

Methods of Publishing

The publishing world is changing very rapidly these days, especially with the advent of Amazon's CreateSpace and the takeoff of e-books. Authors need to keep up with the news to make the best decision for themselves and their books.

Traditional Large Press

(ex. Simon & Schuster, Penguin, Hachette, Random House, Scholastic, MacMillan)

The "Big Six" publishing houses have imprints (branch companies) handling different genres and usually print large quantities of books via offset printing methods.

Pros: usually offer an advance, will handle all production aspects of the book, will do basic marketing (send out media releases, offer galleys or ARCs to major reviewers), will handle all distribution, will handle all finances and send royalty checks

Cons: an agent is required to approach them (may take years to get one), they are picky and prefer writers with platform and commercial appeal, will handle all production usually without author input, it takes about two years to produce a book, marketing is very basic unless the author is famous, if the book doesn't sell well within the first few months it may go out of print, author royalties are small, the publisher owns the book (remember to negotiate e-book rights)

Larger Independent Publishers:

(ex. Charlesbridge, Sourcebooks, Chelsea Green, Haymarket, Avalon, some university presses)

These may use digital printing (print on demand) as well as offset and may be very specialized by genre or have imprints

Pros: more willing to risk unknown authors, often no agent is required, they may offer an advance, they handle all production and may allow author input, they do basic marketing, will provide distribution, may give a better financial return to authors, books are usually available for longer than three-months, author can probably negotiate e-book rights

Cons: provide only basic marketing, they own the book (but author may negotiate e-book rights)

Small Independent Publishers:

(many university presses, Zumaya, Akashic, and many micro-presses)

These use digital printing and may be very specialized in genre and/or not accept many manuscripts per year

Pros: more willing to risk unknown authors, no agent is required, they might offer a very small advance, they handle all production and may allow author input, they should do basic marketing and provide distribution, there is often a better financial return to authors, books can usually be

produced within a year and are usually available for a long time, the author can probably negotiate e-book rights

Cons: Often offer no advance, provide only very basic marketing, company owns the book (but the author can negotiate e-book rights), editing and formatting skills may be questionable or even nonexistent, may not provide distribution (Note: be sure to examine other books a company has produced to verify quality, especially with very small or newer presses)

Publishing Services Companies

(ex. Lulu, CreateSpace, AuthorHouse, iUniverse, Bookmasters, Outskirts Press, and a number of companies associated with large traditional publishers such as Book Country of Penguin, Westbow Press of Thomas Nelson, Dellarte of Harlequin)

These companies will often take any manuscript (no vetting) and charge authors to produce their books for them. Authors can choose which additional services they want (cover, editing, formatting, sometimes distribution channels). Lulu is also a viable option for those wanting to publish a very limited number of simply-made book copies only for family and friends.

Pros: Once the author chooses services desired the company will handle production with author input, production of the book is quick, usually a distribution system is provided or offered

Cons: Services often cost more money than if the author had hired his own independent providers, a higher cost of production will mean books must be sold at above-market cost to make a profit, services may be of questionable quality, distribution avenue may be at extra cost or not be cost-efficient or convenient for buyers, marketing is often nonexistent or at high price with little value, the company owns the book produced although the author might be able to take the manuscript elsewhere to produce the book with a different ISBN, author should understand the publishing business and read the contract carefully to avoid making costly business errors, author should know basic accounting and track income and expenses

Independent Publishing

The author takes charge of the entire process of creating a book by hiring professionals, arranging distribution and marketing

Pros: The author is in charge and makes all decisions, a book can be produced from a completed manuscript in only a few months, all profit belongs to the author, author owns his book and can keep it in production as long as he wants

Cons: The author is in charge and makes all decisions and so should understand all aspects of the publishing business to avoid costly errors, author is responsible for all costs, author must do all marketing, author must know basic accounting and track income and expenses (Note: skimping on editing, cover design, etc., will result in an amateurish book, and skimping on marketing will result in few book sales)

E-book Publishing

Many companies or services exist to offer low-cost production of electronic books for various types of e-readers

(ex. Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, Barnes & Noble PubIt! for Nook, Apple iBooks, Smashwords, BookBaby, and many independent publishers)

Pros: Low cost, most services and companies provide some form of distribution

Cons: Many authors find it difficult to format a manuscript themselves to upload to a self-directed e-publishing program (ex. Kindle Direct Publishing) and will need to pay to have it done, books with heavy formatting or many photos are not good candidates for e-book creation, color may not be an option, authors must be aware of the distribution method to ensure convenience and cost-effectiveness to themselves and buyers, authors should know who owns the formatted e-book(s), authors must do all marketing and do basic accounting