

FEATURES

Career Ladder

Mae Dibley

IN THE FIRST of a series of career profiles to give students a window into the sometimes very daunting looking world of work, SCAN spoke to Kevin Wignall- Lancaster alumnus and author of novels including, *For The Dogs* and *Who Is Conrad Hirst?*-about becoming a writer. The role of a writer can vary enormously and often requires links outside the immediate publishing sphere. Kevin for example says he has a lot of involvement with the film industry. Be aware that almost all authors are self-employed, there is no average salary, and often you will depend on a secondary income, at least until you have established a good reputation for your writing.

So Kevin, what subject did you study at Lancaster?

I studied Politics and International Relations.

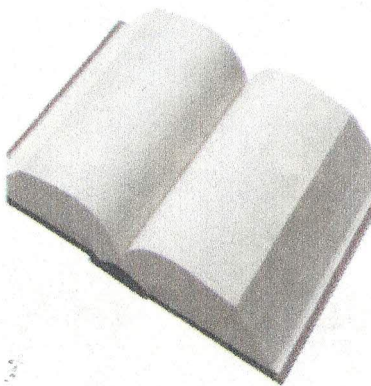
How would you say your time at Lancaster helped you in your profession?

I was a terrible student. The good news is, it's simply being at university that gives you the right kind of background for becoming a writer, meeting new people, bouncing ideas off them, opening your mind, expanding your cultural horizons. Oh, I also set my second book, *Among the*

Dead, in Lancaster.

What is the typical career path for an author?

There isn't one. You can work in publishing and that will help you make contacts, you can do an MA in Creative Writing and



that will help you find your voice. But in the end, you have to sit down and write a novel that someone will want to buy. That's what I did – I realized I'd been talking about writing a book for too long, decided it was time and I finally did it.

What advice would you give to students at Lancaster who think they might like to become an author?

Most people reading this are likely to be almost too young to become a published novelist, and you'd still be considered a

young novelist if you've been published by your mid-30s. So don't rush in. On the other hand, time will eat itself once you graduate and before you know it you'll be in your retirement home, saying, "I always wanted to write a book". So take the time to live a little, find your voice and a story worth telling, then get on and write it.

Are there any resources you recommend for would-be writers?

The web is awash with good advice now and to some extent it's a question of searching around for your specific area of interest. www.thebookseller.com is a good place to learn about the industry. <http://everynewhosanyone.com/> is an odd site, created by a despairing writer, which gives you the websites and email addresses of many agents and publishers - use it to learn about the different agencies but never email an agent directly if you don't know them. You could also do worse than to look at the "Writers and Artists Yearbook" (www.writersandartists.co.uk) as until 10 years ago it was pretty much the only way of finding information on agents and publishers and it's still a great resource [a copy of this is available for reference in CEEC].

Next Time: SCAN speak to Neville Thurlbeck, editor of *The News of The World*, on what it takes to be a journalist. Neville will also be holding a talk on Journalism this Friday (26th) in Faraday Lecture Theatre at 11am.