

10 Myths About Publishing

Small Publishing in a Big Universe

November 16, 2024



Introduction

Who I Am

- Managing Editor of Paper Angel Press and its companion imprints
- Novelist, short story author, and technical writer
- Technical Publications manager and college instructor
- Many, many years of experience in all areas of the publications field
- Executive producer of *Small Publishing in a Big Universe* podcast

Who We Are

- Our Imprints
 - Paper Angel Press: fiction and mysteries
 - Water Dragon Publishing: speculative fiction
 - Unruly Voices: memoirs, poetry, and self-improvement
 - Graveside Press: horror
 - Cupid's Arrow Publishing: romance
- Small Publishing in a Big Universe
 - Podcast
 - Marketplace
 - Webinars

Myth #1: You Can Make A Living As A Writer

Yes, it is possible, but ...

- Advances are rarely paid in a single lump sum.
- You don't begin earning royalties until after the publisher has earned back the amount of your advance.
- Most books never earn out their advances.
- Most authors earn most of their income from writing-related activities, not from book sales.
- The best thing you can do toward making a living from your writing career is to write your next story.

Myth #2: There Are Surefire Ways To Writing Success

- There is no single “magic bullet” for book sales and promotion.
- What one editor/agent/publisher says is almost certainly not valid for all editors, agents, and publishers.
- The publishing market changes more quickly than the publishing process.
- Luck and timing are the two most important factors in a manuscript being accepted.

Myth #3: The Publishing Process is Quick

Submitting Your Manuscript

Traditional Publishing

1. Acquire an agent.
2. Agent shops manuscript around to publishers.

Or

Small Publishing

1. Author submits manuscript to publisher.

Publishing Your Book

1. Publisher offers to publish the book.
2. Negotiate and sign contract.
3. Book cover development.
4. Author receives editorial changes for their manuscript.
5. Author receives proofs for review and final corrections.
6. Book is published.

Myth #4: Your Publisher Or Agent Will Handle All Promotion and Marketing

- Whether you are traditionally-published or self-published, you will most likely be responsible for the majority of the marketing and promotion for your book.
- Your agent or publisher might find opportunities for you to promote and sell your book, but most of the opportunities will be based on your efforts.
- Think “outside the box” when possible and appropriate.
- Partner with other authors whenever possible.

Myth #5: Getting Into Bookstores Is Easy

Authors and Publishers

- Want to see their books on the shelves in bookstores.
- Need to convince bookstores that there will be a demand for their books, enough to reserve space for it rather than for another book.
- Need to drive the publicity to generate demand for their books.

Bookstores

- Determine what gets purchased and stocked on their shelves.
- Want to stock books that will sell and bring readers into the store to buy other books and merchandise.
- Have limited shelf space (even large chain stores devote a considerable amount of their space to non-book items).

<5% of sales are through bookstores
~2% of books end up in bookstores

Myth #6: Just Having a Book Published Guarantees A Minimum Number Of Sales

Traditional Publishing

In their first year of sales, for new titles:

- 33.9% sell more than 1,000 copies
- 12.3% sell more than 5,000 copies
- 6.7% sell more than 10,000 copies

This means 66.1% sell fewer than 1,000 copies during their first year.

Small and Self Publishing

Over their lifetime, new titles:

- sell less than 300 print copies

Myth #7: Getting Reviews Is Easy

Reader Reviews

- The number of reviews drives visibility on Amazon and other marketplaces.
- Reviews by authors of similar books seems to drive awareness and sales better than other reviews.
- Getting reviews continues to be challenging. (*our ratio is less than 10:1*)

Professional and Paid Reviews

- The most prestigious venues for reviews (*Publishers Weekly*, etc.) request review copies at least 3–6 months in advance.
- Paid reviews (from services such as Kirkus)—even good ones—may influence credibility with buyers and readers, but do not seem to drive overall sales.

Myth #8: The Publishing Industry Provides Many Options

Publishing is essentially controlled by these companies:

- **Publishers:** There are essentially five large international publishing conglomerates
- **ISBN Management:** Bowker (exclusive in the U.S.)
- **Print Distribution:** Ingram
- **Middle Grade:** Scholastic ... and then everyone else
- **Online Marketplace Sales:** Amazon ... and then everyone else
 - **Printed Books:** Amazon — 70+% of market
 - **eBooks:** Kindle (Amazon) — 80+% of market
 - **Audiobooks:** Audible (Amazon/ACX) — 90+% of market

Myth #9: Self-Publishing Isn't That Difficult

Advantages

- Author has full creative control
- Author manages the publishing schedule
- Author receives all profits from sales

Disadvantages

- Author covers *all* costs
- Author manages *all* accounting
- Author is responsible for *all* marketing and promotions—including events, ads, networking, etc.

Myth #10: Measuring Your Success As An Author Is Easy

What Are Your Personal Goals?

- “I had a book published!”
- Building a legacy for your family
- To become better known in your writing communities—local or worldwide
- Being identified as “a writer”
- See your book on a shelf at a bookstore

What Are Your Business Goals?

- Number of book sales
- Amount of money earned
- Number of different books published

Set realistic goals.

Contacting Us

- Websites

- Paper Angel Press
paperangelpress.com
- Water Dragon Publishing
waterdragonpublishing.com
- Unruly Voices
unrulyvoices.com
- Graveside Press
graveside-press.com
- Cupid's Arrow Publishing
cupidsarrowpublishing.com
- Small Publishing in a Big Universe
spbu-podcast.com

- Email

- publishing@imprint.com
- spbupodcast@gmail.com

- Social Media

- Facebook
- Instagram
- YouTube

- Presentations and webinars:

- spbu-publishing.com/resources
- spbu-publishing.com/webinars