SELF-PUBLISHING FOR THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

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Abstract: *Writing and publishing a book is a dream of all. Book publishing is essential for those working in the fields of literature, education, research and the arts. Self-publishing the book has become an effortless task with the assistance of digital technologies and the Internet. The academic community can opt self-publishing mode to publish books within a short period of time and maximise the availability to all kinds of readers.*

Keywords: *Self-publishing, Open Access publishing, Amazon KDP, Book Publishing, Scholarly Publishing.*

Introduction

Knowledge sharing is an integral part of scholarly communication. Books belonging to tertiary sources of information play an essential role in knowledge sharing. Earlier it was difficult to print and sell books without the help of traditional publishing houses. Major publishing houses are more selective in accepting the works for publication. It shrinks the opportunities for authors who would like to publish through famous publishing houses. Advancements in printing and computer technology have made the publishing industry more accessible to ordinary people. Now anyone can publish a book and make it available worldwide if the author owns a computer with an Internet connection. The self-publishing sector offers more possibilities for writers to publish books using cutting edge technologies.

Drawbacks of traditional publishing

Publishing the book with a popular publishing house is the dream of authors. Slow processing time is one of the main drawbacks of traditional book publishing. Traditional publishers are very selective and only accept works based on their priorities. Once the manuscript is submitted to the publishing house, the author loses control over the book. The publishing house decides everything regarding the book. Famous publishing houses send the manuscript for a rigorous review

process (Clark & Phillips, 2014). As it is a business, publishing houses cannot ensure the successful selling of books. Majority of publishing houses charge the publishing expenses from the author to cover the loss. Advance payment makes the book publishing expensive to authors. The royalty rate in India is very nominal, and the authors cannot expect a decent income from book publishing. Very few well-known authors receive a higher rate of royalty (Subramanian, 2014). Often authors need to transfer the copyright of the book to the publishing house. Popularity and respect received from society motivate the authors to publish the book.

What is self-publishing

Self-publishing is the publication of an author's work without the help of any publishing house. The author takes full responsibility for the publishing process, print and sell it on their own or with the help of self-publishing service providers. The author himself can decide the selection of reviewers, proofreaders, layout and design professionals. The author has complete control over the manuscript selection, processing, printing, marketing and distribution of the book (Hartgers, 2019). Self-publishing depends on the Internet and cutting edge technologies. Self-publishing platforms help the authors to publish the book in various formats like ebook and paperback. Readers from anywhere in the world can access the book as both ebook and paperback editions. Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing platform allows authors to publish the books in both ebook and paperback format and make them available to readers in more than 175 countries.

Various approaches in self-publishing

Book publishing involves several processes. A book undergoes various phases like manuscript preparation, expert review, proofreading, layout, design, printing, pricing, marketing, and sales before it reaches the reader's hand. The author can choose and apply custom methods at each stage of publishing, for convenience. Let us get acquainted with the various approaches to self-publishing.

Online publishing

An author can make available the e-book on the Internet and it can be made convenient for the readers to access the same. PDF and EPUB are the popular formats used for publishing e-books. PDF and E-Pub

formats are compatible with a computer, mobile phone and e-book reading device. E-books are ideal for publishing with or without price. Authors need not bear the printing expenses. It is common in the Academic and research circles to publish with copyleft for wider access (Dilevko & Dali, 2006). If the author expects monetary benefits, he can place the book for online selling services like Amazon. Online booksellers offer higher rewards to authors (up to 70%) than traditional publishing houses.

Paperback

With the support of modern printing technology, it is possible to print paperback editions instantly. Print-on-demand service is one of the most popular distribution methods in self-publishing. Here, the copy of the book will be printed only when the order is placed by the customers instead of printing books in anticipation of sales. If the order for one copy of a book is received, then only one copy will be printed. Unlike the regular offset printing machine, specific machines are used for print-on-demand service. The advantage of the print-on-demand method is that the author need not have to spend money in advance to print the copies of the book (Print on Demand, n.d.).

Merits and demerits

The main advantage of self-publishing is that there is no need, for the author, to depend on a publisher for the whole publishing process. For authors, self-publishing is a practical way to publish a book, within a short period of time, that too done under the full control of the author. The author himself can select the best professionals in the field, for the expert review. The self-publishing industry makes use of innovative technologies for the publishing processes. Automated book submission, online author tools, online sales, ebooks, paperbacks and print on demand service are the highlights of self-publishing (Maguire, 2020). Works in local languages can be published effortlessly without delay. E-book and print editions can be made available simultaneously. It is convenient to add accessible features in e-books for the differently-abled people, such as having visual and print disabilities (Polanka, 2013). Self-publishing allows you to publish books globally, and readers can access copies from anywhere in the world.

Let us check the inconveniences with the self-publishing method. The author must bear the cost of publishing if he cannot manage the processes alone. The pricing of print-on-demand copies is a little higher than the conventional print copies. Only computer-savvy authors can manage various stages of self-publishing. Otherwise, the author has to depend on others to finish data entry, layout and design. The marketing and promotion of the book can be difficult if the author is not well-known among the specific reader's community (Kieffer, 2017). There is a general perception that books are self-published without expert examination.

Methods of self-publishing

In the academic environment, authors can approach two methods to publish books - Open Access method and selling of books.

Open Access method

The Open Access method ensures free availability, and it expands the reach of the book to more number of readers. The author can choose a license suitable for free distribution. Open licenses ensure copyright and the free distribution of works. Creative Commons is an ideal license for the public availability of literary, artistic, and scientific works. Creative Commons assists the authors in creating licenses based on four conditions: Share-Alike, Attribution, Non-Commercial, No-Derivatives. License builder available at the https://creativecommons.org/choose website. Usage increases when the book is available free. More readers get the opportunity to use the document (Busch, 2020).

Authors can upload Open Access books to an online public place for free distribution; upload the document into the author's personal website/blog and institutional repository/digital library. The author can make use of tools to know usage analytics (e.g. downloads). It's possible to collect feedback and comments on the book from readers through websites/blogs. Based on the comments and suggestions, the author can improve the book and prepare the next edition soon.

Bookselling

Self-publishing services assist authors in publishing and selling of books. They offer author services, guidance and publishing platforms. Authors can hire editing, layout and designing services from self-publishing

agencies. If the author can manage the manuscript ready for publishing, then he can make use of the publishing platform to release the book. He needs only to upload the document and cover design in the prescribed format to the self-publishing platform website. Within a few hours, the book will be released and made available in the online shop. Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing is a major global player of self-publishing. Authors can find local self-publishing agencies to publish the book. Pothi, Notionpress and Partridge are popular self-publishing agencies in India.

Conclusion

Self-publishing is suitable for both academic and non-academic sectors. The author experiences complete freedom and control at all stages of self-publishing. Every stage of self-publishing is augmented with the help of technology. Books get global reach. Self-publishing can help to overcome many of the drawbacks in traditional publishing. If the author can manage the tasks of self-publishing alone, he will be able to deliver the book to the reader in a cost-effective manner.

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