

Busybird Publishing

2/118 Para Road

Montmorency, Vic 3094

p: (03) 9434 6365

w: www.busybird.com.au

e: admin@busybird.com.au



THE PUBLISHING LANDSCAPE

A Free Busybird Publishing Resource for Authors

Copyright Busybird Publishing 2019

We periodically put up blogs like this one to educate authors about the publishing landscape.

There are two legitimate streams of publishing:

- **Traditional Publishing:** you submit to a publisher. They will judge if (they believe) your book is worth publishing. If they accept you, they take all the financial risk to publish you. They will sign you to a contract, and oversee (and pay for) editing, design, printing, and marketing. You might get paid an advance (a small sum of money), or an advance against the royalties (a small sum of money that royalties have to pay off before you see more royalties) *and* royalties (a small percentage of each sale). For a new author, an advance might be around \$1,000 – 5,000. Royalties uniformly will be around 7.5%, which means you get about \$2 per book sold.
- **Self-Publishing:** you organise production of your book, and pay for whatever services you require. But you receive 100% of royalties (although if you get your book in bookstores, they will take a cut). You also keep 100% of the rights.

The murky model is the one where a publisher might claim they have an innovative new business model, and that they'll share the cost of publication with you. The trade-off, they'll tell you, is that you'll get 50% of royalties, rather than just the 7.5%. *Wow!* That sounds awesome, right? And what makes all this so much more attractive is they tell you that your book is great, and that the market needs a book like yours.

The truth is these publishers will tell you anything to get your money. It's doubtful they invest anything in your manuscript, other than hiring subcontractors (such as an editor and designer) who they underpay to perform their respective service. And yet this publisher gets to keep 50% of your royalties and 50% of your rights. That means if a traditional publisher wanted to pick you up, or if a film company wanted to turn your book into a film, this publisher would get a cut.

Most people want a traditional publishing deal. The benefits are the validation – a publisher telling you that your book is good enough for the market – and that they do everything to make your book a reality. As an aside, if a traditional publisher rejects you, it doesn't necessarily mean your book isn't good enough. Traditional publishers get it wrong all the time. The best example is *Harry Potter*, which was rejected umpteen times before it made it.

Self-publishing is becoming a viable alternative, as evolving technology has made it accessible and inexpensive. You could produce a book that looks identical to a book that comes out of a traditional publisher. *The Martian* by Andy Weir and *Still Alice* by Lisa Genova were both self-published, and became bestsellers, then became films with A-list actors. The difficulty with self-publishing is finding somebody you can trust, and who'll guide you through the process.

These are the two routes. But here's a much simpler way to break it down:

- **Traditional Publishing:** you pay nothing, the publisher oversees the production, and you get a small return.
- **Self-publishing:** you pay for everything, and you get 100% return, and keep 100% of the rights.

There is no other path. There is *no* in-between. The moment you pay *anything* to publish, you're self-publishing. If you're self-publishing, you should retain 100% of your royalties and 100% of your rights. There's no rationale this type of publisher can offer you that validates any claim to these.

Now why do we blog periodically about this?

Because people are getting misled. People are getting ripped-off. People are spending hard-earned money because they're being lied to and promised things (e.g. bestsellers, film adaptations) that no publisher can guarantee. Multimillion-dollar traditional publishers with all their resources can only take educated guesses at how a book will fare, so anybody else who makes these claims is a liar.

We get authors who think that all publishers operate under the same model (that's exactly what they want you to think). We hear so many horror stories. We get authors ringing us in tears. We get authors asking if these sorts of deals are normal. We have authors berating themselves for their ignorance.

And it's frustrating to see good people treated this way.

We have a lot of experience here. Our mandate is to help educate authors. We don't want you being misled or ripped off. We want you to understand the landscape.

Whoever you publish with, it should be rewarding and gratifying and pleasurable.

So beware of the dangers.

 **Busybird Publishing**
2/118 Para Road
Montmorency, Vic 3094
p: (03) 9434 6365
w: www.busybird.com.au
e: admin@busybird.com.au