

THE KEY BOOK PUBLISHING PATHS • BY JANE FRIEDMAN • JANEFRIEDMAN.COM

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING			SELF-PUBLISHING OR “INDIE” PUBLISHING		
ADVANCE & ROYALTIES	NO ADVANCE	DIGITAL-ONLY / DIGITAL-FIRST	FULL SERVICE OR ASSISTED	DO IT YOURSELF	WITHIN A COMMUNITY
<p>KEY CHARACTERISTICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly selective process often requiring an agent; very few authors accepted. You receive an advance against royalties; you pay nothing to publish. However, most advances do not earn out. You will likely sign a “life of copyright” contract, which allows the publisher to hold onto rights until certain conditions are met. Demands exclusivity; you can’t publish the work anywhere else while under contract. It will likely take 1-2 years to reach market. <p>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publisher shoulders risk. Physical bookstore distribution nearly assured with most traditional publishers. Best chance of mainstream media coverage and reviews. With experienced publishers, years of expertise in book editing, production, marketing and publicity work for you. <p>IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Big Five (New York) publishing: These houses represent 70-80% of what you see stocked in a typical bookstore. Your work must have commercial potential. Examples: Penguin Random House, HarperCollins. Small or independent presses: Authors who are writing more literary, experimental or risky works will likely have to pursue publication outside of the Big Five, at presses where artistic excellence is the No. 1 priority. Examples: Graywolf, Milkweed. University or scholarly presses: you often give up far more rights to your work; it may also be subject to peer review and/or university board approval. <p>ALTERNATE NAMES OR TERMS</p> <p>New York publishing, Big Five publishing, legacy publishing, commercial publishing, trade publishing</p>	<p>KEY CHARACTERISTICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A selective process sometimes requiring an agent; very few authors accepted. You don’t receive an advance. However, your royalty rate will likely be higher to make up for it. <p>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publisher still shoulders risk, assuming the author doesn’t have to cover any kind of editorial, design, or marketing costs. Physical bookstore distribution nearly assured with most traditional publishers, but with no advance, there might be less of a sales and marketing commitment from the publisher. Decent chance of mainstream media coverage and reviews, but again—when you’re not paid an advance—the publisher has no investment to recoup, and less of an incentive to market your work. With experienced publishers, years of expertise in book editing, production, marketing and publicity work for you. <p>IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Big Five publishers may operate imprints that pay no advance, but take a lot of rights. Literary agents may operate publishing businesses on the side that don’t pay an advance. No-advance deals can be highly valuable when the publisher has a strong brand, reach to readers, and experience in the marketplace. Try to negotiate a fixed-term contract (something that expires at a specific date). Examples: Berrett-Koehler, Rogue Reader, Cool Gus <p>ALTERNATE NAMES OR TERMS</p> <p>Sometimes called “partner” publishing, but not to be confused with self-publishing</p>	<p>KEY CHARACTERISTICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A selective process sometimes requiring an agent; very few authors accepted. You may not receive an advance or you’ll receive a nominal one. However, your royalty rate may be higher to make up for it. If created, print editions are produced via print-on-demand; there is no physical bookstore distribution unless demand is made apparent (high sales or success). <p>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publisher still shoulders some risk, assuming the author doesn’t have to cover any kind of editorial, design, or marketing costs. Potential for some mainstream media coverage declines when no print edition is available. With experienced publishers, years of expertise in book editing, production, marketing and publicity work for you. <p>IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extremely wide range of players here, from Big Five imprints that publish e-books, to digital presses run by agents, to savvy start-ups (Atavist), to Amazon Publishing. Diversity of players and changing landscape means contracts vary widely. Ideal contract would be a fixed-term contract (rights revert after a specified number of years). Most sales will happen through Amazon. Be very protective of your rights if you’re shouldering most of the risk and effort. Given how easy it is in the digital age for anyone to start a press, make sure the publisher is doing something meaningful to earn its share of revenue, especially a newly born one. <p>ALTERNATE NAMES OR TERMS</p> <p>Digital-only publishers, digital-first publishers</p>	<p>KEY CHARACTERISTICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You fund the publication of your book; cost is often thousands of dollars. You receive better royalties than a traditional publishing contract, but make less than do-it-yourself options. Your book may be available for order through bookstores, but in most cases it isn’t actually stocked on the shelf. The service company may try to sell you additional services that carry high prices, but may provide little value. <p>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You get a published book without having to figure out the service landscape or find professionals to help you. Ideal for an author who has more money than time. Some full-service companies are run by former traditional publishing professionals, and offer high-quality results and good potential for media coverage. <p>IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all full-service or assisted publishing providers are created equal. Fees dramatically vary and quality dramatically varies. Do your research carefully. <p>CATEGORIES OF SERVICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> High royalty. With these companies, you tend to pay more for the service and keep close to 100% of your earnings. Examples: Mill City Press, Matador, Silverwood. Curated. These companies are selective or may have editorial guidelines to follow. Examples: SheWrites Press, Greenleaf, Booktrope. Agent-assisted. When an agent helps you publish and takes 15%+ of your sales, and may also charge for costs. Crowdfunding. When you raise money for the publisher to work with you. Example: Inkshares. Old-school services. Think of any service run by AuthorSolutions, such as AuthorHouse, Xlibris, iUniverse, etc. Avoid. <p>ALTERNATE NAMES OR TERMS</p> <p>Hybrid publishers, full-service publishing, print-on-demand publishing, assisted publishing, subsidy publishing, vanity</p>	<p>The following services can be mixed & matched by entrepreneurial authors to best reach their readers and maximize profits. They primarily work on a nonexclusive, at-will basis, and offer the best possible royalties for the author. No gatekeepers and very limited (or no) assistance.</p> <p>E-BOOK RETAILERS</p> <p>Primarily: Amazon KDP, Nook Press, Apple iBookstore, Kobo Writing Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Instant” publishing capability—start selling your ebooks usually within 24h. Author responsible for formatting and uploading ebook files, marketing copy, etc. These services are automated and don’t offer assistance. <p>E-BOOK DISTRIBUTORS</p> <p>Primarily: Smashwords, BookBaby, Draft 2Digital, PublishGreen, eBookPartnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> These services make your work available to the major online retailers and other outlets. They work on a variety of models; some charge a fee, while others take a cut of sales but charge no fee. Some may do a combination of both. Some distributors offer add-on services related to ebook formatting, marketing, cover design, print-on-demand, and more. <p>PRINT-ON-DEMAND SERVICES</p> <p>Primarily: CreateSpace, IngramSpark, Lulu, Blurb</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> POD technology makes it affordable to sell and distribute print books via online retailers. Often used in conjunction with the ebook services listed above. The services are free or close-to-free if you have printer-ready PDF files. If you can’t prepare the files yourself, you can buy their assistance (not recommended). <p>TRADITIONAL PRINT RUNS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Savvy authors with money to invest may employ the services of a book printer and manage inventory, fulfillment, shipping, etc, with or without assistance from partners. <p>ALTERNATE NAMES OR TERMS</p> <p>“True” or “real” self-publishing</p>	<p>KEY CHARACTERISTICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You write, publish, and distribute your work in a public or semi-public forum, directly for readers, for free. Publication is self-directed and continues on an at-will and almost always nonexclusive basis. Emphasis is on feedback and growth; sales are almost never involved. <p>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows you to develop an audience for your work early on, even while you’re learning how to write. Popular writers at community sites may go on to traditional book deals. <p>COMMUNITY CATEGORIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serialization: Readers consume content in chunks or installments; writers receive feedback that may allow them to revise. Establishes a fan base, or a direct connection between the author and her readers. Serialization is often used as a marketing tool for completed works. Examples: Wattpad, LeanPub Fan fiction: Similar to serialization, only the work is based on other authors’ books and characters. For this reason, it can be difficult to monetize fan fiction since it may constitute copyright infringement. Examples: Fanfiction.net, Archive Of Our Own Reader-driven publishing: Readers vote on what books should be published by the host site. Example: Kindle Scout (may be the only example right now!) Blogs and websites: Both new and established authors alike use their blog or website to post works in progress, offer excerpts for critique, or distribute free (and paid) versions of their books. Examples: LiveJournal, Wordpress, etc. <p>WHO CREATED THIS?</p> <p>Jane Friedman has more than 15 years of experience in the publishing industry. She is the former publisher of Writer’s Digest and currently teaches digital media and publishing at the University of Virginia. Find out more at JaneFriedman.com</p>
<p>VALUABLE RESOURCES + ASSISTANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Independent Publishing Magazine by Mick Rooney offers comprehensive reviews and rankings of self-publishing service providers: independentpublishingmagazine.com There are many marketplaces for self-publishing authors to find assistance, including Bibliocrunch and Reedsy. Also take a look at the EFA to make a free posting for editorial help: http://the-efa.org. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helpful software for ebook formatting and conversion: Calibre, Sigil, PressBooks, Apple Pages, Apple iBooks Author, Jutoh, Vellum. My writing advice archive offers 101 posts on traditional publishing, self-publishing, and e-publishing: janefriedman.com/writing-advice-archive For more resources of all kinds: janefriedman.com/resources To receive industry updates: janefriedman.com/free-newsletter 		