intimidated by the racks of books in a bookstore or library. How do you know which is the best ABC book for your child?

What is your mission?

To help families find great books. Reading with a child is invaluable. It helps parents and teachers move their kids toward a life-long skill and get them interested in learning and discovery before they know what those things are.

- We want to inspire kids to develop a love of reading and help families find great books.

- We want families to read together. Kids will learn to read at school, but reading needs to be reinforced at home. Not homework reading; we're talking about finding a book that everyone can enjoy and share it together.

The Reading Tub, Inc. does not sell books. Its purpose is only to review what's already available. As Terry notes, "It doesn't matter whether someone buys the book or borrows it from the library. We just want families to find some good books to share and enjoy together."

People judge books by their covers. There are certain titles and authors that people know, and there are authors who make the talk-show circuit promoting their latest book. And if you think about just that small group, think about how many books people DON'T know about. We want them to give parents the ability to judge the content BEFORE they go to the library or a bookstore and to find books they would never hear about because that author wasn't on *The Today Show*.

When we wear our "parent" hats, we want to find *something* that doesn't have a TV or movie character as the protagonist. "I love Dora the Explorer and the Wiggles and Elmo," says Terry Doherty, "but I want my child to see more of the world through the time we spend reading than what they already see on TV. I don't think I'm the only parent that thinks that way."

The Reading Tub, Inc. has been very fortunate to have some of the smaller publishing houses find us. There are some world-class writers who publish as an independent press. They are producing some FABULOUS stories. We are happy to tell the world about them. You won't find reviews of popular books (like *Harry Potter*) and many children's classics. For books that get a lot of media coverage or are widely known, there is very little that we can offer that contributes to the discussion.

What can people do on your website?

They can find great books or books that they might want to skip. We have a search box on the site that lets people find books by keywords. Titles and authors are common, but you can also search by subject (such as trains, cats, and fairies) or topic (such as remedial reading, self esteem, and family).

We currently have a small section of literacy resources. This is the area we hope to expand. One of our projects, One Letter at a Time, will allow us to add tools and information to this portion of the Web site.

They can also send us questions or ideas. We are always on the lookout for ways to tweak the site to fit the needs of our visitors. One person suggested that we create topical lists by age group, because that would help visitors who aren't computer savvy or don't want to spend a lot of time at the computer. Great idea. It is on our We'd like To-Do list.

It's important to know that we do not sell books. But if someone is interested in buying a book, we want to make it easy for them to do that; without having to leave the Tub! It's the same with libraries. In every profile there is a "reserve at the library box." We keep a running list of the libraries of our visitors. If someone has registered with the site, we add their library to our list.

How many profiles have you published?

To see the most recent stats on how many books we have, just go to our Search page.

[<http://www.thereadingtub.com/search.asp>] We keep a running total of how many books we have reviewed

and how many are waiting on the shelves to be read. Put those two numbers together and you've got the total.

When we celebrated our first anniversary, we were so excited to have published 100 reviews. By the time our fourth anniversary rolls around in the fall of 2007, we will probably have close to 900, if not more. We are close to reaching 1,000 books in our catalog, which we call the Book Bag.

What happens to the books after you read them?

We only accept for review and market copies of books. That helps us in two ways. First, because the book is shared with and read by a family, it is easier to handle. Second, it allows us to help the book find a good home. All of the books sent to us for review are donated to community organizations working with children and reading.

The only time we accept a galley, manuscript, or pre-release version of a book is when an author wants a quote from The Reading Tub, Inc. These are the blurbs you see in the front or on the back cover of a book. In those cases we have a parental reviewer and/or Reading Tub, Inc. volunteer read the book. If the author wants the book to be in our "book bag," though, they need to send us a final copy so we can share it with a family.

What makes you unique in terms of approach, content, format?

The Reading Tub® Website offers in-depth profiles for children's literature written, infants to age 13. There are five things that make the Reading Tub® web site a unique resource for literacy.

- (1) We read every book that is sent to us. Some sites don't publish reviews for books they don't like; but how are people to find out about them if no one writes something?
 - For picture books, we read the book at least three times, because toddlers and preschoolers tend to be fickle!
- (2) We have a set formula for every profile, so you'll find the same categories and criteria in every review.
 - We include references to other reviews, because we know ours aren't the only opinions!
- (3) We identify the educational value of the book.
 - Sometimes the story has a lesson and it's very clear.
 - Other times, though, there are things that pop out of the story that you may not have thought of.
 - We think it's very important to identify ways that families or teachers can move beyond the text to bring the book to life, either through discussion or related activities.
- (4) Whenever an author or publisher has additional materials (coloring pages, teacher guides, etc). We include a link to that resource.
- (5) Our profiles go well beyond what you'd find on a major bookseller's site.
 - First of all, every book is read with a child in the author's target audience and we include their opinion.
 - We write what we think of the books as parents. Sometimes what looks like a great story can introduce subjects we don't think is appropriate for the target audience.
 - For example, I just read a book about a little girl who wants a pet cat. Great story ... until we got to the part where she found three abandoned kittens in a trash bag. Two of the cats died and Grandpa buries them in the backyard. It is all in the story. The book is billed as being suitable for 3-year-olds. When I got to that part, I wasn't convinced.

Who is your primary audience?

- Providing the resources to help a child learn to read is our goal.
- The market for the Reading Tub, Inc. is the people "in charge" of that process: the caregivers.
 - We help parents, grandparents, teachers, and others looking for good books to help pre-readers, as well as those working with a child who is learning to read.
 - The Reading Tub™ Web site is a resource for anyone who is reading with or selecting books for a child.
- To me, the most crucial group is the adult caregivers who don't use computers or read magazines. The Reading Tub® website is a great resource, but I want the Reading Tub to help the people who aren't likely to surf the web, too.
 - There is plenty of advertising about how important it is to read with your child.
 - But if people are working two and three jobs and don't watch TV, or if they don't read newspapers and magazines, how will they know?
 - 80% of US families did not buy or read a book last year. That statistic goes beyond frightening.

What Can a Parent Do to Get their Child to Like Reading?

One of the first things is to understand that sharing a book with a child is reading. It isn't always about teaching words or letter sounds. There are wordless books that are great, because sometimes it's just about talking. Whether a child is listening to you read or making up their own story to the pictures on the page ... it's still reading. Sometimes, as parents, we forget about the reading together part once our kids start reading at school. We tend to see it more as homework (and maybe they do, too). Even if your child can read independently, it's still important to share a book together once in a while. You can read alternate chapters, you can take on certain characters in dialogue ... it is about engaging the child.

You can also talk to your child's teacher or stop by the library. Librarians are incredible resources. Tell them about your child's interests and the types of books they like (fantasy, animal stories); tell them about your goals for reading, too. Do you like books that have life lessons, like sharing? Do you want non-fiction and fiction books? Your librarian will have plenty of great titles.

We also need to remember that literacy is not just reading English. The key is to find a book – in Spanish, in French, in Urdu, Russian, whatever – that parents can share with their children. The last thing a non-English speaking parent needs is the added pressure of trying to help their child read when they are struggling themselves.

Who are your partners?

There are hundreds, probably thousands of non-profits dedicated to literacy. The Reading Tub, Inc. believes that they each have something to offer, because there is more than one way to help a child learn to read. Our goal is to leverage our resources for win-win situations, and our partners help us do that.

Be the Star You Are!® Cynthia Brian (New York Times best selling co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Gardener's Soul*, actress, radio host, and life coach) created Be the Star You Are! a 501c3 non-profit in San Francisco dedicated to empowering women, families, and youth at risk through improved literacy and positive message programming. Be the Star You Are! collects new books from publishers and authors and donates them to other charities in need. They also host an upbeat weekly radio program interviewing authors and experts. Their motto is “To be a leader you must be a reader. And Everybody Counts!”
[<http://www.bethestaryouare.org>]

In March 2004, a mutual contact sent Terry an email about Cynthia Brian and her work with an after-school center for youth at risk. Terry took the initiative to propose that the two organizations work together. We created a partnership. The Reading Tub, Inc. sends books for kids 8 to 12 to Be the Star You Are! where the youth volunteers on the STAR Teen Book Review Team read and write the reviews. Terry posts their reviews on the Reading Tub® web site where teachers, parents, librarians and kids learn what books would be most interesting to them. Their combined efforts are getting kids excited about reading ... and making it relevant!

Paul Cody's Perfect Parties 4 Literacy. Paul Cody and his daughter Shanelle, who live in Vancouver, British Columbia, are passionate about literacy with a capital "L." They not only understand how important reading is for a child's success, but they know the impact a good story can have on building self-confidence and character, especially for young children.

Read Barefoot Books. This is our newest partner. Barefoot Book publishes books with a goal of offering rich, culturally diverse stories. They also offer bilingual books. Our partnership is with Lori Rohleder, a stall holder (known in other companies as sales reps). Lori has introduced us to books that we would not otherwise know about.

What has the response been to the Reading Tub®?

I would characterize the response as terrific. Traffic to the website has been picking up steadily, and I'm getting a lot more substantive inquiries of late, which has me really excited. We do not love every book that we receive, and it is hard for authors to hear that, particularly self-published authors. That is why we work very hard to find at least one positive thing to say about every book we review.

When we started the Reading Tub® we expected to rely heavily on the public library to help us find books to review. About three months after we launched the website, authors began to find us, and that hasn't stopped.

One of my favorite things is the partnership with Be the Star You Are! In March 2004, I contacted Cynthia Brian. She is a NY Times best-selling author, actress, radio host, and life coach. She is also passionate about kids and reading. She created Be the Star You Are, a non-profit dedicated to empowering women, families, and youth at risk through improved literacy and positive message programming. BTSYA created a Teen STAR Book Review Team. The Reading Tub sends books for kids ages 8 to 12. The Teen Book Review team members read the books and write the reviews; then I post them on the Reading Tub® Website.

Jennifer Tao, who is the Team leader, has received several local awards; and BTSYA was just featured on KGO-ABC/7 San Francisco. We're getting kids excited about reading and making it relevant by having them use their comprehension and writing skills.

What are your criteria for including books & authors in your Showcase?

We accept any book written for children ages 0 to 13. As you know, there is an incredible world of books out there. According to Bowker (who is the publishing industry resource on this stuff), there were 21,516 new juvenile titles in 2004. We want the opportunity to review as many of them as we can, because the needles in that haystack are some great books ... almost all of which won't be featured on TV or in a magazine.

The criteria for authors to participate in the Author Showcase are that they have written a children's book that is published and accessible and that the Reading Tub® has had the opportunity to review it. We do require a donation for participating in the Showcase. We create two web pages for them, feature them in our newsletter and blog, and write a press release. All of the work is done by volunteers, but we are promoting them and their work.

We use their donation to keep the Reading Tub® Website up and running. We believe that reading is a public commodity ... no one should have to pay extra to find a great book. But there are expenses, not the least of which is web hosting for the very pages we are creating for them. After all, if kids don't know how to read, who will be reading that author's next book?

Do you have any special projects?

We are very fortunate here, because we have a sense of community that is "book oriented." The Virginia Festival of the Book just concluded another fabulous week of events. Still, there are things that we can do to help kids and families with reading and learning.

We are currently working on a project we call One Letter at a Time. It is a project designed to provide parents with facts about literacy and guides on how to help their children. The material – which will be printed in English and Spanish – will be provided free to organizations who work in the under-served segments of our community. The Reading Tub® web site is great for those who are already inclined to read books with their kids, but we need to reach beyond that group. If all goes well, we plan to donate bilingual books as part of the package.

How can people contact you?

The easiest way to reach me is through the Web site. We make it pretty easy for visitors can sign up for our newsletter, get the link for Scrub-a-Dub-Tub (our blog), or send in requests. The email is terry at thereadingtub.com. [NOTE: Substitute symbol for "at" to send email.]

What can people do to help?

The Reading Tub, Inc. is always looking for volunteer families to help us with reading the books we receive. We receive books for infants/toddlers through young adult. It's particularly difficult to get volunteers during the school year, because we are competing with homework. Our reviews aren't a simple "we like this" or "we don't like that" we have some specific criteria we work with, and that requires some extra time from a parent. For picture books, generally takes about an hour to craft a concise book review using our outline. For chapter books, it's usually about two hours.

We are a public charity and like all charities, fundraising is a fact of life. To date 100% of our donations have gone to operating the business; some of it has gone to building and upgrading site capabilities, the rest has gone to current projects or is sitting to build the endowment for other projects on the drawing board.

Some day, I'd like to actually have enough funding to build small staff, but I'm not ready to take that on. So for now, we'll remain volunteers.

What is your greatest wish for The Reading Tub®?

If I could have anything in the world, I'd like an investing partner who brings ethical business savvy to our model and has a strong philanthropic philosophy; one that starts with "let's roll up our sleeves."

The business has been growing for each of its last three years. Currently, I am comfortable with the pace because it allows me to balance life and work. My background is as a public servant, not an entrepreneur. Like all business owners, I want this business to grow so that we can make a difference in the lives of families and children. To make that happen with maximum impact, I need a professional partnership.