

**How to Publish &
Market a Book
Without
Jumping
Off
a
Cliff**

Excerpt

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A Dandelion Books Publication
www.dandelion-books.com

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How to Write & Publish a Book without Falling off a Cliff - ebook edition

ISBN 978-1-934280-71-3

Dandelion Books, LLC
Tempe, Arizona

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How to Choose the Right Online Publisher

Googling for Book Publishers opens the floodgates to over 14,700,000 entries which predictably by tomorrow will have already grown by several hundred more.

Browsing through the glitz of ads, special offers and celebrity testimonials can leave you feeling helpless and blatantly manipulated. Online marketers come from a long line of offline advertisers who are notorious for being able to sell ice cubes to Alaskans and hot toddies to Arizonans.

With all this high-pitched hyper-link hysteria, how do you go about choosing the right company for your book? Which publisher among the multitudes is going to do your work justice and also give you the best bang for your buck?

Ask your colleagues

Most people will tell you that word of mouth is one of the best ways to gather information about a product or service. However, be discerning. Personal referrals can also send you down a rabbit hole. What may work for one writer may be a potential disaster for another.

Jamie's Manuscript

Jamie just finished writing a fiction work that has a straight text interior—no graphics or diagrams. He also owns book cover design software.

Jamie isn't concerned about book sales, so he doesn't have a marketing budget. "Writing is a hobby," he candidly admits. "If someone likes my novel, great! I don't expect to get rich from it, and

chances of me becoming a best-selling author are—well—let’s say fairly remote.”

Jamie is honest. He’s told you his goals and expectations. He’s also told you his focus is not on writing and selling books. In fact, he really doesn’t care about numbers. He just likes to write.

Jamie decides to publish with a budget online “turnkey company.” He tells you that all he has to do is upload his designed interior and cover files and *Voila!* he has a printed and bound book drop-shipped to his home.

Margie’s Manuscript

Margie is also a fiction writer. She’s clueless about book design and layout and meticulous when it comes to editing and proofreading.

Unlike Jamie, Margie wants to sell her book when it’s published; in fact, she wants this book to launch her writing career.

Margie doesn’t have a marketing budget and her publishing budget is also limited. With two small children, she’s chosen to be a stay-at-home mom and her husband’s high school teacher’s salary is stretched to the max.

Margie is thrilled to learn from Jamie about a low cost publishing company that he likes. The ads are enticing and the company certainly gets good recognition. Wherever you go on the internet, anything related to “books,” “writing” and “publishing” seems to be linked to this company. It claims to publish thousands of books annually, and the price is certainly right.

Before signing in with Jamie’s publisher, Margie wisely decides to wait for Jamie’s first printed books to arrive until she can evaluate a finished product. She’s glad she did.

Even though Jamie used his MS Word spell check, the published book was still loaded with glitches, such as “though” instead of “through,” “two” instead of “to” and “sow” instead of “so.” Most of us know what happens when we do not manually proofread a manuscript not once, but several times, before it’s designed and laid out.

Jamie also didn’t bother to proof his pdf files; if he had, he may have caught some of those errors before the book was set up for printing.

Although Jamie does know how to use publishing software, every professional book designer will tell you there's much more to the process of design and layout than simply converting one file to another. Jamie's margins were irregular; he forgot to insert running heads; the copyright page ended up on the right rather than the left facing page... and as for "widows and orphans..."

Margie decided to save up her money and place her book in the hands of a publisher that could give it plenty of Tender Loving Care. Another friend recommended a boutique co-publisher and Margie loved the appearance of her friend's book. This company also provided Margie's friend with a wealth of reliable information about book marketing and promotion.

Your Book

Your book is not fiction and it is longer than Jamie's and Margie's novel. It also includes graphics, photographs, tables and charts and requires an index.

You are well aware that Jamie's turnkey "fast food" dot.com method of publishing won't work for you.

Demand quality from your Publisher—and yourself

Following is an excellent article by Jim Barnes titled "Publisher Up!" in *Independent Publisher* (Volume 8 - Number 7), about the importance of producing a quality work.

Preceding the article is an excerpt from an essay by Jonathan Karp, editor-in-chief of TWELVE, an imprint of Warner Books. The essay was published in the *Washington Post* (June 29):

The barriers to entry in the book business get lower each year. There are thousands of independent publishers and even more self-publishers. These players will soon have the same access to readers as major publishers do, once digital distribution and print-on-demand technology enter the mainstream. When that happens, publishers will lose their greatest competitive advantage: the ability to distribute books widely and effectively. Those who publish generic books for expedient purposes will face new competitors. Like the music companies, some of those publishers may shrink or die.

Many categories of books will be subsumed by digital media. Reference publishing has already migrated online. Practical nonfiction will be next, winding up on Web sites that can easily update and disseminate visual and textual information. Readers of old-fashioned genre fiction will die off, and the next generation will have so many different entertainment options that it's hard to envision the same level of loyalty to brand-name formula fiction coming off the conveyor belt every year. The novelists who are truly novel will thrive; the rest will struggle.

Consequently, publishers will be forced to invest in works of quality to maintain their niche. These books will be the one product that only they can deliver better than anyone else. Those same corporate executives who dictate annual returns may begin to proclaim the virtues of research and development, the great engine of growth for business. For publishers, R&D means giving authors the resources to write the best books--works that will last, because the lasting books will, ultimately, be where the money is.

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At last! One cry amidst the multitude for *quality publishing!* Thank you, Jonathan Karp.

I have a personal reason for being grateful for this article. My own publishing company, Dandelion Books, was built on the same foundation: quality books for readers who want and expect the best. There will always be a place for pulp fiction and disposable books in other genres as well, just as there will always be comic book readers and pop culture fans with no desire to stretch and expand their horizons. Not everyone has to like Picasso--or Bela Bartok--or John Ashbery.

Dandelion fashioned its image after one of my favorite former publishing houses, Grove Press. Barney Rosset, its founder and editor-in-chief, has been cited as "the greatest American publisher of the twentieth century and the most influential cultural figure that you haven't heard of. Under Rosset, Grove Press and *Evergreen Review* fought decisive battles, including many before the state and federal supreme courts, defeated legal censorship, and opened American life to new and dangerous currents of freedom. But Rosset's public fight against hypocrisy and injustice is inextricable from his tumultuous personal life: the same unyielding, quixotic, restless energy that

upended centuries of law brought Rosset perilously close to destruction."

Grove Press was avant garde publishing at its best. If the truth hurts, it can also set you free.

Although Rosset never cared about being politically correct, Karp may have to be more careful; his imprint is still tied to a corporate parent. Yet even if the jury is still out when it comes to risk-taking, clearly Karp is betting on the future. He has made a commitment to bring forth *books that have lasting value*.

Jim Barnes continues:

...now that we've put away our beach toys and the new sales season begins, it's going to be EVEN HARDER to break through and achieve marketing and sales success. As Jonathan Karp states above, success in publishing is a game of chance, and the odds keep getting longer as more players join the game.

...visit (Karp's) website of his publishing imprint 12, and read his mission statement explaining how they'll publish no more than one book a month, "by authors who have a unique perspective and compelling authority." He adds this wise statement: 'To sell the book is only the beginning of our mission. To build avid audiences of readers who are enriched by these works--that is our ultimate purpose.'

This issue's lead article spotlights the like-minded Colorado independent publisher, Fulcrum, and how they nabbed acclaimed author Laura Pedersen from the New York houses to top their fall list. "The big publishers have become more 'accounting model' driven, and have also focused less on editorial engagement," says Fulcrum's publisher Sam Scinta. "We have been able to attract several authors who have published with the bigger houses because of how we do our business."

Scinta goes on to explain how Fulcrum supports books and authors for the long haul and builds strong author-editor relationships. Pedersen notes that during four years and four novels with a Random House imprint, she worked with five different editors and five different publicists. "The typical editor-writer Manhattan lunch became somewhat of a bad blind date since I knew we'd probably never meet again, even if according to the zodiac we were both air signs," she says.

Publishers like Karp and Scinta are trying to change this way of doing business and bring back the decency and dignity of books and

publishing. I subtitled this issue "PUBLISHER UP!" as a nod to Western publishing and because I attended a rodeo over Labor Day weekend. (Cowboy Up! means, of course: when the going gets tough, work harder and smarter.)

I think it's our hope for the future not only of publishing, but for society, that we as authors and publishers assure that the book regains its status and America becomes an avid book culture once again. We need to get beyond the noise of advertiser-dominated mass communication and back to the thoughtful exchange of ideas that books provide. The "dumbing-down" of America has to stop, and literacy plays a big part. Disposable books have a place, but we owe ourselves much more.

One of the best resources for digital or on demand book publishing is Angela Hoy's *Writer's Weekly* newsletter.

On her website, Hoy writes:

The dirty little secret of the Print On Demand (POD) industry is that the most popular ones all use the same service to do our printing, and we all distribute our books through Ingram. So the quality of our books and the places to which we sell them are identical. The only real differences are the prices we charge, the quality of our customer service, and our business models.

Hoy makes an important point. Demand quality from yourself and others; maintain the highest standards in all aspects of your life.

Publish only with a company that offers quality services, including quality customer service. For example, avoid working with publishers that do not serve their customers personally. Automated or turnkey companies are glorified quick print copy services. My 25+ years of publishing experience have taught me that both pre-press and printing services require special attention.

Naming Names

Hoy doesn't hesitate to point out that "iUniverse, XLibris, and Authorhouse and many of the smaller POD companies have a business model built around selling a base publishing package, and then upselling authors on additional services.

Whether you sell a copy of your book to anyone or not doesn't really matter because their profit comes from upselling authors on products

and services. This is why they take any book submitted to them, regardless of quality.

They care more about how many authors they can squeeze through their doors than they care about quality. If they truly cared about quality, they wouldn't be putting so much garbage on the market, which actually hurts our entire industry.

Whew! Little needs to be added to Hoy's opinion about three of the largest and most popular online publishing companies.

Let me point out, however, that Hoy's own company, BookLocker.com, provides only *publishing services*. Therefore, she neatly avoids the "garbage issue" and avoids the danger of accepting money from customers whose works do not meet her own high standards.

Publishing Services vs. Publishing Companies

Booklocker.com states in its contract that "...the company is not a publisher and retains no exclusive rights to the publisher's Work. Self-published authors are their own publishers and are free to list and sell their books elsewhere."

If you go to OfficeMax, Staples, Kinko's or any other copy place and ask them to copy and bind some pages you've printed out, they will not reject your work. They will print anything you give them. So will the three online publishing companies Hoy mentions.

Similar to a turnkey online self-publishing company, a publishing services company prints your manuscript exactly as it is delivered to them. It simply pours the files into their book making machine, which prints the interior, front and back covers and binds both together with a printed spine. It looks like a book, even though it may not meet book industry standards.

Also, a publishing services company does not provide an ISBN number for your book and it does not register it with the U. S. Copyright Office or Library of Congress. Too late, many authors discover they cannot sell their books through many of the online retailers if it doesn't have an ISBN number.

If you wish to have your book professionally designed and laid out, you will be paying extra for this. Also, some publishing services

companies do not do indexing. You may have to out-source this part and then deliver it to the publishing services company for inclusion.

Bottom line: If you do not want to open your own self-publishing company and you want to make sure every detail from start to finish is professionally addressed, the best option is to work with a quality co-publishing company.

However, if you *do* want to start your own publishing company and be in charge of all operations yourself, it's good to know beforehand exactly what's involved.

Self-Publishing vs. Co-Publishing Companies

Ron Pramschufer, a person I highly respect for being one of the most knowledgeable and experienced entrepreneurs in the digital book publishing industry recently posted a brilliant article in his "Publishing Basics" newsletter. The Company's main website is Books Just Books, www.booksjustbooks.com .

States Pramschufer: "First off, you can't be a self-publisher without being the publisher."

I'm very glad he makes this point. *A self-publisher is a publisher.* Full responsibility for every detail of the publishing, marketing and distribution rests on the author's shoulders.

The Business of Self-Publishing

Pramschufer continues: "I start off every seminar I give with the line 'Writing is a love, publishing is a business.' If you plan to self-publish, you are going into the publishing business. Like any other business, to be successful, you need to learn about the business.

"I use the example that you wouldn't open an auto repair business without learning about automobiles. I can take that one step further. You wouldn't think of opening that same repair shop and paying 50% of the income to the guy who installed the sign on the front door, would you?

"This is exactly what you are doing when you pay a place like Author House or Iuniverse to publish your book. Sure, they installed the sign on the front door, but are they worth half the profit?"

Pramschufer describes this process:

With true self-publishing, the author is opening a business, just like that auto repair shop. If the repair shop needs to hire a mechanic to help him provide his service, they hire a mechanic. The mechanic works for a fee-for service basis. The owner works for profit.

A publisher hires editors, designers and printers on the same fee-for-service basis. Back to that sign on the door, yes, the auto repair shop needs a sign but there are plenty of sign companies out there who would be more than willing to provide a sign for a fee. But, do you give the sign manufacturer a percentage of the business? Of course you don't. The same principles apply to every other component of your business.

If the vanity publishing venture capitalists ever wandered over into the auto repair business, how do you think it would work? How many people would be lining up to open auto repair shops where they pay the bills for all the services, do all the work and then split the profits with the sign maker?

Now think of that vanity auto repair shop "owner" waking up one morning and realizing that his business venture was headed nowhere and he wanted to take his investment and move on to a situation that made more business sense. How do you think he would feel when he attempted to move, and the sign maker told him he couldn't because the sign maker not only owned the sign (that you paid for) but they also own all the equipment in the shop (that you also paid for). Did I mention he owned the customer list, too? The only way you could move your auto repair shop to another location where you didn't have to split the profits, was to start all over again.

As absurd as the above example may seem, this is exactly what is happening on a daily basis out there in the publishing world. Hundreds of people are falling for the vanity press trap, every week. They are paying for 100% of the services (at an inflated price, I might add), letting the vanity press/POD Publisher hang the sign on the door and then split all the profits. When the author tries to change the arrangement and move into true self-publishing, he discovers that he doesn't own the ISBN or the printing files, or anything else, for that matter. His only choice is to start all over. Great deal, huh?

'Traditional Publishers' vs. Co-Publishers

If measured by quality of the work and a professional approach to publishing, today there is little distinction between a company that is often referred to as a "traditional publisher" and a co-publisher.

One major difference is the fact that traditional publishers often do not accept manuscripts submitted directly; they work only with literary agents. This means the work must be professionally edited before the author submits them, or they will be rejected after an editor reads the first couple pages. Usually the author must also invest time and money developing a professionally written book proposal, which serves as the literary agent's passport for contacting publishers.

Co-publishing opens the doors to authors who may need final editing and/or book doctoring assistance. Often a co-publisher will accept the manuscript with the understanding that the author is willing to pay for this professional work.

However, a co-publisher will not accept a work that is still in rough draft form or that obviously needs major development. It will not accept a work on potential alone.

A second difference between traditional and co-publishing that is often hidden from the public. Often a first author signing in with a traditional publisher will only be allowed to accept the publisher's offer if they agree to pay for marketing and promotion—demonstrating in advance that they have a hefty budget for their book launch. Usually this budget far exceeds the costs of publishing with a co-publisher.

Yes, but... if the author has a large budget for the book launch, isn't that a guarantee that the campaign will start the sales snowball rolling? No... and yes. There is NEVER a guarantee that a marketing campaign will produce significant book sales.

The marketplace is whimsical and unpredictable. What's "in" today may be "out" tomorrow. You can spend \$50,000 on your book launch and end up with the same number of sales as the author who published with a co-publisher (spending less than \$10,000 for a quality book, including a short print run).

Creative low cost marketing often gets better results than an expensive campaign with a traditional publisher.

By now we've all heard the "lipstick-on-a-pig" statement enough to know that if a manuscript lacks substance, it will never be considered a quality product. The major ingredient is still missing.

Should I Self-Publish or Co-Publish?

What is your dream? Is it to be a publisher or a professional writer, coach, healer, teacher and/or seminar leader? If the answer is "to be a publisher," by all means, DO open up your own publishing company. Some of you may feel you can shoulder the responsibilities of both running a publishing company and managing your career.

If, however, you prefer to trust an experienced, reliable co-publisher because you realize how labor intensive the process of publishing really is, choose to work with a company that is known for its quality products.

Check List

Here is a checklist if you wish to have your manuscript published by a bona fide co-publishing company and if you are writing to publish for profit:

1. A project facilitator (not a robot, but a live person) who will work closely with you and make sure each step of the publishing process is completed satisfactorily before moving to the next one
2. Registrations (ISBN number, LC number and registrations with the appropriate agencies)
3. Editing and proofing of your manuscript when it is still in MS Word
4. Professional layout and design; proofing and "tweaking" of the pdf file before it is sent to you for your own proofing and signoff
5. Revision of the interior pdf file if necessary, before the file is set up for printing
6. Professionally designed front book cover
7. Professionally developed back cover copy, design and layout
8. Revision of the book cover if necessary, before the pdf file is set up for printing

9. Book proof or sample of the digitally setup book
10. Revision of the book proof, with another setup of the cover and/or interior if necessary
11. A sufficient number of printed copies to be sent to the registration offices and to have on file for potential review and foreign rights requests (I suggest ordering 100 copies initially, with approximately 30 copies to be kept with the publisher for their own sales and promotion).

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Book printing – A Tribute to Jason Epstein

Book printing has taken a giant leap forward not only off the page and into space, but also reincarnating in digital format through an amazing automated “book making machine” known as the Espresso.

Jason Epstein, former editorial director of Random House and founder and CEO of On Demand Books, www.ondemandbooks.com, the company that markets the Espresso, is one of the pioneers of the new book printing and storage revolution.

The backlist: backbone of the book industry

In 1951 when Epstein went to work for Doubleday, it didn't take long for him to learn that the key to book industry survival is “backlist.”

As Epstein expounded in his 2008 Hong Kong Book Fair address, publishing cannot exist without backlist:

Backlist is a publisher's most important asset: titles that have covered their initial costs, earned out the authors' advances, require no further investment except the cost of making and shipping the book itself and which sell steadily year after year without advertising or significant sales expense.

Without a substantial list of such titles a publisher cannot survive. The same can be said of a civilization, for the books that survive the test of time, books that are treasured and read year after year, are humanity's backlist, our collective brain.

I do not refer simply to the classics of our various traditions but also to the more recent books, hundreds of which are published every year and join the backlist if not permanently at least long enough to move the process forward, provide depth and complexity to our understanding for those who seek it.

Backlist deepens our knowledge of human experience past and present. Without these books we would not know who we are or where we came from or where we may be going.

Publishers are secular priests

“Publishing is not really a business at all, at least not a very good business,” declared Epstein. “If it’s money you want to make, go into a real business and take your chances... publishing is a vocation, a secular priesthood for publishers are caretakers of our collective memory, indispensable servants to those other caretakers, poets, story tellers, librarians, teachers and scholars.”

Did I cringe when I read that statement? I hope so—otherwise I, like many other publishers would be living in denial. Every serious publisher is well aware that it’s not the brass ring of a best seller but something else far more significant that motivates us to dedicate ourselves to bringing forth quality books.

We “secular priests” are also deeply committed to the backlist: preservation of the written word. If only one person finds value in a book that is out of print, it is worth the effort to reissue that work and make it available.

Epstein’s backlist mission began with the creation of paperback books: lower cost and easier on the publishers’ budget. However, paperbacks still required print runs that often led to out of print books and investments in inventory and warehousing.

Print on Demand – Backlist Bonanza

The major breakthrough occurred when digital technologies burst into the marketplace and print on demand became a reality.

As a writer who signed a contract with one of the major publishers for a book that was censored shortly after it appeared, and as a publisher myself who opened my company in 2000 expressly because I was concerned about valuable books that got lost to the latest cookbook or diet book, I was among the first to recognize digital on demand production and delivery technologies as a way to save the backlist... and also distribute censored books to a public hungry for the truth.

"Books written last year, ten years or a hundred years ago will always be available, thanks to print on demand," I wrote in newsletters and press releases that described the Dandelion vision.

I recall my own "visioneering" with colleagues when I would describe one-off book buying and seamless order and fulfillment from a shopping cart website.

Colleagues thought I was crazy. "It'll never happen," they retorted.

"And then," I added, ignoring their rebuttals, "one day someone will come up with a portable print on demand machine that will print books a minute at a time. Like a jukebox, the buyer will punch in the letter and number code, press the 'Start' button and out of the chute will slide a perfectly produced paperback book. We can then place these glorified printers in bookstores, coffee houses, libraries... wherever people want to read, discuss and buy books."

"It'll never happen," they repeated.

Today, thanks to Jason Epstein and his mission to save the backlist, it has happened... and all the nay-sayers are now jumping on the bandwagon.