



## DECEMBER 10 MEMBERSHIP MEETING:

### Mind your own business: business 101 for authors & small publishers

If you sell books, you're in business...like it or not! Be sure to attend our December meeting where long-time entrepreneur



Bill Collier

**Bill Collier** will help us fine-tune our publishing business practices. Bill will address planning, budgeting, record-keeping, sales tracking, expenses and taxes. Whether you're just getting started or have operated a small press for years, this successful small business owner's tips can make a difference in the way you do business.

It's never been more important to have your publishing business in order. Get the information you need to be more efficient and more profitable in 2009.

**Bill Collier** is the founder and former CEO of BC Group International, Inc., a three-time "St. Louis Technology Fast 50" company. He sold the company in 2005.

Currently, Bill is president of Collier Business Advisors, LLC, a company that offers advice and consultation to entrepreneurs and business owners. He is also co-owner of Arch Engraving, a Kirkwood-based manufacturer of plaques, signage and other award and recognition products.



Bill is active in a variety of community and business organizations, including SLPA. His column, "Small Business Success," appears in the *St. Louis Small Business Monthly*. He speaks regularly to a variety of business audiences. He is also the author of *How to Succeed as a Small Business Owner ... and Still Have a Life*.

**Join us Wednesday evening, December 10, at the Lodge at Des Peres. Doors open for networking at 6:30 p.m.; meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. The formal meeting concludes around 8:30 p.m. with networking continuing until 9:00 p.m.**

### How do you think the current financial situation in the U.S. will affect self-publishing?

By Ron Pramschufer

The situation our country finds itself in and how it affects self-publishers reminds me of the story of the Three Little Pigs. The "get it done quick and easy" authors who use vanity presses or subsidy presses, like Author House or IUniverse, may now find themselves in straw or wood houses with the wolf at the door.



Ron Pramschufer

If you took the time to set yourself up as a true self-publisher, and build a house of brick, you'll be fine.

The way I see it, most of the current financial mess does not personally affect me much other than I'll probably have to work a few more years before I retire, but then... I like working. I live in a house with a mortgage I can afford. I don't have much credit card debt. When my son goes off to college next year, he will do so without any huge student loans. I.e.: I am living within my means. This was not always the case.

I owned my first house during the Jimmy Carter years and had to take out a second mortgage to help out my small publishing

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## How do you think the current financial ... *Continued*

company. Money was tight, so the second mortgage I was able to obtain was a two-point origination fee and a rate of three points over prime. The loan also needed to be rolled over every ninety days and another two points paid. And if that wasn't bad enough, back then prime was just under 20 percent. Sound familiar? Nobody forced me to take this loan. I took it because I thought at the time it was the right thing to do. At the end of the day, things didn't work out; I lost my house and ended up back in a rental. I also lost the business. Did I say I had two small children? I made the decision and it didn't turn out, so I started over. To this day, I am not crazy about Jimmy Carter, but life goes on.

The creation of RJ Communications was the result of more recent difficult financial times. I was working for an Ohio printer, running their New York sales office. The printer was bought by another printer; my office was closed and I was out of a job. So much for "big business" security. That was in 1994. Armed with four to five credit cards, a lot of energy and a good idea, I started RJ Communications. Fourteen years later, RJ Communications is one of the most successful publishing service companies in the country.

The current financial situation has the true entrepreneur looking inward for ways to solve problems and grow, while the rest of the world sits around and waits for the government to save it. As this all pertains to self-publishing, the same people who think they can buy a \$600,000 house with \$10,000 income and then want the government to bail them out when they can't make the payments are the ones most likely to fall for the vanity press trap. I have written about this on many occasions. If it's too good to be true, it usually is. Never has this been truer than it is trying to navigate today's self-publishing minefield.

First off, you can't be a self-publisher without being the publisher. That's simple English. An author who pays a publisher to publish their book is not a self-publisher because they are not the publisher. These people may call themselves a "Published Author," I guess, but that's not much different than buying a \$599 Master's or Ph.D. from [www.cheap-degrees.com](http://www.cheap-degrees.com) and calling yourself "professor."

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 percent of the income to the guy who installed

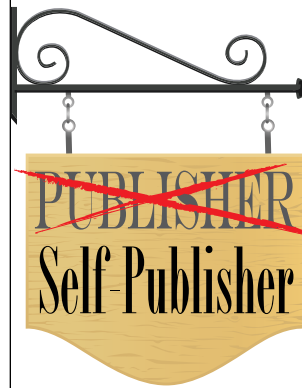
the sign on the front door, would you? This is exactly what you are doing when you pay a place like Author House or IUniverse to publish your book. Sure, they installed the sign on the front door but are they worth half the profit?

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 on 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 percent 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?

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**First off, you can't be a self-publisher without being the publisher. That's simple English. An author who pays a publisher to publish their book is not a self-publisher because they are not the publisher.**

## How do you think the current financial ... *Continued*

Let me go out on a limb here a little bit and say that there is NO vanity/subsidy/POD press that is worth using for anything if your goal is to make money in publishing. On their best day, these vanity/subsidy/POD presses are expensive, mostly mediocre, publishing services. Think about this for a second. Several years ago I did podcast interviews with the presidents of IUniverse, Author House and the VP of finance from Xlibris. A few short years later, all three of these senior executives have left the business completely. What does this suggest to you? It doesn't take much imagination to picture the wolf coming over the hill and these execs running from their straw houses. If you haven't listened to this series in a while, you can listen or download and listen to them at [www.wbjbradio.com/series/pod.php](http://www.wbjbradio.com/series/pod.php).

The favorite line of the vanity press gang is that "the primary goal of most authors is not making money from publishing their book" because they know the odds of any author making money from the vanity/POD business model is similar to them hitting the lottery. The problem with this is I have yet to meet a single author who does not envision making money from the sale of his book. Deep down inside, even the family memoirs people believe there is potentially a commercial market for their book. Starting a business and earning income from that business is truly the American Dream. It is a dream that is being realized time and time again by authors who take the time to truly publish their works. Sure it takes some time to learn about the business and sure you need to invest some money in your business but, in the end.... It's YOUR business.

The wolves are running wild all over the economic landscape. There is still time to build your self-publishing house of brick. Unfortunately, if you are in a house of straw or wood, you can't just throw a few bricks up and think you are going to survive. Bite the bullet and do it correctly. If it means going back to the beginning, do it now while there is still time and there are still plenty of bricks. Hope to hear from you soon. 📖

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Ron Pramschufer has worked in the publishing industry for over 35 years. He co-authored the popular title *Publishing Basics—a Guide for the Small Press and Independent Self-Publisher*, now in its third edition, as well as *Publishing Basics for Children's Books*, in its second edition. Pramschufer is the organizer of the monthly "Publishing Basics Newsletter" and the host of "Publishing Basics Radio PodCast," a show that he began in 2005.

## President's Corner by Lynette Schuepbach Business development takes time and effort

I want to thank Ed Sylvia for his outstanding work as president of SLPA this past year. He has done a fine job, not only this year, but also in the previous years that he served as SLPA president. Thanks, Ed, for a job well done. I'm honored to follow in your footsteps and hope that I can help the association grow and serve its members.

The SLPA Board of Directors met in November to give new officers a chance to learn from the past officers. In addition, the board planned events and duties for the coming year. Among the exciting 2009 events that you can look forward to: a month-long celebration of Small Press Month in March, two one-day educational programs, a field trip to a printer's facility, and monthly meetings with interesting topics presented by dynamic speakers. We hope you will become a member early in the year to take advantage of a members-only contest. We will present details at our January meeting.

Our December meeting is all about business. Bill Collier, author of *How to Succeed as a Small Business Owner ... and Still Have a Life*, has much experience with small business in a variety of industries. His information will stimulate you to organize your business and develop your business plan so that you are ready for the coming year. Please join us for the regular meeting on the second Wednesday of December at the Des Peres Lodge from 6:30 p.m. to 9 p.m.

I am always amazed at the amount of time and effort that business development requires. The St. Louis Publishers Association members are here to help you develop your business. We won't do it for you, but we can share some experiences and challenges we've faced, and the pitfalls and successes that ensued. You will find that members are very willing to share ideas with you. And you just might find the editor, designer, publicist, printer or lawyer who can help you take your business to the next level.



Life and business are full of challenges and new experiences. The St. Louis Publishers Association is here as support for you and your business. Welcome! 📖

—Lynette Schuepbach, President  
[lschuepbach@charter.net](mailto:lschuepbach@charter.net)



## SLPA online marketing is open for submissions

A great new member benefit is the **online marketing** opportunity on our SLPA Web site. If you have a published book, but it is not in the SLPA online listing yet, we are accepting submissions again from December 5th through the 28th. You can submit one book or service listing free as a member benefit. You can list additional books and services for a small fee. If you are a speaker, you can also list for free in our online Speakers Bureau, so go for it!

The new listings will go live in January 2009, so if your membership renews in January, be sure to renew your membership before you submit your content. You can renew your membership right on our site now, so it's easier than ever. (Of course, you can still write a check at meetings or mail it to us.)

**One book or resource listing and one speakers bureau listing are free; additional listings are available for \$20 each, payable to SLPA.** Mail checks to SLPA P.O. Box 410182 Creve Coeur, MO 63141. **(Please do NOT send us to a Web site to download your art!!!)**

### SLPA online marketing requirements

**Along with your paid membership, we will need the following items from you: (Please note format specifications.)**

#### Catalog Listing:

**BOOK COVER ART** as attachments:

JPG format, 2" wide, 150 dpi

#### Book information:

- Title
- Author
- Publisher
- ISBN-13
- Price
- Page count/Binding
- Special information (photos/index/recipes, etc.)
- Available through
- URL for link

#### Short paragraphs needed:

Book description: 40 to 50 words    Author bio: 25 words

### Online Speakers Bureau

**Along with your paid membership, we will need the following items from you: (Please note format specifications.)**

**IMAGES as attachments:** JPG format, 2" wide, 150 dpi

- Photo of speaker
- 2 to 3 book covers

#### INFORMATION:

- Speaker's name
- 50 word bio
- City and state where you live

**Contact information:** Phone number, e-mail address

**SPEAKING TOPICS:** You can list up to 6 titles/topics

- Topic 1
- Topic 2
- Topic 3
- Topic 4

**Speaking fee:** List a dollar figure or say "negotiable"

**Expense reimbursement:** List a dollar figure or say "negotiable"

**Your Web site URL**

### SLPA online resource listing requirements

**Along with your paid membership, we will need the following items from you: (Please note format specifications.)**

**Company logo art as attachment**

JPG format, Size: 2" to 4" wide, 150 dpi

**Company information needed:**

- Company name
- Company tagline or descriptor


**Contact information:**

- Name/Address/Phone/Fax/E-mail
- URL for link to your site


**Short paragraphs needed:**

- Company description: 40 to 50 words
- Bulleted list of services you provide

**E-mail everything EXACTLY as described above to**

**Sue Sylvia at: [slpa@staircasepress.com](mailto:slpa@staircasepress.com)** 

## SLPA online updates

If you currently have book, service or speaker listings on our Web site, we can easily update your listings as needed. Please e-mail updates to Sue Sylvia at [slpa@staircasepress.com](mailto:slpa@staircasepress.com). 

## Possible impact of a recession on book publishers

By Hans Bool

Timeless building is a title of a book you categorize as being part of timeless books. Some of the published books are. Many others are contemporary. The contemporary books you further divide into the need-to-know and nice-to-know market.

Book publishing is a business in which potential authors search for a publisher and publishers search for a market. People always continue to read, but book publishing is in conformity with other intermediary sectors (brokers, transport) more prone to recessions. We read when we have time and we have time when we feel secure.


In recent years, where we have been experiencing prosperity, the books that ruled were those of the nice-to-know market. "How to stop working before the age of 50," is an example of a nice-to-know kind of book that is a product of its time. When the stock exchange is going up, people feel wealthy and think they can all stop working. Prosperity will inflate people's desires and grow their wishes.

Recessions on the other hand calm peoples' desires. An automatic readjustment takes place. Many feel deceived by a sudden limitation of possibilities (those who have been fired, or whose company went broke) and they get back with their feet on the ground. Nice-to-know stuff is no longer a first priority.



The impact on a possible recession is therefore that the need-to-know market will prosper. Titles like "How to get back to work after being fired," "How to feel strong in a recession," etc., are titles that help people through hard times. This is what you need to know.

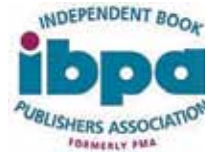
Editors and publishers that have been focusing on themes like "freedom" and other content related prosperity will

have to think twice whether to make a switch. And so must writers. 

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## Application Time is Here! The 2009 IBPA Publishing University Scholarship

Every year, our parent group, IBPA, The Independent Book Publishers Association, holds an educational event for publishers called Independent Publishing University, or IBPU for short.



It is an incredible event, and we highly recommend it for both educational and networking opportunities. The 2009 Pub U will be held at the end of May in New York. IBPU University is held each year right before Book Expo America, the

premier trade show for the publishing industry, which attracts a global audience. It is very worthwhile to check it out while you are there.

Every year, IBPA awards a scholarship for one member from each affiliate group (like SLPA) to attend IBP University. The scholarship recipient then brings back what they have learned and shares it with their affiliate group.


The scholarship is generally awarded to a publisher who can benefit from the networking and education opportunities in growing his/her publishing company and giving back to SLPA. The scholarship includes free registration to attend the entire Publishing University, plus a \$500 stipend to help pay for travel expenses. (Together, this is an opportunity worth over \$1,000.)

The criteria for applicants are as follows:

- Must be a member of IBPA as well as SLPA.
- Must be a publisher, preferably in the early stages of developing his/her company.
- Has not received the scholarship in the past.

To apply for the scholarship, fill out the form on our Web site and send it to:

Sue Sylvia  
Staircase Press Design  
PO Box 83  
Troy, IL 62294  
Or e-mail it to: [slpa@staircasepress.com](mailto:slpa@staircasepress.com)

**Submission Deadline is January 5, 2009** 




Happy Holidays  
from SLPA!

## We welcome our newest members

**Cynthia Correll, Right Hand for Hire, LLC:**  
cynthia@righthandforhire.com


Cynthia offers a variety of services for authors, including QuickStart Web site, powered by PGI Press Lite technology, a unique content management system that offers easy updates.

**Kathy Bussmann:**  
bussmann@sbcglobal.net


Kathy is editing, researching and transcribing her grandmother's journals from 1914-1920. 

## Make the most of your membership with free promo opps

The SLPA offers its members a variety of free marketing and promotional opportunities. Besides the new online listing opportunities available to members, we encourage you to **bring your published materials to meetings for display on the exhibit table.** The table is frequented by guests and new members interested in learning about our organization, our members and our finished works.

**Looking for more free publicity? Offer yourself as a subject for "Member Spotlight," a newsletter column slated to begin this January.** This column will profile one of our members and highlight his or her publishing accomplishments. How has the SLPA helped you? What inspiring story can you share with the rest of us? To be considered for the "Member Spotlight" column, contact communications chairperson Ligaya Figueras via e-mail at: figueras@sbcglobal.net. 

## What's Ahead?

Don't miss our January meeting when **featured speaker Claire Keeling**, president of Sort it Out Consulting, tells you how to be more productive and efficient with your publishing endeavors. Start the year off right—learn to save time in '09! The meeting is January 14. Mark your calendar now! 

## Questions About SLPA?




Contact Membership Chairman:  
Christine Frank at 314-205-2679

## Behind the scenes with the board




**Ed Sylvia, meeting greeter**

Starting in 2009, we're adding a new column to our monthly newsletter. "Behind the scenes with the board" will give members a chance to get to know the faces of the SLPA Board of Directors and a better understanding of the work that these volunteers do on behalf of our organization.

Since 2009 is not quite here, we'll ease into the column by spotlighting our official "meeting greeter" Ed Sylvia. Ed may be stepping down from his duties as SLPA president, but he has agreed to fill an important role as "The Welcome Man." On meeting nights, you'll find Ed standing at The Lodge door shaking hands with long-time members and giving a hearty welcome to new members and guests. Thanks Ed, for lending a hand. 

## What do you think? The 2008 SLPA Membership Survey!

Got an idea for a meeting topic? Is there something we could be doing better? Have you seen something great in another organization that we should be doing? We want to hear about it!

This year, the survey will be done online. A link to the 2008 Membership Survey will arrive via e-mail in early December. You will also find the survey link in the members-only section of the SLPA Web site. Please let us know what you think by responding promptly. The annual survey tells us what you want most from your membership in SLPA. If you are a member in good standing (paid and current) you are eligible to participate. Don't procrastinate; let your voice be heard! 

**Next Deadline**

**December 21**

**Don't be late – no kidding!**

Send us news on your new releases or upcoming appearances or anything else you wish to share.

Get your news and articles in EARLY! Send your information, articles and announcements to **newslettereditor@stlouispublishers.org.**