

## UNF professor and author hopes to make dreams come true for other scribes

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By [Jim Schoettler](#)



Thirty years ago, aspiring writer Sharon Y. Cobb spotted Tennessee Williams walking outside the Key West art gallery where she worked and ventured outside to make a pitch.

"I said, 'I really want to write, but I just don't know what to do,'" Cobb said. "So he looked at me and said, 'Write, damn it. Just write.'"

The legendary playwright also suggested that the nervous young woman take a creative writing course, which she did.

Thirty years later, the author, screenwriter and University of North Florida adjunct professor is paying the favor forward to help other aspiring writers.

Cobb is into her third year as owner and mastermind of the Writers Pitch Book, a business that connects authors and screenwriters with agents, editors and producers while eliminating the need for query letters and other middleman steps needed to get published.

The Pitch Book requires a 150-word synopsis of a book or screenplay that gets a close edit from Cobb before she passes it on to a nationwide list of agents, editors and producers. The service covers the gamut of writing, from adult fiction and nonfiction to children's books. Those pitched are sent multiple synopses in the specific genres they specialize in.

### \$50 for a pitch

Cobb received 134 pitches in the first two years, some from as far away as India using her website [www.writerspitchbook.com](http://www.writerspitchbook.com). Agents and others requested more work in 64 cases, though no contracts have been written. The next Pitch Book will be delivered in September, with the service expanding to two deliveries in 2012.

The first pitch costs \$50 with discounts for multiple pitches. Making a few bucks for her many hours of work is one goal, but being able to help someone get published would be the ultimate prize, Cobb said.

"I really believe this is a solution to a major problem writers have - getting connected," said Cobb, author of two books and a screenplay. "To have an agent then request your full manuscript is like winning the sweepstakes."

Cobb began the Pitch Book while director of the UNF Writers Conference in 2009. Originally designed for those who signed up for the conference, Cobb made the service public last year after attendees sought to have friends submit pitches.

### Like a movie preview

She said a good pitch must ensure that the concept for the work is marketable and that the synopsis is compelling.

"It's the same thing as you watching a preview of a movie and you making the decision, 'Do I want to spend \$10 to go to that movie?'" she said. "Does it spark their [the agent's] imagination?"

Cobb's service is an innovative method for would-be authors to take the first step in achieving their dreams, said Vic DiGenti, Northeast Florida director for the Florida Writers Association. He praised his friend and fellow author for helping to pave the road for others.

"Writers are usually generous people who know how it was when they first got started, so they're willing to extend a helping hand," DiGenti said. "It behooves her to give back."

Simply getting a bite from an agent can give an aspiring author a jolt of much-needed confidence, Cobb said. Some clients asked for additional work after their pitches got delivered "were just leaping around screeching how excited they were," she said.

Williams would be proud of his longtime admirer.

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