

2018 KEY BOOK PUBLISHING PATHS • BY JANE FRIEDMAN • JANEFRIEDMAN.COM

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING			ALTERNATIVES TO TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING		
BIG FIVE	MID-SIZE & LARGE	SMALL PRESSES	SELF-PUBLISHING AND ASSISTED PUBLISHING		SOCIAL
<p>WHO THEY ARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Hachette, Simon & Schuster, Macmillan (each has 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. Publisher will pursue all possible subsidiary rights and licensing deals worldwide. 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"> You receive an advance against royalties, but most advances do not earn out. Publisher holds onto all publishing rights for all formats for at least 5-10 years. Many decisions are out of your control, such as cover design and title. You may be unhappy with marketing support, and find that your title "disappears" from store shelves within 3-6 months. However, the same is true for most publishers. 	<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 low advance and have 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, you 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>ENTREPRENEURIAL OR DIY SELF-PUB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You manage the publishing process and hire the right people/services to edit, design, publish, and distribute. You decide which distributors/retailers to deal with. You are in complete control of all artistic and business decisions. You keep all profits and rights. <p>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may not invest enough money or time to produce a quality book or market it. You may not have the knowledge or experience to know what quality help looks like or what it takes to produce a quality book. It is difficult to get mainstream reviews, media attention or sales through conventional channels (bookstores, libraries) <p>KEY RETAILERS AND SERVICES TO USE</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: Smashwords, Draft2Digital, PublishDrive, StreetLib. 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. The above retailers and distributors operate primarily on a nonexclusive basis and take a cut of sales; you can leave at will. There is no contract, just terms of service. If you're confident about sales, you may hire a printer, invest in a print run, manage inventory, fulfillment, shipping, etc. <p>WHEN TO PREFER DIY OVER ASSISTED</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You intend to publish many books and make money via sales over a long period. You are invested in marketing, promotion, platform building, and developing an audience for your books over many years. 	<p>ASSISTED AND HYBRID PUBLISHING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You fund book publication in exchange for assistance; cost varies. Hybrid publishers pay royalties; other services may pay royalties or 100 percent of net sales. You'll receive a better cut than a traditional publishing contract, but usually make less than DIY. Regardless of promises made, books will rarely be stocked in physical retail outlets. Each service has its own distinctive costs and business model; always secure a clear contract with all fees explained. Such services typically stay in business because of author-paid fees, not book sales. <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 if you have more money than time, but rarely a sustainable business model if you are frequently publishing. Some companies are run by former traditional publishing professionals and offer high-quality results (with the potential for bookstore placement, but this is rare). <p>WHAT TO WATCH FOR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some services have started calling themselves "hybrid publishers" because it sounds more fashionable and savvy, yet offer low-quality results and service. Most marketing and publicity service packages, while well-meaning, are not worth your investment. Avoid companies that take advantage of author inexperience and use high-pressure sales tactics, such as AuthorSolutions imprints (AuthorHouse, iUniverse, WestBow, Archway, and others). 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"> You write, publish, and distribute your work in a public or semi-public forum, directly for readers. Publication is self-directed and continues on an at-will and almost always nonexclusive basis. Emphasis is on feedback and growth; sales or income can be rare. <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>MOST DISTINCTIVE CATEGORIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serialization: Readers consume content in chunks or installments; you receive feedback that may help you to revise. Establishes a fan base, or a direct connection to readers. Serialization may be used as a marketing tool for completed works. Examples: Wattpad, Tapas, 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, Wattpad. Social media and blogs: Both new and established authors alike use their blog and/or social media accounts to share their work and establish a readership. Examples: Instagram (Instapoets), Tumblr, Facebook (groups especially), YouTube. Patreon/patronage: Similar to a serialization model, except your patrons pay a recurring amount to have access to your content.
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>	