Maybe you’ve seen them, lingering in curious little rows toward the bottom of the magazine racks at your favorite bookstore. Above, celebrity-studded glossies promise the big paydays of which freelance dreams are made. Lining the walls around them, debut novels exude the rookie genius you crave.

And there they sit: literary magazines and journals. Excellent writing, but often small circulations and tiny (or nonexistent) paychecks. Excellent reputations, but often highly competitive and tough to crack. Whether you write fiction, creative nonfiction or poetry, publishing within their pages can build you cred among the literary set and put you in talented company—but can it actually help you develop your career, write better or land a book deal?
Undoubtedly. There’s a lot to gain from writing short now, no matter what your goals are for the long haul. Literary agent and former Zoetrope: All-Story head reader April Eberhardt says she has found some of her most promising author clients inside such publications.

“They’re essential to the world of writing,” she says. “So many wonderful writers have begun their careers there, and for those of us who love the excitement of discovering a marvelous new voice, literary journals and magazines are the gift packages in which they arrive.”

Moreover, Eberhardt says there are three solid benefits to targeting these markets: The very act of submitting forces you to sharpen your craft; appearing in print, including e-print, lends legitimacy and heft to your platform that can catch an editor’s eye in pitches down the road; and being published builds confidence—which keeps you writing.

Like other venues for shorter work, the revered realm of literary journals can serve as an excellent building block for your long-term aspirations—be they to land a book deal or establish yourself as a freelance writer.

With that in mind, WD polled 40 literary agents to see which journals they read with an eye for new talent. Then, we rounded up 12 of their picks and contacted the publications’ editors for an inside glimpse at each one—and exclusive tips on how you can break in.

Whatever you do, don’t force every journal into one box. As you’ll discover on the following pages, each outlet has a distinct voice, subject matter, pulse and focus—and they’re anything but uniform.

So read on to find your potential match. Before submitting, check the publications’ websites for updated guidelines—and never forget to read some issues to get a feel for the type of work they favor. If all else fails, great reading in one of the last refuges of short-form creativity breeds your own great writing down the road, right?

**AGNI MAGAZINE**

In the words of Sven Birkerts, editor

“We look for freshness of outlook, clarity and lyrical expressiveness, and artistic seriousness of purpose.”

**FOUNDED:** 1972 at Antioch College by Askold Melnychuk. **MISSION:** To find and advance the cutting edge in literary fiction, nonfiction and poetry, within the broadest cosmopolitan perspective. To stand up for linguistic nuance in an image-saturated culture. **PUBLISHED:** Twice per year, with a regularly updated website featuring new material. **FOCUS:** We divide our attentions equally among the three genres, and make room for artist portfolios and occasional multimedia inserts (DVD, CD). **KEY TO BREAKING IN:** We look for freshness of outlook, clarity and lyrical expressiveness, and artistic seriousness of purpose. **WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE:** Our insistence on subjective uniqueness, our commitment to a global perspective, our search for viable aesthetic modes for contemporary experience. **READERSHIP:** Our readers are discerning and pledged to the ongoing importance of literary expression. **PAST NOTABLE WRITERS:** Ha Jin, Jhumpa Lahiri, Derek Walcott, Ken Kalfus, Rita Dove, Gary Amdahl, Seamus Heaney, Joan Wickersham. **HOW TO SUBMIT:** During our reading period (September to May), either submit a hard copy to AGNI, 236 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215, or electronically at agni.bu.edu. **GOOD WRITING IS:** It startles with its rightness, excites the passion for language, demands to be passed along. **LITERARY JOURNALS ARE:** The places where the seeds first land. They represent the continuity of inspiration in our culture and the guardianship of standards. They are driven not by the market but by collective faith. **DETAILED GUIDELINES:** agni.bu.edu
A PUBLIC SPACE  In the words of Anne McPeak, managing editor

“… a forum for new ideas and new conversations …”

FOUNDED: 2005. MISSION: A Public Space is an independent magazine of literature and culture. The magazine is a forum for new ideas and new conversations, and each issue brings together a wide range of global voices to tell the stories of the 21st century. PUBLISHED: Four times per year. FOCUS: Fiction, nonfiction, poetry, work in translation. KEY TO BREAKING IN: Familiarize yourself with the magazine to make sure your work is a good fit. There’s a lot of great writing out there, but not all of it is right for us. WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE: A Public Space pushes the bounds of traditional narrative, and is especially interested in publishing international literature in translation. READERSHIP: Culturally curious with an international perspective. PAST NOTABLE WRITERS: Kelly Link, Rick Moody, William T. Vollmann, John Haskell, Peter Orner, Samantha Hunt, Yiyun Li, Marilynne Robinson, Nam Le, Anne Carson. HOW TO SUBMIT: Please use our online submission manager; it saves paper and makes it easier for submissions to be tracked. LITERARY JOURNALS ARE: A gateway to discovering your next favorite writer. DETAILED GUIDELINES: apublicspace.org/submit

CHICAGO REVIEW  In the words of V. Joshua Adams, editor

FOUNDED: 1946. MISSION: Chicago Review was founded to correct a situation in which contemporary literature was neglected by academic literary culture. Our mission nowadays is to publish the best writing from the United States and abroad. PUBLISHED: Three times per year. FOCUS: Poetry, criticism, fiction. We are known primarily as a poetry magazine but we like fiction, too. We just publish less of it. KEY TO BREAKING IN: Read it. WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE: CR is run entirely by graduate students. We try to bring a combination of academic rigor and literary sensibility to our work. We also frequently publish in-depth special issues on poets (Duncan, Dorn, Zukofsky, Rexroth, Guest) and national literatures (Polish, German, British). READERSHIP: I think Joshua Cohen said it best when he said they were “like members of the Senate: relatively small in number, but enormous in influence.” PAST NOTABLE WRITERS: Philip Roth, Susan Sontag, William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Robert Duncan, Anaïs Nin, Charles Simic, James Tate, Michael Palmer, Anne Carson. HOW TO SUBMIT: By mail. Send one story or a handful of poems. Always include a SASE. GOOD WRITING IS: A combination of risk and craft. LITERARY JOURNALS ARE: The best place to find good writing. And they need support. Go subscribe to one right now. DETAILED GUIDELINES: humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/review/submit.shtml

CRAZYHORSE  In the words of Garrett Doherty, editor

FOUNDED: 1960. MISSION: Crazyhorse publishes the entire spectrum of today’s fiction, essays and poetry—from the mainstream to the avant-garde, from the established to the undiscovered writer. PUBLISHED: Two times per year, in April and November. FOCUS: Fiction, poetry, personal-oriented essays. KEY TO BREAKING IN: Read an issue to see if your work might go well with the other writers’. WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE: The editors search for “the best of the ecumenical,” so in each issue there is a wide array of style and genre. READERSHIP: Eclectic, on the lookout for something out of the ordinary. PAST NOTABLE WRITERS: Dean Young, Marianne Boruch, Albert Goldbarth, Joelle Fraser, Gary Fincke. HOW TO SUBMIT: Please upload or mail a manuscript of up to 25 pages of fiction or essay, or three to five poems; include a cover letter. We prefer to receive a manuscript online rather than through the mail. GOOD WRITING IS: The best of the mysterious, elusive things. LITERARY JOURNALS ARE: Not read enough, and there is fantastic work in them! Thank you for reading them. DETAILED GUIDELINES: crazyhorse.cofc.edu
GLIMMER TRAIN  
**Founded:** 1990. **Mission:** To publish original and meaningful literary short fiction. **Published:** Four times per year. **Focus:** Fiction. **Key to breaking in:** It’s important to review a publication’s writing guidelines before submitting and, if possible, to review an issue to confirm that there is a potential match between your writing and any particular publication. **What makes us unique:** We have a strong focus on new writers. **Readership:** Our readers (and writers) are affected by other people’s experiences, as well as their own: Life is a big deal to them. They’re observant and they’re compassionate listeners. **Past notable writers:** Gina Ochsner, Daniel Wallace, Yiyun Li, Lauren Groff, Manuel Muñoz, William Trevor, Thisbe Nissen. **How to submit:** Our monthly submission calendar is posted at glimmertrain.org. Categories include: Short Story Award for New Writers, Fiction Open, Very Short Fiction Award, Family Matters, Best Start and Standard. Please use the online submission system at our website. **Good writing is:** Transformative and resonating. **Literary journals are:** They gather and publish work that captures the moments and experiences that test and reveal humanity in a way that will hold meaning over time. **Detailed guidelines:** glimmertrain.com/writguid1.html

McSWEENEY’S  
**Founded:** 1998. **Mission:** To publish the best new fiction by the most exciting writers out there, and to bring as much effort and attention to each issue’s design as our writers do to their stories. **Published:** Four times per year. **Focus:** Fiction. **Key to breaking in:** Sending us something great. **What makes us unique:** We redesign every issue and read everything that’s sent to us, and sometimes there is a comb inside. **Readership:** Handsome. And bosky. **Past notable writers:** Denis Johnson, William T. Vollmann, Rick Moody, Joyce Carol Oates, Heidi Julavits, Jonathan Lethem, Michael Chabon, Susan Straight, Roddy Doyle, T.C. Boyle, Steven Millhauser, Gabe Hudson, Robert Coover, Ann Beattie, David Foster Wallace, George Saunders. **How to submit:** Send a complete ms (no query necessary) to printsubs@mcsweeneys.net, or to Print Submissions, 849 Valencia St., San Francisco, CA 94110. **Good writing is:** Clear, sharp, big-hearted. **Literary journals are:** Pretty interesting things, to me, personally. **Detailed guidelines:** mcsweeneys.net/submit/print.html

n+1  
**Founded:** 2004. **Mission:** The editors of n+1 share the belief that an essentially literary orientation serves as a valuable means to view every part of culture. Their aim is to talk about what was great in culture without giving the word “great” over to conservatives; and to be able to attack what is half-hearted, dishonest and false. The title, n+1, refers to the hope that there is still a next step to be taken in every field of the arts, and that no part of history has ended. **Published:** Two times per year. **Focus:** Fiction, political and cultural criticism, memoir. **Key to breaking in:** For the print publication, it’s best to read back issues to get familiar with what we normally publish. We also publish weekly at nplusonemag.com, so we encourage people who are interested in writing for n+1 to consider submitting to the Web. **What makes us unique:** We publish some of the greatest lesser-known writers in America, and also the greatest lesser-known writing of celebrated writers. **Readership:** Younger, perhaps, than magazines of a similar nature; people who look to literary magazines with a critical edge. **Past notable writers:** Helen DeWitt, Elif Batuman, Vivian Gornick, Benjamin Kunkel, Keith Gessen. **How to submit:** We always prefer e-mails to snail mail manuscripts and queries. Those interested in submitting should consider the kind of writing n+1 publishes, which is normally what can’t be found elsewhere. But don’t explain this to us—make it evident in your pitch. **Good writing is:** Impossible to define, but you know it when you read it. **Detailed guidelines:** nplusonemag.com/about-us
**ONE STORY**  In the words of Hannah Tinti, co-founder and editor-in-chief

“Good writing is: Fine. Great writing is better.”

**FOUNDED:** 2002. **MISSION:** One great short story mailed to subscribers every three weeks. **PUBLISHED:** 18 times per year. **FOCUS:** Short stories. **KEY TO BREAKING IN:** The first thing I notice is the quality of the writing, the skill of the authors to communicate what they are trying to say to the audience. The second is the story itself—I want to read something that surprises me. Something you won’t see in any other magazine. **WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE:** Our format and the consistent quality of the work. **READERSHIP:** A circulation of 6,000, mostly readers and fans, but also writers, agents and editors. **PAST NOTABLE WRITERS:** Andrea Barrett, Ron Carlson, Gregory Maguire, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. **HOW TO SUBMIT:** We accept submissions only online. Visit one-story.com to submit your short stories. Our word limit is 3,000–8,000 words. **GOOD WRITING IS:** Fine. Great writing is better. **LITERARY JOURNALS ARE:** Vital to the survival of modern literature. **DETAILED GUIDELINES:** one-story.com

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**SLICE MAGAZINE**  In the words of Maria Gagliano and Celia Johnson, publishers

“We have a keen eye for what publishing houses are looking for, and many of our authors have been approached by literary agents (a large part of our readership) who saw them in *Slice.*”

**FOUNDED:** 2007. **MISSION:** To pave a space for writers who may not have a platform but show the kind of talent that could be the substance of great works in the future. In each issue, a specific cultural theme becomes the catalyst for writing from renowned authors and lesser-known voices alike. Our hope is that while readers are often drawn to the magazine to read work from their favorite authors, they’ll also discover the amazing new voices that are published alongside them. **PUBLISHED:** Two times per year. Our spring/summer issue publishes in April and our fall/winter issue publishes in October. **FOCUS:** Interviews, fiction, nonfiction, poetry. **KEY TO BREAKING IN:** We look for writing with a fresh take on everyday life. That’s it. Nothing obscure or experimental. Previously unpublished and emerging writers are encouraged to submit—we started this magazine specifically to help them. Submitting to our *Slice* Spotlight Author Competition is a great way to get out of the slush pile and have your work considered among a smaller group of submissions. **WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE:** *Slice* was founded and is run by two book editors with a first-hand view of how difficult it is for new authors to have their voices heard. We have a keen eye for what publishing houses are looking for, and many of our authors have been approached by literary agents (a large part of our readership) who saw them in *Slice.* **READERSHIP:** Publishing professionals (especially editors and agents), emerging writers and everyday bookworms always looking for great new writing. **PAST NOTABLE WRITERS:** Junot Díaz, Salman Rushdie, C.K. Williams, Aleksandar Hemon, Haven Kimmel, Paul Auster. **HOW TO SUBMIT:** Submit to submissions@slicemagazine.org during our reading periods (check our website for dates). Please put your work in the body of an e-mail, not as an attachment. **GOOD WRITING IS:** Something that makes us stop and look at our usual world in exciting new ways. **LITERARY JOURNALS ARE:** A great opportunity for writers to build their platforms and work with publishers who are truly passionate about nurturing writers and their work. (We wouldn’t do it if it weren’t for the love!) **DETAILED GUIDELINES:** slicemagazine.org/submit.php for regular submissions and slicemagazine.org/spotlight_competition.php for our spotlight competition.
TIN HOUSE  In the words of Rob Spillman, editor

“Literary journals are: Frequently dull, pretentious, willfully obscure.”

**FOUNDED:** 1999. **MISSION:** To publish the most interesting, forward-looking literary work in the world. **PUBLISHED:** Four times per year. **FOCUS:** Fiction, essays, poetry, food and drink columns, our Lost & Found section on underappreciated books and authors. **KEY TO BREAKING IN:** A strong voice. **WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE:** Well-designed, unpretentious, timeless. **READERSHIP:** Literate, well-rounded, curious, adventurous. **PAST NOTABLE WRITERS:** Dorothy Allison, Stephen King, Richard Ford, Sherman Alexie, Francine Prose, Stuart Dybek, Steven Millhauser, Charles Simic. **HOW TO SUBMIT:** Online, via tinhous.com. **GOOD WRITING IS:** Clear, personal. **LITERARY JOURNALS ARE:** Frequently dull, pretentious, willfully obscure. **DETAILED GUIDELINES:** tinhous.com

TRIQUARTERLY  In the words of Ian Morris, associate editor

**FOUNDED:** 1964. **MISSION:** To discover new writers, to give attention to the non-commercial work of established writers and to serve as a bridge between American literary culture and writing from abroad. The editors seek to sustain a unique and well-established combination of openness to new writers, international range and artistic seriousness, combined with high production values. **TriQuarterly** is distinguished from other American literary magazines by its openness to writing that treats a great diversity of subjects and that reflects an equal variety of aesthetic approaches (including many works in translation), and by its special issues, which aim to be collections of a kind seldom undertaken by commercial publishing but of great value as models of the range and vitality of imaginative writing and literary culture. **PUBLISHED:** Three times per year. **FOCUS:** Fiction, poetry, nonfiction, the occasional art portfolio. **KEY TO BREAKING IN:** Patience, persistence and, of course, talent. **WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE:** Since its inception, **TriQuarterly** has been known for its eclectic range of special issues, including issues devoted to the work of Nabokov, Borges, Plath; to the literatures of Mexico, South Africa, Poland, Spain, Italy; to topics ranging from tales from the American West to writers under 30, which included at the time Jim Harrison and Joyce Carol Oates. **READERSHIP:** Adventurous, independent, willing to step off the well-worn path. **PAST NOTABLE WRITERS:** John Barth, Charles Baxter, Anne Sexton, Edward Hirsch, Sharon Olds, Stuart Dybek, Sandra M. Gilbert, Aleksandar Hemon, Amy Hempel, Gina B. Nahai, Adrienne Rich. **HOW TO SUBMIT:** By mail only with a SASE, from Oct. 1–Feb. 28. **GOOD WRITING IS:** That which confounds expectations for the better. **LITERARY JOURNALS ARE:** The best place to read writers who will be appearing in mainstream markets three to five years from now. **DETAILED GUIDELINES:** triquarterlytoday.blogspot.com

ZOETROPE: ALL-STORY  In the words of Krista Halverson, managing editor

**FOUNDED:** 1997. **MISSION:** The magazine is a platform for artistic experimentation and collaboration. We aim to publish stories with ambition and compelling ideas, stories that are provocative and important in some way. **PUBLISHED:** Four times per year. **FOCUS:** Short fiction. **KEY TO BREAKING IN:** As with all journals, a writer should first read back issues of the magazine to determine whether his work is a good fit. **WHAT MAKES US UNIQUE:** Each issue is designed in its entirety by a leading artist. Past designers include William Eggleston, Tom Waits, Laurie Anderson, Guillermo del Toro, Dennis Hopper and Gus Van Sant. **PAST NOTABLE WRITERS:** Mary Gaitskill, Woody Allen, Yiyun Li, Ha Jin, John Barth, Margaret Atwood, Don DeLillo. **HOW TO SUBMIT:** We accept hard-copy submissions of short stories, 7,000 words or fewer, from Jan. 1–Sept. 1. Writers should include a SASE for our reply. **DETAILED GUIDELINES:** all-story.com [WD]

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