



# My Manuscript is Ready: Now What?

By Traci Bisson (Published June, 2005 in Ex Libris, newsletter of the New Hampshire Writer's Project)

There is much to consider when preparing a manuscript for publication. The biggest decision is whether to pursue a traditional publisher or to consider self publishing. With over 120,000 titles published each year in the United States (bookwire.com), self-published authors are increasing in numbers.

Before deciding which publishing option is right for you, consider your goals. Do you have time and money to publicize your book? Do you want your book to be considered by national media or are you happy with a write up in your local community newspaper? Do you want chain bookstores to carry your books or would you be content having a few copies for sale in your neighborhood bookstore? Your answers to these questions will decide which publishing option to pursue.

You will need to "sell" an agent before working with most traditional publishers. Many small press publishers however prefer to work with an author directly. Traditional publishers pay royalties to authors and offer national distribution. In most cases, their in-house publicists will solicit coverage from the media and arrange book signings. With either method, be prepared to fuel your marketing and publicity campaign until your book proves successful.

According to the Author's Guild, a successful fiction book sells 5,000 copies, and a successful nonfiction book sells 7,500 copies. Authors need to wear their publicity hat to ensure the publisher's goals are met, and to secure future publishing contracts. A new release has approximately six weeks to prove itself once it hits bookstore shelves.

If trade publishing statistics sound grim, consider self publishing. Studies show that 81% of the population feels they have a book inside them. According to the Publisher's Marketing Association, 78% of titles published in the US come from small/self-publishers.

Subsidy publishers, also known as vanity or print on demand (POD), offer quick, easy options for printing. The author receives royalties on every book sold after paying book publishing fees. However, this widely used option has created a stigma in the industry. Many books are poorly written and

sales are generally low. The average sale of a title with Xlibris is about 130 copies. Distribution is usually not offered; therefore chain bookstores will not carry these books. Book reviewers and reporters have also shied away from POD books, leaving authors with only the support of their local newspaper.

Experts claim that 9 out of every 10 books published by trade publishers fail! This is one reason why the self-publishing industry is on the rise. Authors can establish a publishing company and print their own titles as well as those of other authors if they choose. This method is becoming more widely accepted as many self published books are gaining attention from the media.

An author should do the following before deciding to self publish:

- Invest in a professional copyeditor to review and correct your manuscript.
- Consult with other authors, support organizations, publicists and books to educate yourself. Two books (both successful self-published books with over 90,000 and 60,000 copies sold respectively) that should be in every self-published author's library:
  - o The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing By Tom & Marilyn Ross
  - o 1001 Ways to Market Your Books By John Kremer
- Outline a plan for promoting your book and allocate funds to accomplish.
- Think outside the box. Consider nontraditional outlets for selling a book. According to publisher David Godine, only 32% of the U.S. population has ever been in a bookstore.

No matter what method of publishing you decide to pursue, educate yourself on the pros and cons of each option to ensure that your publishing experience goes smoothly.

