

2017 KEY BOOK PUBLISHING PATHS • BY JANE FRIEDMAN • JANEFRIEDMAN.COM

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING			ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING		
BIG FIVE	MID-SIZE & LARGE	SMALL PRESSES	HYBRID PUBLISHING	SELF-PUBLISHING: ASSISTED	SELF-PUBLISHING: DIY
<p>WHO THEY ARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Hachette, Simon & Schuster, Macmillan (each have dozens of imprints). <p>WHO THEY WORK WITH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authors who write works with mainstream appeal, deserving of nationwide print retail distribution in bookstores and other outlets. • Celebrity-status or brand-name authors. • Writers of commercial fiction or genre fiction, such as romance, mystery/crime, thriller/suspense, science fiction and fantasy, young adult, children's. • Nonfiction authors with a significant platform (visibility to a readership). <p>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publisher shoulders financial risk. • Physical bookstore distribution nearly assured, in addition to other physical retail opportunities (big-box, specialty). • Best chance of mainstream media coverage and reviews. <p>HOW TO APPROACH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost always requires an agent. Novelists should have a finished manuscript. Nonfiction authors should have a book proposal. <p>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author receives an advance against royalties, but most advances do not earn out. • Publisher typically holds onto all publishing rights for all formats for at least 5-10 years. • Many decisions are out of the author's control, such as cover design and title. • Authors can find themselves unhappy with the level of marketing support received, and find that their title "disappears" from store shelves within 3-6 months. However, the same is true for most publishers, regardless of size. 	<p>WHO THEY ARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not part of the Big Five, but significant in size, usually with the same capabilities. • Examples: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Scholastic, Workman, Sourcebooks, John Wiley & Sons, W.W. Norton, Kensington, Chronicle, Tyndale, many university presses (Cambridge, Oxford). <p>WHO THEY WORK WITH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authors who write mainstream works, as well as those that have a more niche or special-interest appeal. • Celebrity-status or brand-name authors. • Writers of commercial fiction or genre fiction, such as romance, mystery/crime, thriller/suspense, science fiction and fantasy, young adult, children's. • Nonfiction authors of all types. <p>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identical to Big Five advantages. <p>HOW TO APPROACH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't always require an agent; see submission guidelines for each publisher. Novelists should have a finished manuscript. Nonfiction authors should have a book proposal. <p>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as Big Five, but advances and royalties from mid-size publishers may be lower than Big Five. • Some mid-size publishers may be more open to innovative or flexible agreements that feel more like a collaboration or partnership (with more author input or control). • University or scholarly presses typically pay a very low advance and have very small print runs, typically with a focus on libraries, classrooms, and academic markets. 	<p>WHO THEY ARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This category is the hardest to summarize because "small press" is a catch-all term for very well-known traditional publishers (e.g., Graywolf) as well as mom-and-pop operations that may not have any formal experience in publishing. • Given how easy it is in the digital age for anyone to start a press, authors must carefully evaluate a small press's abilities before signing with one. Legitimate small presses do not ask authors to pay for publication. <p>WHO THEY WORK WITH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging, first-time authors, as well as established ones. • Often more friendly to experimental, literary, and less commercial types of work. <p>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibly a more personalized and collaborative relationship with the publisher. • With well-established small presses: editorial, design, and marketing support that equals that of a larger house. <p>HOW TO APPROACH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rarely requires an agent. See the submission guidelines of each press. <p>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may not receive an advance or you'll receive a nominal one. Your royalty rate may be higher to make up for it. Diversity of players and changing landscape means contracts vary widely. • There may be no physical bookstore distribution and/or the press may rely on print-on-demand to fulfill orders. Potential for media or review coverage declines when there is no print run. • Be very protective of your rights if you're shouldering most of the risk and effort. 	<p>KEY CHARACTERISTICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author funds book publication in exchange for expertise and assistance of the publisher; cost is often thousands of dollars. • Author receives better royalties than a traditional publishing contract, but makes less than if self-publishing on their own. • Such books will rarely be distributed into physical retail bookstores, although in some rare cases, it may happen. • Each hybrid publisher has its own distinctive costs and business model; always secure a clear contract with all fees explained. <p>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a published book without having to figure out the service landscape or find professionals to help. Ideal for an author who has more money than time. • Some companies are run by former traditional publishing professionals, and offer high-quality results. <p>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some self-publishing (assisted publishing) services have started calling themselves "hybrid publishers" because it sounds more fashionable and savvy, but such companies may be nothing more than an assisted self-publishing service. • Not all hybrid publishers are created equal. Fees dramatically vary and quality dramatically varies. Research carefully. <p>EXAMPLES OF HYBRID PUBLISHERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curated. These companies are selective or may have editorial guidelines to follow. Examples: SheWrites Press, Greenleaf. • Crowdfunding. Authors must raise money for the publisher to contract the work. Example: Inkshares, Unbound. 	<p>KEY CHARACTERISTICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to hybrid publishing: authors pay to publish. An older term for this would be "vanity publishing." • Contractual arrangements vary, but the best services charge an upfront fee, take absolutely no rights to the work, and pass on 100% net royalties to the author. They make money on charging authors for the services provided (editorial, design, marketing, and so on), not on copies sold. • Such books will almost never be stocked in physical retail bookstores, although in some rare cases, it may happen. • Many assisted publishing services have different packages or tiers of service, while others offer customized quotes. <p>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • The best and most expensive services offer a quality experience that is comparable to working with a traditional publisher. <p>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most marketing and publicity service packages, while they can be well-meaning, are not worth an author's investment. • Avoid companies that take advantage of author inexperience and use high-pressure sales tactics, such as AuthorSolutions imprints (AuthorHouse, iUniverse, WestBow, Archway). <p>EXAMPLES OF GOOD ASSISTED SERVICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matador, Mill City Press, DogEar, Radius Book Group, Book in a Box, Girl Friday Productions. To check the reputation of a service, search for Mick Rooney's Independent Publishing Magazine website. 	<p>KEY CHARACTERISTICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authors manage the publishing process and hire the right people/services to edit, design, publish, and distribute. • Each author has to decide which distributors or retailers they prefer to deal with. <p>VALUE FOR AUTHOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author keeps complete and total control of all artistic and business decisions. • Author keeps all profits and rights. <p>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some authors don't invest enough money to produce a quality product. • First-time authors may not have the knowledge or experience to know what quality help looks like or what it takes to produce a quality book in their genre. • Bricks-and-mortar retailers, professional reviewers, and mainstream media will rarely offer help or coverage. <p>DIY PRINT AND EBOOK SERVICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary ebook retailers that offer direct access to authors: Amazon KDP, Nook Press, Apple iBookstore, Kobo. Primary ebook distributors for authors: Smashwords, Draft2Digital, Pronoun. These services offer little or no assistance. • Print-on-demand (POD) makes it affordable to sell and distribute print books via online retail. Most often used: CreateSpace, IngramSpark. With printer-ready PDF files, it costs little or nothing to start. • These retailers and distributors operate primarily on a nonexclusive basis and take a cut of sales; authors can leave them at will. There is no contract. • Some authors may hire a printer and manage inventory, fulfillment, shipping, etc. and sell via Amazon Advantage.
SPECIAL CASES			FOR MORE INFORMATION		
<p>AGENT-RUN EFFORTS</p> <p>Some agents have created publishing arms, either as part of their agency or as a separate business. The most significant example is Diversion Books from agent Scott Waxman. Usually these efforts are limited to print-on-demand or ebook only distribution.</p>	<p>AMAZON PUBLISHING</p> <p>With more than a dozen imprints, Amazon has a sizable publishing operation that is mainly approachable only by agents. Amazon titles are sold primarily on Amazon, since most bookstores are unwilling to carry their titles.</p>	<p>DIGITAL-ONLY OR DIGITAL-FIRST</p> <p>All publishers, regardless of size, sometimes operate digital-only or digital-first imprints that offer no advance and little or no print retail distribution. Sometimes such efforts are indistinguishable from self-publishing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to Get Published: https://janefriedman.com/start-here-how-to-get-your-book-published/ • How to Self-Publish: https://janefriedman.com/self-publish-your-book/ • How to Evaluate Small Presses: https://janefriedman.com/evaluate-small-publisher/ • A Definition of Hybrid Publishing: https://janefriedman.com/what-is-a-hybrid-publisher/ • Should You Traditionally Publish or Self-Publish? https://janefriedman.com/should-you-self-publish-traditional/ 		
			<p>WHO CREATED THIS?</p> <p>Jane Friedman has more than 20 years of experience in the publishing industry. She is the former publisher of Writer's Digest and co-founder of the industry newsletter for authors, The Hot Sheet. Find out more at hotsheetpub.com.</p>		