

SELF-PUBLISHING AND POD UPDATE – March 2010

If you're new to self publishing, there's a lot to learn, and you should know that a lot of the internet information on this subject is just plain out of date. The publishing world, like anything else that relies on digital technology, is changing daily.

This newsletter has been created to keep authors up to date on who's who and what's what in self-publishing. We will update it once a month with new information as it becomes available.

In this report, we will start with background, name the major players, and talk about some of the concerns authors are faced with.

WHO'S WHO?

The largest players are:

Author Solutions: They are now the owners of **Xlibris**, **iUniverse**, **AuthorHouse**, **Inkubook**, and **Trafford** as well as some smaller companies. While these companies like to look as if they are separate and unique, they are now all owned and controlled by Author Solutions. Using economies of scale (which basically means outsourcing the work to the Phillipines, India, Pakistan and other less developed nations), they are able to handle thousands of books. Don't expect much input as their contracts give them the right to make all final design decisions.

Amazon is no longer just a bookseller. They also own **BookSurge** (a POD print company) and **CreateSpace**. CreateSpace offers really low pricing on some publishing packages, but these packages include few services. For instance, the \$299 package requires that you upload high res cover and interior files from which they can print books. They do nothing else for that money. Their next package at \$499 provides templates for you to create a cover and interior from.

Lulu is still on its own, but according to our sources, its output is not very high quality.

There are dozens of mid and small sized POD publishers, which may be able to supply personal service as well as genuine interaction between author and publisher.

WHAT'S WHAT?

Besides the Kindle (by Amazon), there are now many ebook readers available. Here are a few: the Nook by Barnes & Noble, Sony Reader, COOL-ER, Astak EZ Reader. There are probably more. The advantage of some of these over the Kindle are pretty serious: you can download ebooks off and onto your computer, not just use content supplied by Amazon, and these readers use the Library service, Overdrive, to provide books.

FOR THOSE NEW TO MODERN PUBLISHING

Do you have to self publish?

Whether you call it Indie publishing, POD publishing, self publishing, or any other name, it means you pay for publishing. So the real question is, do you have to pay for publishing?

Chances are, the answer is yes. Even before the economy started going downhill, large traditional publishers (those who pay you an advance on royalties) were not looking for unknown writers of any kind no matter how good their work. Books sent to traditional publishers by unknowns go into what's known as "the slush pile," and for the most part, are never seen again. If you can find an agent who will take you on, your chances are better. But agents are not looking for unknowns either.

In any case, assuming you could get published without having to pay for it, traditional publishers will take 90% to 93% of profits and you will get a pittance for your work. Paying for publishing means you make more money per book and have more control.

Picking a publisher

With so many to choose from and a lot at stake—it's your *book*, after all—choosing a publisher is very important. What should you look for? And what should you look out for? Some think going with the biggest is the safest bet, but going with the biggest means you will be a very small figure on their balance sheet. If there are things you don't like, they will not change their policies to suit you. Your book will be designed out of the country, but your buyers are, for the most part, in the country. People here need the work too. Who you are and whether your book can succeed will be irrelevant.

On the other hand, concerns with a small publisher are more along the lines of "Can they do it?" and "Will they do it?" Can they produce a quality book? Can they design good covers? Will they make the book available? Will they pay royalties?

Here is where it helps to check out what third parties have to say. Try www.podpublishing.org or <http://online-book-publishing-review.toptenreviews.com/> for some valuable answers.