

Traditional, Epublishing, or Print on Demand Publishing

—What's the Right Fit for You? By Lyn Cote

Before technological advances, there were only two choices: traditional or vanity (subsidy) publishing. But over the past decade, the choices of how to publish have become varied and subsequently confusing. Before taking the plunge into publication, an author must weigh the advantages and disadvantages of each. And decide which one is the right fit for you. Here are the questions you need to ask yourself to decide which path is for you.

Each author needs to assess:

- His/her ability to wait upon a publisher acquiring a manuscript
- His/her desire to have more or less control over their publishing choices
- His/her platform and desire and capacity to self-promote
- His/her type of fiction and market facts (ie, waiting for Steampunk to gain a readership)
- His/her need for income

This brochure will explain:

- Part 1-the advantages and disadvantages of each type of publishing
- Part 2-the markets within each choice which are reputable
- Part-3 the hard facts of book distribution in a shrinking shelf-space book world

I've done several library talks on this topic with authors who have chosen one of the new options. I'm traditionally published, but have experimented with an online serialization of my first (unpublished) manuscript. I also have done some OOP and original ebook and POD publishing. I think the topic is equally of interest to the multi-published and unpublished author.

Part 1-

The Traditional Path (print and/or ebook)

Advantages of Traditional-

- Publisher pays an advance (only print publishers, not most ebook houses)
- Publisher pays for editing, cover art, and some marketing
- Cachet of being acquired by a traditional house
- Publisher takes care of distribution--books may appear on bookshelves and will appear online without author effort

Disadvantages of Traditional-

- Must please an editor
- Takes a 12-18 months from acquisition to publication
- Lower e-royalty rates 6-25%
- Publisher controls pricing

Self-publishing Ebook

Advantages:

- Author has total control over cover art and type of story to write
- Quick. A finished manuscript can be online within days.
- Author controls pricing and can boost sales with special pricing strategies
- Author receives a royalty rate of 35-70% depending on online bookseller

Disadvantages:

- Author must pay for editing, copyediting and cover art (And yes, your book needs to be edited and copy edited!)
- Author shoulders all responsibility for marketing and promotion

Print on Demand Publishing

Advantages:

- Author has control over editing, cover art and total control over the type of story
- Also quicker
- Author has more control over pricing, can set own profit margin

Disadvantages:

- Author must pay for editing, copyediting and cover art
- Author shoulders all responsibility for marketing and promotion AND distribution

Part 2

Reputable Channels for publishing

For traditional publishers, drop by my website and click [Christian Book Publishers](#). I list the large houses, smaller presses, and ebook publishers. All publishers listed on this page have been recommended by other writers as reputable. (I give no guarantees.)

NOTE: If you are self-publishing, you don't need a publisher unless you want a publisher to assume all the upfront costs of editing, cover art, etc. If you are willing to assume these, you can upload your books to [Smashwords](#), [PubIt \(B & N nook\)](#) and [Kindle](#) yourself. If you don't know about ebook formatting, I suggest you either hire someone or take a class. Lori Devoti at the [How to Write Shop](#) offers a self-publishing ebook formatting course online. Smashwords provides a free [Smashwords Style Guide](#). Smashwords takes a Word file, cleaned up according to their Style Guide and then formats for most every ereader format: Sony, Kobo, Kindle, Nook, etc. So if you want to just go the easy route Smashwords will do it for you. However, most authors prefer to upload to Kindle and PubIt themselves since most ebooks are sold through this channels and because these pay monthly instead of quarterly like Smashwords. You can do all three--just opt out at the distribution stage for Kindle and PubIt.

A few indispensable blogs about ebook publishing

[A Newbie's Guide to Publishing](#) by JA Konrath

[The Book Designer](#) by Joel Friedlander

[Advanced Fiction Writing.com](#) by Randy Ingermanson

Part 3

The Hard Facts of Distribution

Borders is liquidating. Barnes & Noble stores are shrinking the number of print books they shelve in stores. ([Here's blog on that by Kristine Kathryn Rusch.](#)) Indie bookstores are closing all over America. That leaves a few chains like Books A Million and Book World, Family Christian Stores and a few hardy independent bookstores. Book Lovers are finding their favorite spots disappearing. Libraries are still in business and I think will prosper as places for Book Lovers to gather and feed their addiction.

So how is an author whether traditionally published or self-published going to get their books to reader-buyers? Digital publishing is of course the answer. The Kindle Store, etc has an INFINITE shelf.

[CreateSpace](#), Amazon's POD house, offers [Expanded Distribution](#) for \$39. This makes a CreateSpace POD book available through Baker & Taylor and Ingram, the two largest book distributors in the US. If your book isn't available through this publishers, no one can order it from a bookstore and no library will likely order and shelve it. That said, there are many other reputable POD houses, just google Print on Demand and make your own choice.

The question every author who decides to self-publish (AND hasn't been traditionally published previously) should ask themselves is "Am I ready to publish?" Readers can be cruel to books that don't come up to their standards. Imagine putting up your book on Kindle and getting a string of nasty 1 star reviews. BIG OUCH. Or even worse, imagine putting it up and no one buys it. DOUBLE OUCH.

Here's a [good discussion](#) of this by best-selling traditionally and self-publishing author Bob Mayer on his [Write it Forward Blog](#).

When I finished my first manuscript, I thought I was ready to publish. I wasn't. A long string of rejections taught me that hard lesson. Read Bob Mayer's blog and take his advice. REALLY.

The publishing world is shifting under our feet. New opportunities are exciting but confusing too. More choices means more chances to make a wrong decision or the right one! I hope this brochure will help you make an informed decision--[Lyn Cote, Strong Women, Brave Stories](#)