



Getting Published: What are my options?

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It wasn't long ago that if you wanted to be published, there was only one route: submitting to what's known as a commercial (aka 'traditional') publisher. Of course, this was during an age where you banged out your work on a typewriter and had to mail out submissions. After all, this was before computers became as common to households as toasters.

Then vanity publishing (now known as self-publishing) came into vogue, but it was an expensive endeavour and lacked credibility. If the book couldn't make it with a real publisher, then it couldn't be any good, could it?

But both time and technology have changed the way we look at publishing. Everybody has a computer. Trawl the net and you'll find innumerable blogs from people sharing some aspect of their lives. Lots of people have stories to share. Also, with the onset of digital printing, printing a book has become cheap. In fact, you can use POD (Print-On-Demand), which prints and mails books out as they're ordered.

Publishing is easy. But what's the best route today?

Commercial Publishing

You write your book, find a publisher, check their submission guidelines (these may vary), and submit what's required – usually a cover letter, synopsis, and three chapters. Then you wait – usually around three months, but some publishers may take longer (and few shorter). You're then either rejected, or (if applicable) they request your entire manuscript, which leads to more waiting. Ultimately, you're either rejected, or accepted.

If you're accepted, you'll be given a contract. Depending on the size of the publisher, you may get an advance, an advance against the royalties (so that the royalties have to pay off the advance), or just royalties. Standard royalties from a commercial publisher are about 5–10% (of a book's RRP). The publisher will assign you an editor so you can work together to make your book the best it can be. They'll lay the book out, issue the cover design, and get it in bookstores.

With a commercial publisher, you pay nothing. They take all the financial risk upon themselves.

Partnership Publishing

Here you pay a sizeable amount (upwards of \$5,000) for the services of having your book published. These services will entail (basic) copyediting, layout of your book, and the cover design. Print runs cost an additional fee. The partnership publisher will also organise the distribution of the book, getting it into bookstores and advertising it on their website.

The partnership publisher takes none of the financial risk. That falls upon you. However, in signing with a partnership publisher, they will take approximately 50% of your royalties.

Self-Publishing

As the name implies, self-publishing is doing it all yourself.

You organise the components required to getting your book out into the world (e.g. editing, layout, design), find a printer suitable for your project, and decide on the size of print run yourself.

The most difficult thing with self-publishing is distributing your book (i.e. getting it out into bookstores), but there are distributors you can approach for this task.

Conclusion

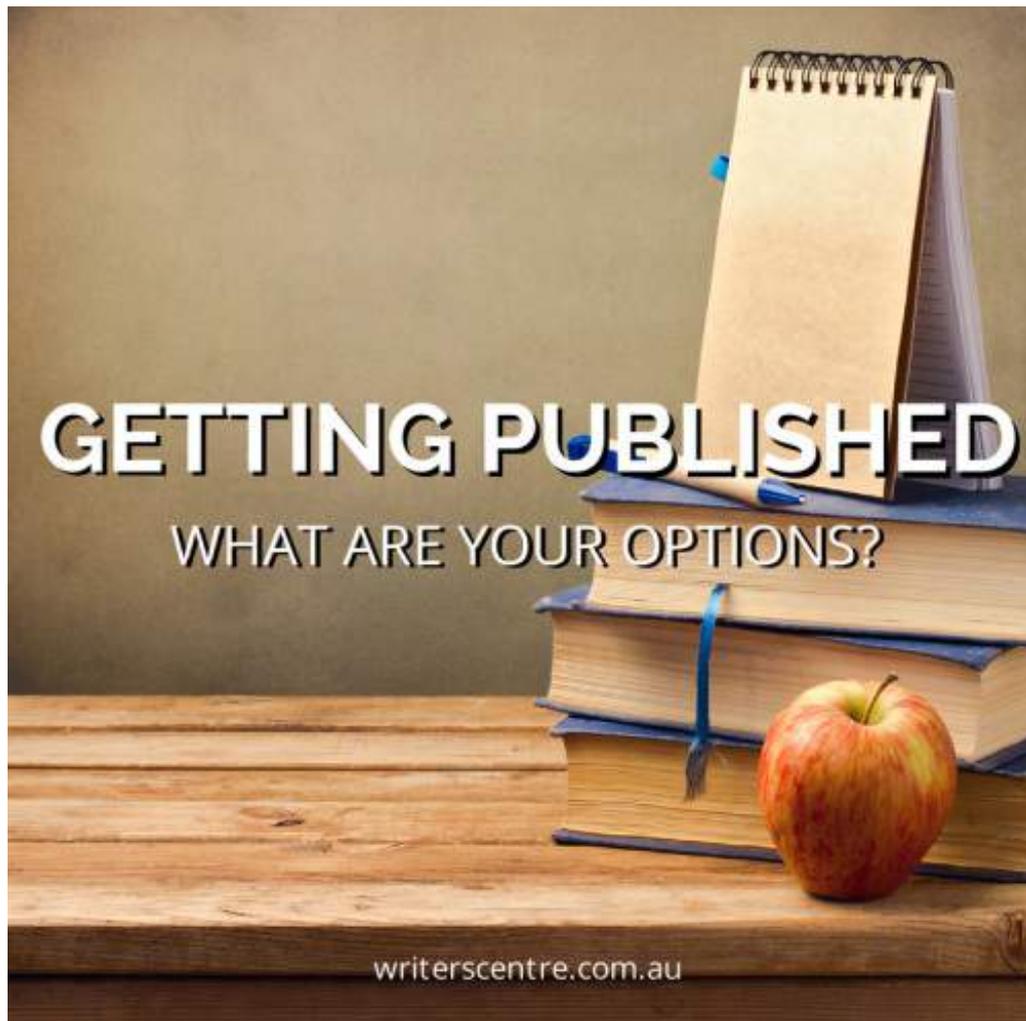
There's a validation in being accepted by a commercial publisher, a form of branding. Imagine the logo of a multinational publisher on your book.

My concern with a number of partnership publishers is they are unscrupulous, making novice writers feel as if their work – regardless how good or bad it is – has been 'accepted' (the way it would be with a commercial publisher), encouraging them to invest large amounts of capital to publish and embark on ludicrous print runs, and then sitting

back and collecting a share of the profits. The risk and expense is entirely on the author, and yet they collect only half the rewards?

If you wanted to go this route, you can do it yourself. If you do, though, find somebody you can trust who can talk – if not nurture – you through the process, and isn't looking to gouge you for their own benefit. Also, self-publishing nowadays has gained legitimacy as an alternative.

Whichever way you go, take pride in your work. You have just one chance to make a first impression. If you're sending your book out into the world, put in the effort to make it the best it can be.



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