UNDERSTAND THE KEY BOOK PUBLISHING PATHS

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TRADITIONAL

KEY CHARACTERISTICS
- Author receives advance and royalties, usually based on life-of-copyright contract
- Process often takes 1–2 years
- Agent often required; highly selective process

VALUE FOR AUTHOR
- Publisher shoulders financial and creative risk
- Physical bookstore distribution often a given
- Best chance of mainstream media coverage and reviews
- Years of expertise in book editing, design, and production working for you
- Marketing and publicity dept. insight, advice, assistance

WARNINGS + EXCEPTIONS
- New digital-only imprints may offer no advance, charge for services, yet demand same rights as other contracts
- Part of the advance may be paid up to one year after the book's publication date
- Successful indie/DIY authors can negotiate better deals and sometimes keep their e-book rights

EXAMPLES
- The Big Six publishers (media conglomerate owned)
- Small, independent presses, such as Graywolf, Tin House, and Algonquin
- Mid-size publishers, such as Sourcebooks and F+W Media
- University presses, which often take lifetime rights and even copyright

PARTNERSHIP

KEY CHARACTERISTICS
- Author partners with agent, publisher, or author collective, sharing the risk and the revenue
- Author does not pay a fee to publish, but advance unlikely
- There is a selection process; the partner does not accept all interested authors
- Partner provides industry savvy and marketing expertise

VALUE FOR AUTHOR
- Lower risk than DIY self-publishing; better royalties than traditional publishing
- Gain benefit of a partner with experience and knowledge of the book publishing industry
- Opportunity to focus more on creative work, less on administrative, business end

WARNINGS + EXCEPTIONS
- Not all partners are created equal; some may offer little more than digital distribution and administration
- Changing landscape means contracts may vary widely from partner to partner; consider hiring an agent to review the contract before signing
- Make sure your partner is doing something meaningful to earn their share of revenue
- Do not confuse this for agent-assisted self-pub (see below for special cases)

EXAMPLES
- Rogue Reader
- Diversion Books
- Cool Gus Publishing

FULLY ASSISTED

KEY CHARACTERISTICS
- Author pays an upfront fee for a package of services; service provider does only what is paid for
- All work is accepted; the only criteria is that author can pay
- Author receives better royalties than a traditional contract, but makes less than DIY options

VALUE FOR AUTHOR
- All you have to do is write a check and let the service provider do all the work

WARNINGS + EXCEPTIONS
- You get only what you pay for; you may end up with a book without commercial viability
- Your book may be available for order through bookstores, but it is rarely ever physically distributed/stocked
- The service company will try to sell you additional services that may provide little value
- Books published through these services are often seen as lower quality than every other type of self-publishing
- The self-pub success stories you hear about do not come from full-assist services

EXAMPLES
- Author Solutions, which includes: Archway, Xlibris, AuthorHouse, iUniverse, Abbott Press, Westbow, DellArte Press, Balboa Press
- Infinity Publishing
- Outskirts Publishing

DIY + DISTRIBUTOR

KEY CHARACTERISTICS
- Author does all/most work on her own, hires outside assistance as needed, and provides the distributor with final files
- The distribution service may charge an upfront fee and/or take a cut of sales, and is responsible for paying you
- Nonexclusive; the author is not bound to the distributor or giving up rights

VALUE FOR AUTHOR
- For e-book publishing, removes admin headache of managing accounts at multiple online retailers
- For print or POD distribution, a service partner is mandatory; however, your book will not likely be stocked in stores, merely available for order
- Some services provide free or paid e-book file conversion, marketing tools, and other services on an a la carte basis

WARNINGS + EXCEPTIONS
- Some distributors are also book retailers, such as Smashwords, Lulu, and Blurb

EXAMPLES
- Smashwords (e-books)
- BookBaby (e-books)
- eBookPartnership.com
- CreateSpace (owned by Amazon, POD service)
- Lulu (e-books and POD; avoid fully assisted service)
- Lightning Source (POD)
- Blurb (full-color books)
- BookCountry (e-books)
- Vook (enhanced e-books)

DIY DIRECT

KEY CHARACTERISTICS
- Author does all the work on her own, hires outside assistance as needed, and provides retailers with finished, ready-to-go files or books
- The retailer takes a cut of your sales, which may vary based on the price you set
- Nonexclusive; the author deals with each retailer on at-will basis

VALUE FOR AUTHOR
- Maximizes earnings; by dealing direct, authors get highest possible percentage of sales
- Authors can usually make changes and updates on the fly, as often as needed
- Author retains maximum control over product, pricing, marketing, etc

WARNINGS + EXCEPTIONS
- Demands the most skill and effort from the author to get the best quality book
- Amazon demands exclusivity if you enroll in KDP Select
- Some agents will offer to assist you with DIY e-book publishing, and take 15% of your sales (see special cases)
- It is difficult to indie publish enhanced e-books outside of Apple without a distribution or service partner

EXAMPLES
- Amazon KDP
- Nook Press (Barnes & Noble)
- Kobo Writing Life
- Apple iBookstore
- Scribd

LESS CONTROL ▸ ▸ ▸ MORE CONTROL
LESS UPFRONT RISK FOR AUTHOR ▸ ▸ ▸ MORE UPFRONT RISK FOR AUTHOR
LOWER AUTHOR ROYALTIES / REVENUE ▸ ▸ ▸ HIGHER AUTHOR ROYALTIES / REVENUE

SPECIAL + HARD-TO-CLASSIFY CASES

- **Agent-assisted DIY e-book publishing.** When the agent takes care of all administrative and business duties related to DIY e-publishing (yellow column above)—giving you an "assisted" experience—then takes 15% of your sales, in addition to charging various editorial, production, and design fees.
- **Agent-assisted DIY e-book publishing exclusive to Amazon.** Amazon's White Glove program is only available to indie authors working through an agent. The agent receives 15% and your work receives preferential marketing and promotion from Amazon. However, your book may not be sold at any other retailer.
- **Agent-assisted e-book publishing & distribution.** The agent signs you with an e-book distributor that works specifically with agents and publishers. The two biggest firms are Argo Navis and INscribe Digital. Be aware this puts two middlemen into the equation: the distributor who gets a cut, and your agent who typically gets 15%.
- **Digital-only publishers**: They may operate on traditional, partnership, or assisted models. Proceed with caution and be careful when agreeing to exclusivity. There should be a specific term to the contract (e.g., three years). How or when does the agreement terminate? Be very protective of your rights if you're shouldering most of the risk and effort. Examples of high-quality and innovative digital-only publishers: Byliner, Atavist, Plympton, Kindle Singles, and countless e-book imprints from magazines, newspapers, websites, and book publishers.
- **Crowdfunding**: When authors use a site such as Kickstarter, Pubslush, or Unbound to fund their project.
- **"Hybrid" authors**: There is much confusion over this term. When I use the term "hybrid," I'm referring to an author who both traditionally publishes and independently (DIY) publishes. CJ Lyons is an example of such an author. A hybrid author may or may not work with an agent.

POPULAR TOOLS & SERVICES FOR PRODUCING E-BOOK FILES

- Scrivener: word-processing software
- Calibre: free e-book conversion tool
- Sigil: free EPUB formatting/creation tool
- PressBooks: free e-book formatting tool, Wordpress-based
- Apple Pages: can export EPUB files
- Apple iBooks Author: for building enhanced e-books
- Book Creator: iPad app for creating illustrated e-books (for iOS devices)
- AerBook Maker: good for multimedia-driven work

WHERE TO FIND FREELANCE ASSISTANCE + OTHER SERVICES

- BiblioCrunch: find professional editorial help
- Editorial Freelancers Association: the-efa.org
- Agent Rachelle Gardner keeps a list of recommended editors at her website (look under "Resources for Writers")
- WriterCube: marketing support
- For a link round-up on the basics of e-book publishing: http://janefriedman.com/2013/04/21/how-to-publish-an-ebook/
- For a primer on how to get traditionally published: http://janefriedman.com/2012/01/28/start-here-how-to-get-your-book-published/