

A Brief History of Self-Publishing

Self-publishing has existed as long as the written word. Early writers held the duality of also being their own publishers. It wasn't until the fifteenth century when Johannes Gutenberg invented the mechanical printing press that publishing companies came into vogue. Thus began a monopoly on book printing that would shape what is referred to as the book industry today.

Throughout time, self-publishing has held a stigma that works produced in this manner are less. They are not true literary art because they have not been vetted by the likes of a professional editor. It begs the question, "Are self-published authors really authors or even published?"

Dr. Jim Taylor dared to cover this subject in an article for the Huffington Post [2nd link under sources]. He concluded that the only thing he knows for sure is "the rules of publishing are changing" even though he doesn't know if self-publishing will ever gain the legitimacy attached to traditional publishing. We beg to differ.

Traditional Publishing Vs. Self-Publishing

Regardless of the argument, the fact that numerous famous authors self-published before they were known is significant. A few of these include:

- John Grisham
- Beatrix Potter
- Tom Clancy

Self-publishing saw a revolution in 2012. Amanda Hocking sold more than 1.5 million of her books for Kindle in the paranormal romance genre making her a millionaire as a result. If you were an author considering self-publishing within a three-planet radius at that point, your decision became much easier. It was a no-brainer.

Types of Self-Publishing

If you've decided to self-publish, there are a lot of ways to go about it. **We will be focusing on the benefits of Print-On-Demand in this article.** However, there are essentially two types of self-publishing:

Digital - This pertains specifically to ebooks in various formats including, but not limited to: Kindle, ePub, and PDF.

Print - More commonly known as print-on-demand, this results in a physical book.

Both types involve utilizing an online service where the author uploads a file of their manuscript. Depending upon the chosen service, the book may be checked automatically for errors, checked by a human, or a bit of both. Most self-publishing services also offer some sort of editing and book design services for a fee.

Once the file is approved by whatever process the service employs, it can be immediately published using either method. It is the most efficient way to obtain the title of "Published Author" with the least hassle which makes it a popular choice for aspiring writers worldwide.

The Downside to Self-Publishing

Really the only adverse effect of going the self-publishing route is the aforementioned stigma that the result will be mediocre. To counter this idea, there are thousands of online services from book designing to marketing that are viable replacements for traditional publishing. Sure, you sacrifice the slim possibility of receiving an advance or contract to write more books, but in short, the benefits wildly outweigh any downside in making a choice to self-publish.

The Benefits of Self-Publishing to Print - Print-On-Demand

While digital self-publishing is crazy popular because of the instant gratification aspect of it all, it is quite simple to transition to a print-on-demand service and vice versa. Many of them are one and the same.

Let's delve into this list of benefits and advantages:

- **Less hassle** - You are able to circumvent the rejection letters. There is no need to hire an agent. You don't have to print copies of your manuscript and send them to numerous publishing houses filled with jaded editors. Your book has already been approved for publishing by you!
- **No stock** - There's no large up-front investment for printing costs or the need to pay storage fees. The only stock you have to deal with are the copies you stock yourself for friends, family, and events.
- **Immediate availability** - Once your book is approved by your chosen service, it is available for sale anywhere in the world. This certainly cannot be said of traditional publishers. There's no other way to convert your manuscript into a book more quickly.

- **Updates are easier** - If you need to make changes to your book, you can do this easily, quickly, and put it right back into distribution. Face it, not every book is evergreen. This is especially beneficial for non-fiction writers. Sometimes, facts are incorrect, new information becomes available, and this is a convenient way to stay relevant.
- **Environmentally friendly** - Even if you're not an advocate for the environment, print-on-demand is naturally a green practice. With no stock, there's no waste.
- **Empowers the self-publisher** - Print-on-demand allows those with a small budget to be even players in the industry. It's possible to publish with no up-front costs at all.
- **Quality** - The quality of print-on-demand gets better and better all the time. While all of the options for customization are not yet available, it is gaining ground on traditional publishing. If you are savvy with page design programs and formatting, it is possible to produce a fabulous-looking book. However, books coming right out of the presses without any customization really don't look that bad.
- **Readers don't care** - Once your book is in the hands of readers, they don't care who published it. You're right, large publishers are well-known as with other products, but a reader is going to remember your name if they really like your book.
- **Better royalties** - Traditional publishers offer royalties between 5 and 10%. Depending upon your avenues of distribution, you keep all profits after costs when you self-publish. These costs may include design, editing, and marketing, but the percentages are significantly higher.
- **Creative control** - Sending your book through a traditional publisher may result in a change in your title, crazy edits, and little control over design and marketing. By self-publishing, you maintain control over the entire process.
- **Business control** - Namely over the rights of your book...you retain all of the rights to your work forever. There is no waiting period or fight over digital rights. You also won't have issues if your book goes huge and hits the movies. Writing is a business, and if you are self-publishing, it is YOUR business. Period.
- **Longer shelf life** - With traditional publishing, if your book doesn't sell after the initial marketing, they stop promoting it. With self-publishing, your book stays for sale as long as you wish. You control the marketing, so if one system doesn't work, there are hundreds more to try.
- **Speaking of marketing** - Since you control the marketing of your book, you can focus on tight niches. You can market as widely as you want. There are no limits, and you are able to market worldwide with the help of the Internet. You can make appearances at events as well for signings and sales. The only limits here are the ones you place upon yourself.

The Choice is Yours

The stigma surrounding self-publishing and print-on-demand is diminishing. With the popularity of e-readers, and the ability to purchase right from nearly any device, the sale is so simple. If you take your time, produce a good book, and write a fantastic sales page, your book will almost sell itself. Learn some simple marketing or hire the pro's. Becoming a full-time author is easier than it has ever been.

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