

Becoming an Author

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I wasn't always an author, or even an editor, but I was always some kind of academic. With parents who were teachers, my mother a music teacher and my father a psychology professor, that's not really surprising. But my interest initially was in science, so the only writing I did and was trained to do was writing research reports and papers. Actually, that was good training for most writing, even fiction since the results of my experiments often didn't match what was supposed to happen!

My writing career began while I was working at the [Unification Theological Seminary](#) (UTS) in Barrytown, New York. One of the courses I taught here was on Unification Philosophy, and my first book, entitled "[Contemplating Unification Thought](#)", is a volume of articles I wrote based on my experiences teaching that course. During my time at UTS I also published a [companion volume](#) which includes clarifications of various concepts in Unification Thought. I attended a number of seminars given by Dr. Sang Hun Lee, who developed [Unification Thought](#) based on the revelations received by [Reverend Sun Myung Moon](#). This book contains some of Dr. Lee's responses to questions raised by participants. I wanted to make these materials available to students in the class, and this effort introduced me to the world of print on-demand self-publishing.

Then, I was asked to write a biography of the first president of UTS, Dr. David S.C. Kim. It turned out that he had enough material for three books! These were published in quick succession, with titles including phrases he often used as encouragement and spiritual guidance to the students: "[Let Us Learn from the Past](#)," "[The Ideal Family to Be or Not to Be](#)," and "[Let Us Work Together for Good](#)."

While at UTS I met Dr. Dietrich Seidel and his family who lived in the apartment upstairs from ours in the historic Massena House in Barrytown. In fact, the Seidel's daughter, Diesa, became the first babysitter for our daughter, Rosie! I began working with Dietrich to publish [a volume of his articles](#), but due to his ill health this was not completed before he passed away in 2016. After his passing, his wife Elisabeth worked with me to complete this book, which reflects Dietrich's theological research and their work as a couple in marriage and family counseling.

In the meantime, Elisabeth discovered a treasure trove in their garage – letters she and Dietrich wrote to each other during their 40 years of marriage. They each saved the letters they received from their beloved spouse! With help from Yuichi Tanabe, my husband who is an artist, I compiled their letters into a heartwarming publication, illustrated with photos and copies of some of the beautiful cards the Seidel couple sent to each other over the years. This book is fittingly called "[Beloveds, Forever Together: Letters of Eternal Love](#)."

Another treasure that Elisabeth found is a collection of tape recordings of the many classes Dietrich taught, as well as sermons and talks he gave over the years. The first publication to emerge from these materials deals with [eternal life in the realm of spirit](#), based on a continuing education class Dietrich taught in Rhinebeck. This one was more than just an editing job, since Dietrich had shown a lot of videos in the classes and of course that part was not on the tapes. I started researching the kinds of testimonies that must have been shown and I found a wealth of fascinating information on the topic, including messages from the spiritual realm received through mediums as well as accounts of near-death

experiences. A friend also lent me a book on angels at that time. At this point, I realized that there was a lot of additional content I could add, from this research and from the theoretical understanding of the spiritual realm from Unification Thought. As a result, I became a co-author of that publication!



Elisabeth Seidel and Jennifer Tanabe

The [next project](#) involved his sermons, given both to the staff and students at UTS as well as to more public audiences. The sermons focus on bringing God into our daily life, translating faith into practice, especially in marriage and family life, and constitute the second book resulting from the tape collection. More tapes are being transcribed and I plan to compile them into further publications.

Other authors I have worked with have resulted in a variety of publications. While serving as an editor of the online "[New World Encyclopedia](#)," I worked with Dr. Mirek Karasek on a number of topics in the field of economics, his specialty. We then co-authored a groundbreaking work on [international aid](#).

A very different publication is "[The Kalki Avatar: Tears for Nepal](#)" which I edited for Ginger Nicholls, a 1986 graduate of UTS. Ginger and her husband, John, spent 15 years as missionaries to Nepal, the land of Mount Everest. Ginger is originally from Minnesota, which is where I first landed in the US! John is from England, a fellow Brit, so I feel a nice kinship with them. And the story of their life in Nepal is nothing short of amazing.

My editing/co-authoring efforts continue with other UTS graduates. I collaborate with them to publish their writings, be it memoirs, theoretical understandings gained through their studies, or the practical application of their research. As someone who suffered the pains of writing a doctoral dissertation and needed help to find ways to publish its findings, I empathize with their desire to make their dissertations do more than collect dust on a library shelf. And it is always exciting to help in the publication of their insights on different topics.

However, at some point I realized I don't want to be limited to scholarly writing and so I ventured into the world of fiction. My first foray is a set of short stories, "[The Catalpa Tree Fairy and Other Stories](#)," for which my husband spent many hours producing beautiful illustrations. These stories were inspired by my life in the beautiful Mid-Hudson Valley, and several feature the trees and birds found in my backyard, where I enjoy sitting with a cup of tea accompanied by one or more of my cats. One of those beloved cats passed on a few years ago and is the star of one story, while others have characters drawn from my life and my imagination, together with a healthy dose of fantasy.

My next work of fiction is already in progress, but my time to work on it often takes second place to the non-fiction publications. Now I feel like the characters are getting impatient waiting for their stories to be told! Does that mean I've really become an author, with a muse that wants me to keep writing?

Dr. Jennifer Tanabe was born in St. Andrews, Scotland and earned both her Bachelors (1974) and Doctoral (1978) degrees in Psychology from the University of Edinburgh. She was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Minnesota's Institute of Child Development and later taught graduate level courses as well as holding a number of administrative positions at Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, New York. She currently works as a freelance educational consultant, editor and writer. (jenniferptanabe.com)