

Two conditions are essential for writing a book, as no doubt every author in history has found out. As there are no textbooks on how to write a book, at least I have never found one, every author must for him- or herself rediscover that he needs the right psychological and the best possible physical infrastructure, just for composing his book's manuscript. Having it printed and published were another matter.

The psychological requirements are simple to state: There must be an all-transcending desire to write the great work, to sacrifice friends and even family, in order to preserve from interference the all too precious time of writing. If a daily allowance of some hours can be achieved, set aside for writing 500 words for an easy text, then a 160000 words book, *Research Films*, would require 320 days, say one year. But 500 words each day is the performance of a professional newspaper journalist. I certainly did not achieve this when I wrote my first book, when constant looking-up of historical references was required. Peace of mind, and absence of any financial worries, are other desiderata—nay, essentials—for composing a book.

The physical infrastructure is also simple to state. The transfer of words, from one's mind to a permanent base, has undergone a great technological evolution in history. From stylus to wax tablet, from pen and ink to paper and from mechanical typewriter to paper, were all preliminaries to the present electronic personal computer, with its great memory. If an author is lucky enough to devote himself full-time to writing, then he needs a regular supply of meals, warmth or air-conditioning, and of course a comfortable chair.

Not all authors have been so fortunate in the past; many had to fight against appalling conditions and yet achieved great works of literature—these were the geniuses who overcame all difficulties. I am here considering the average scientist like myself who wants to write a book and tries to make this lengthy task as easy for himself, and as efficient as possible.

At 14 Sirius Avenue in Sydney, I was lucky again and had a cool, large and quiet room in the basement—the hobby room as the estate agent called it—a solid Swiss Hermes portable typewriter, regular meals supplied by Nanny, as Ann had by then left me and lived in Perth. No financial worries, and the overwhelming desire to write about Research Films. My difficulties were of a different nature and I shall describe them below. I started work very early in the day when it was still cool, stopped for lunch and drank red wine copiously. At a fraction, 1/8 of a pound sterling per gallon, I could afford it!