

**How to Make  
Online  
Publishing  
Work for You**

**By Deborah Greenspan**

# How to Make Online Publishing Work for You

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# About the Author



**Deborah Greenspan**

Deborah Greenspan is a professional freelance writer whose credentials include hundreds of video scripts for *Technology Today*, (aired on the Discovery Channel), more than fifty documentaries for the *Science Screen Report*, a nationally distributed program produced for high schools and elementary schools, as well as credits for *Luxury Quest* (produced for Continental Airlines) and *Premier Destinations* (produced for Arizona West Airlines). In addition, Deborah has many years experience creating print and web copy for numerous corporations, and writes books and movies as well. To find out more, visit her website at <http://www.mediacreations.tv>.

## **Some of Deborah's Books include:**

*Mirror Mirror*– based on a true story about a mother whose son commits suicide... *The Healer* – a future gone mad and a boy sent back in time to save us from ourselves... *Kids' Day* – when Diana's wish comes true the result is world wide chaos... *InSight of God* – an inspirational book about the nature of reality... *New Age or New Opiate? A Cultural Analysis of The Celestine Prophecy and the New Age* - Graduate Thesis... *Inside Out* - the story of a young woman growing wild in the '70's. Visit [Lumina Press](http://www.lumina.com) to find out more.

She also produces [e-Writer Magazine](http://www.e-writer.com). To subscribe, send an email to [subscribe@lumina.com](mailto:subscribe@lumina.com)

Deborah resides in sunny Florida with two intelligent and beautiful teenage daughters, and a very fussy cat.

# **Table of Contents**

## **WHAT IS ONLINE PUBLISHING?**

**Print-on-demand**

**Ebooks**

## **WHY SELF-PUBLISH?**

**Why it's so hard to get published**

**Cost of publishing**

**Bestsellers only**

**A new world for writers**

**Internet marketing tools**

## **GETTING YOUR BOOK OUT THERE**

**Write and Rewrite it**

**Edit it**

**Competition**

## **PUBLISH IT**

**Comparison of POD and e-publishers**

**Quality**

**Investment**

**Royalties**

**Contract Period**

**Comparison Chart**

## **MARKET IT**

**The Press Release**

**The Hook**

**The Book Signing**

**The Sell Sheet**

**Radio and Television**

**Internet Marketing**

**Who's the Audience**

**Reviewers**

**Online Bookstores**

**Get a Web Page**

**Internet Discussion Groups**

**e-zines**

**Publicists and Promotion**

**Marketing Packages**

**A FINAL WORD**

## **WHAT IS ONLINE PUBLISHING?**

At one time, there were few books. The most widely read one, the Bible, was laboriously copied one print at a time, and only religious people and the very rich could read it. Then Guttenberg invented the printing press, and this important book could be read by anyone. At least, anyone who could read. (This changed the world, beginning the Reformation, but that's another story.)

Technology kept improving the process of book production, and today we've come full circle. Once again, books are printed one at a time. But once the book is setup, the only labor involved is produced by machines and computers. When combined with the electronic capabilities made possible by the internet, we've entered a new era in book production, Online Publishing. There are two technologies behind this revolution: Print-on-demand and eBook publishing.

### **Print-on-demand**

Print-on-demand is just what it sounds like, the ability to print one or a hundred books as they're needed. Instead of publishing 25,000 to 100,000 copies and then trying to sell

them all, publishers that use POD technology are now able to publish only as many books as are ordered. This saves huge amounts of money, and allows publishers to add books to their lists that they might otherwise ignore. This is changing the economics of book publishing and in fact, the entire industry.

## **eBooks**

Also changing the face of publishing is the technology that enables us to create and market eBooks. These paperless works can be read on the internet or downloaded directly to the individual's computer. There are also various readers of eBooks available and a whole slew of publishers out there who can turn your magnum opus into a marketable product.

## **WHY SELF-PUBLISH?**

Self-publishing has gotten a bad name. Called the “vanity press,” for many years, it evokes images of egomaniacs with nothing to say but lots of money to spend on getting their words into print. Although this may be true of some self-published writers, there are also many whose wonderful books might never have been made otherwise. Here's a short list of some authors who self-published their books at one time in their careers:

**Walt Whitman: Leaves of Grass**

**Mark Twain: Huckleberry Finn**

**Richard Bolles: What Color is Your Parachute?**

**L. Ron Hubbard: Dianetics**

**Henry David Thoreau: Walden**

**Irma Rombauer: The Joy of Cooking**

**Richard Nixon: Real Peace**

**James Redfield: The Celestine Prophecy**

These are just a few of many writers whose works have sold millions of copies and are still selling because people want to read what they have to say. Just because an editor has rejected your manuscript does not mean it's worthless.

## **Why it's so hard to get published**

Traditional publishing is changing with the times. Where there were once hundreds of well-known publishing houses with an even greater number of imprints, today those numbers have shrunk significantly. As is happening in every industry, companies are merging, buying up smaller companies, and consolidating their operations. Today, there are only twenty-three major houses still in existence.

They stay in existence by publishing books they believe will sell in large numbers: books written by authors whose names are a brand that can easily be marketed. Any John Grisham book, for instance, will make money no matter what there is between the covers. But when he was unknown, John Grisham got 29 rejections on his first book, “A Time to Kill,” and finally published it himself.

## **The cost of publishing**

Traditional publishers face huge overhead costs. Besides offices in New York, high-paid editors, and enormous marketing budgets, they also must print thousands of copies of each book they produce, and accept returns from bookstores if the books don't sell. If a house is producing 500 titles a year, they need bestsellers and authors with huge followings in order to survive. The more modest mid-list books, the ones that won't sell a million copies, are an enormous gamble that most houses try to avoid taking.

## **Bestsellers only**

Publishers buy books that fit into certain genres--thrillers, erotica, romance, mystery, sci-fi--and they know what's worked for them in the past. Because a lot of money is at

stake with each book they produce, they try to buy books that they believe will get on the bestseller list.

This means that works that are odd or strange, that don't fit the current thinking on what it takes to get on the list, don't get made. After a while, everything out there begins to look the same, and that odd creative work by an unknown author that captures the imagination and fires the intellect gets harder and harder to find. That's why there's more of a market for self-published works than ever before.

## **A new world for writers**

In every industry there are those who produce and those who pay for production. And the ones with money have always exploited the ones who produce. In publishing, writers have always been at the mercy of publishers, especially when they're first starting out. Because the publishers had the money to take a work and turn it into a product, they had the writers right where they wanted them.

Today, that's no longer so. Today, a book can be published for very little money. And the writer who puts in the time and effort to create that work can also be the one who benefits the most from it.

## **Internet Marketing tools**

Not only can writers publish their own books through POD and ePublishers, they can also use the power of the internet to market their books in ways that could not be imagined just ten years ago. Where once the only way to promote a book was through time-consuming lecture tours, in-store book signings, and major media promotions costing small fortunes, today a writer with a little imagination, intelligence, and perseverance can sell thousands of copies over the internet.

Of course, a writer without a web site today is like a writer without a typewriter twenty years ago. But that's just the beginning. By getting internet press releases out to appropriate online bookstores, publishing in ezines, and getting established in discussion groups, writers can get their work reviewed, and then use the reviews to further promote the book. Another strategy is to create short simple press releases about your book and email them to targeted bookstores.

And don't forget to register with the search engines. Writers on a budget can do this themselves; it's not difficult. But if you have the money and want to save time, there are many programs available that handle search engine registration for

you. Promoting your book online is a topic deserving of its own chapter (at the very least), and before we talk about it any further, we should talk about writing the book.

## **GETTING YOUR BOOK OUT THERE**

Talking about promotion before talking about creating the book itself is a lot like trying to sell a painting before you buy the canvas, but in reality, business people don't create products of any kind without first thinking how that product will be marketed and sold. Except artists and writers, that is. As members of that illustrious group, the chances are your book is already written.

### **Write it and Rewrite it**

Writing is a labor of love for most authors. While the idea of getting rich from your book may help motivate you, very often it's the story itself or the information you want to share that pushes the book forward. But even a labor of love has time limitations. We want it finished. We want it out there!

Although we urgently need to get to the next step it's imperative that we slow down. Spend as much time as you can to make your manuscript as good as you can make it. Go over each sentence and clarify it, make sure it says

exactly what you intend it to say. Check the grammar, the spelling, the sentence structure, and the overall organization of the work. The heart of good writing is, very simply, re-writing.

## **Edit it**

Unless you're a professional writer with superior grammatical skills and experience, you'll probably want to have your book [edited by a professional](#). After all, what's the point of getting your book into print if it's in such condition that no one will want to read it? Even if you're a terrific writer, it's very hard to edit your own work and see what's missing. Although you may think your work is perfected, the chances are it could still use a lot of careful editing to make it really shine.

## **Competition**

E-publishing is growing like crazy. Experts estimate that more than 70,000 to half a million previously unpublished books and shorter works will be available as eBooks or through print- on-demand during the coming year. So the best time to get your book out there is right now. Handle the competition by making yours the best book it can possibly be.

## **PUBLISH IT**

Writing and editing are a lot harder than publishing, so don't worry. If you're capable of writing a book, you're more than capable of getting it published online. There are decisions that must be made about which publisher to go with or whether to become a publisher yourself, and it can get a little confusing. We've included some tips to help you make these choices.

### **Comparison of POD & ebook publishers**

At this moment, there are numerous print-on-demand and e-publishers just waiting to put your book into print. Each one has somewhat different capabilities and conditions. Some offer editing services; some do not. Some will publish anything that comes their way; some look for higher quality.

### **Quality**

Quality is your first consideration. If you go with a publisher who has no standards, your book will be associated with books that are poorly written, and bookstores will ignore it. Try to get your book published by a company that insists on high quality. You might have to employ a professional editor at anywhere from \$1.50 a page to \$5.00 a page depending

on how much work the book needs, but it's better for you in the long run to get your book into polished condition, than it is to spend the money to have it made and then let it languish because it has been associated with "poor companions."

## **Exclusive vs. non-exclusive rights**

Another issue to contend with concerns the rights you are keeping and the rights you are assigning to the publisher. If the publisher gets exclusive publishing rights, then no one else can publish your book. A better choice for the writer is a publisher who is willing to take **non-exclusive rights**.

This means you can work with as many vendors as you want, and keep all the revenues you generate. And as long as you retain **subsidiary rights** you can also benefit from movie and television rights, character merchandising, CD games, and other products derived from your work. These are all possible areas in which you can earn additional money.

## **Investment**

Self-publishing used to cost many thousands of dollars. But with print-on-demand technology, the only costs are setup costs. These have to do with typesetting your book, creating

cover art, setting up the POD file, assigning ISBNs, getting your account set up, and other administrative details.

Setup costs for print-on-demand range from as low as \$99 for a generic looking book with a plain cover to \$1600 for a book that cannot be distinguished from one produced by a large publishing house.

## **Contract Period**

Most online publishers require authors to sign a contract that locks them in for a period of time ranging from one to five years or more. Authors who want to maintain control over their material should make sure that there is a clause in the contract that allows them to write a letter terminating the agreement within a specified period of time usually ranging from ten to thirty days. You need this if a traditional print publisher decides to take on and promote your work.

## **Royalties**

And what about royalties? How do you get paid? Be careful that you compare apples to apples. Royalties can be based upon list price or they can be based on net price. Some publishers play with these numbers, trying to make the

royalties look substantial while still covering their costs and making money. Usually, 10% of list price comes out to be more than 30% of “actual payments received less distribution, returns, and sales and use taxes.” “Actual payments received” is list price minus discounts to the wholesaler (trade discount is 55%).

## Comparison Chart

Company	Accepts	Rights	Royalties	Pays	Investment	Time Limits
<a href="#">1st Books</a>	Anything	Non-excl.	<b>eBook:</b> 40% of direct sales <b>POD:</b> 30% of actual receipts less distribution, returns, sales and use taxes etc.	quarterly	eBook only: \$399 plus \$199 for POD (pays 100% royalties until you earn \$300)	written notice
<a href="#">Infinity</a>	Anything	Non-excl.	<b>POD:</b> 20% on direct sales 10% on third-party sales	monthly	\$400	written notice
<a href="#">iUniverse</a>	Several imprints--different levels of expertise	Exclusive	<b>POD:</b> 20% of actual receipts less shipping and handling, sales and use taxes, returns	quarterly	\$99-\$399	30 days notice
<a href="#">Llumina</a>	70-80%	Non-excl.	<b>eBooks:</b> 60% on direct sales; 25% of third-party sales; <b>POD:</b> 30% on direct sales; 10% on third-party sales	monthly	\$99 for eBook only \$299 for POD and eBook	written notice

<a href="#">Xlibris</a>	Anything	Non-excl.	<b>eBooks:</b> 50% on direct sales and 25% on third-party sales; <b>POD:</b> 25% on direct sales; 10% on third-party sales	quarterly	\$200-1600	written notice
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There are other considerations besides these. For instance, does the publisher offer editing and/or marketing services? With millions of books in print, the commitment of your publisher to making your book a success really matters. And although it may be tempting to go with the biggest and most automated (Xlibris), remember that you'll get a generic cover and little service unless you opt for their premium package at \$1600. Visit [e-Writer Magazine](#) for a more complete comparison of e-publishers.

## **MARKET IT**

There used to be only one way to market a book—the traditional way. This usually involves a large marketing budget along with a time-consuming lecture and book-signing tour. Radio and television interviews might also be part of the package. Today, the internet makes it possible to market books in ways never heard of before for a lot less money. By combining some of the strategies of traditional book promotion with strategies that work on the internet, authors

can get their books out of the closet and into the hands of the public.

## **The Press Release**

Book promotion usually begins with a press release designed to attract the attention of a newspaper, magazine, or e-zine editor. It includes a brief synopsis of the book, biographical information about the author, the publisher's name and address, the ISBN number, the publication date, the price, and a way to contact the author (or his or her publicist) to schedule an interview.

## **The Hook**

None of the above information will do the job, however, unless the press release gets attention. It does this with a hook—a headline that makes the editor want to read the rest. The hook can tie in to current events, human interest, or other approaches. Here are a few examples of the spin you can put on your press release:

- 1) human interest angle – heartwarming anecdotes
- 2) interpersonal relationships and controversial issues—focus on love, sex, money, men and women, parents and children, governments and individuals etc.

- 3) tips – advice and tactics, ten tips etc.
- 4) unusual events such as unique creative ideas or personal achievements.
- 5) truly unique products and developments
- 6) editorial tie-ins that are politically and socially important
- 7) holiday tie-ins

Centered under the hook (or headline) is the title of the book and under that the name of the author. A few positive quotes from reviewers come next.

In the body of the press release you start out with a great line that leads into a three or four paragraph synopsis of your book. Make sure your copy is crisp and polished, and that it flows nicely so that you can get your message across.

That's the basics. If you have extra material, you can include a quote sheet, a glowing review of your book, a relevant article clipped from a magazine or newspaper, or even a brief question and answer session with the author. Be creative and make it interesting.

## **The Book Signing**

Once you have the press release, you're ready to get started. All bookstores (independent and chain) love to have authors

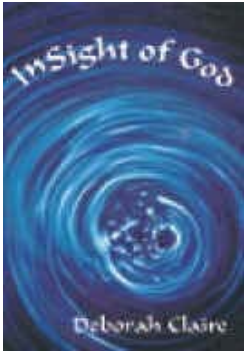
come to their store and sign copies of their books. It's an event, a chance for readers to meet the author and have their copy of the book autographed (which means they can't return it.) It attracts people and gets them in the store, and it doesn't cost the bookstore anything. Sometimes authors also do readings from their work, giving patrons the chance to hear the words in the author's own voice.

Start with your local bookstore and go from there. Call and speak to the manager. He or she will want to know a little about the book.

## **The Sell Sheet**

The Sell Sheet is a one-page document that provides all the necessary details about your book. Although it may resemble a press release, the Sell Sheet is more marketing oriented. While the press release focuses on the news value of your book, the Sell Sheet announces its existence to the world. It contains a picture of the book cover, all the pertinent publication details and ordering information, a brief synopsis, your reviewers' most memorable quotes, publicity details, and a brief author biography. Here's an example:

## In Sight of God



### **InSight of God**

Metaphysics

Trade Paperback

Publication: 9/15/01

Price: \$12.95

Size: 5.5" x 8.5"

Author: D. Claire

ISBN: 09713099-0-6

116 pages

First Print Run: On

Demand

Available from Llumina Press and Ingram  
To order call 1-954-341-5636 or visit us on the  
web at <http://www.llumina.com/>

While meditating on the boundaries of reality, *InSight of God* knits science, poetry, mysticism, and romance into a startling vision of the cosmos and the human condition. *InSight of God* aims at the edges of our understanding, taking a serious look at the framework underlying God and Goddess, love and power, life and death. By drawing material from a wide range of sources and perspectives it turns dualities into "oneisms," and illuminates the patterns beneath the commonplace that structure our knowing.

Thoroughly researched and passionately revealed, the insights in this groundbreaking book open new vistas on the inner workings of the human mind and spirit. With its unique perspective on relationships of all kinds, *InSight of God* brings order to the chaos of human relations, and enables readers to get in touch with their deepest and truest nature.

"This is a good book... filled with wonderful, wonderful ideas!" Richard Fuller, *Metaphysical Review*

Deborah Claire is a writer with a mission. In between caring for her two daughters and her cat, she's passionately involved in her work. A mystical experience at the age of sixteen fired her imagination and set her on her path in life. It is an endless source of inspiration to this very day.

You can send your sell sheet to bookstores and hand them out to customers at book signings. You can also use most of it blown up on a poster board as a promotional piece that can be set up on an easel near the table where you'll be signing books, or even set in the window to announce the event.

Just add your photo!

## **Radio and Television**

Making arrangements to be interviewed on radio and television isn't as difficult to manage as you might think. And there isn't any more effective means of publicizing your book. The basic steps are simple. First, figure out who your audience is and make a list of those shows that appeal to that audience. Don't waste your time or theirs trying to sell them on your book on relationships when their show features health-related topics.

Create a contact list. Find out who the producers of the selected shows are and contact each of them. You can do this with a letter similar to your press release but simpler. Perhaps a bulleted list of major points you can talk about. And don't forget your contact information so they can get in touch with you. If and when the production company calls

you, be enthusiastic and intelligent on the phone. This is your big chance to make an impression.

You should send these letters out four or five weeks before your book signing, so that these television and radio shows can be taped in advance of your bookstore event. If the timing is right, your interview will air a few days before you make the public appearance.

If you don't get a call back from the producer, follow up with a phone call, but don't be a nuisance. If you don't get a response after three calls, you can assume they're not interested, and go to bigger and better things.

## **Internet Marketing**

Cyberspace. It's a new frontier, a place where pioneers can still carve out a niche for themselves. Because of the interwoven nature of cyberspace, ideas can propagate like ripples around a stone falling into water. Yet the internet is vast and competition fierce, so successful marketing requires an understanding of the ways in which ideas can be made to multiply across this space.

## **Who's the Audience**

As with any other type of marketing, it's crucial to know who your audience is. With the whole world at your fingertips, you don't want to waste your efforts sending your seeds in the wrong direction. You need to aim them at the places in which they can grow. You don't send cookbooks to romance readers or new age to fundamentalists. So, your first step is to narrow down and identify your audience. Be as specific as you can. This will make your task much easier in the long run.

## **Reviewers**

You can't really write a good press release without a few reviews from which to extract positive quotes. Getting your book reviewed starts with finding reviewers who read your type of material. It's not as hard as you might imagine. Look up reviewers on a search engine and spend a little time exploring what comes up. Every time you find a reviewer that reads your type of material, send an email requesting that he or she review your book. Include a short paragraph describing what the book is about. If they find it intriguing in any way, they'll send back a request for a copy of the book to read. Send it to them and get those quotes!

## **Online Bookstores**

Now you've got a press release and reviews, you're on your way. There are literally hundreds of online bookstores. Once you know your audience, you can choose the bookstores that sell your type of work. Create an email that includes your press release (with quotes) and send it out. Don't send the press release as an attachment, because the chances are it will never be opened. Always include it in the body of the email.

## **The Big Online Stores**

You've heard of them: Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com, Borders.com. As long as your book is listed on the Ingram database, it will also be listed on these sites. Find out if books from your publisher are listed on Ingram. Some sites like Amazon allow readers to write reviews. This enables you to insert some of the positive reviews you've received about your book into Amazon's database.

## **Get a Web Page**

No online marketing program is complete without a web page. This is your homestead. It's where all your marketing efforts are ultimately directed. Your web page should show

the cover of your book, information about your book and about you, the author, quotes from reviewers and full reviews if they're available. You can even put up a question and answer interview with the author, and include a few pages from the book. After all, few people want to buy a book based solely on its cover. Most of us want to get a peek inside. If your publisher includes a web page on its site, you can make use of it in your marketing efforts.

## **Internet Discussion Groups**

Sign up with newsgroups and listservs that are frequented by members of your target audience. Put together a short article (200-300 words) related to the subject matter of your book and post it to the groups you've identified. Make sure you include contact information (your web page address) so that readers can look you up.

Follow up with excerpts (or the full texts) of the reviews you get by posting them to the discussion. Don't be too pushy, however. Just one review a week introduced by a little note: "Here's another great review..." You can find newsgroups and group discussions at sites such as [deja.com](http://deja.com) or [tile.net](http://tile.net).

## **E-zines**

E-zines and e-mags (electronic magazines and newsletters) are posted on web sites and sent by email directly to subscribers. Some e-zines are sent bulk email to readers who may then “opt-out” if they don’t want to receive them. But more effective e-zines allow readers to “opt-in.” This means they choose to receive the e-zine. Since they choose to receive it, the response you get from advertising is much greater than you might otherwise get.

You can look for free publicity by getting your book reviewed in such newsletters. Or you can pay for advertising your book and including a link to your web page. This usually costs about \$25.

Go through the search engines and find the e-zines that appeal to an audience similar to yours and get on their lists. Once you get an idea of what they do, you can offer them an article (with a link back to your web page) or make a deal to pay for advertising.

## **Publicists and Promotion**

Some writers don’t want anything to do with marketing and promotion, and perhaps they’re better off that way. After all,

writers should concentrate on what they do best: writing. Unfortunately, hiring a publicist to get your work out there can cost big bucks, the kind of money that few of us have on hand.

## **Marketing Packages**

To reduce the cost while making it easier for writers to promote their own work, some dot coms offer marketing packages. As we've seen there are certain basics to a promotional campaign—a press release, a sell sheet, an article, a list of related newsgroups and listservs, a list of online bookstores offering similar works, a list of e-zines targeted to your audience... With these items in hand, and a strategy designed by an expert, writers can easily handle the task of publicizing their work. In fact, it can even be fun!

## **A FINAL WORD**

Publishing today is different. With print-on-demand and eBook technology, writers have more control over their work than they have ever had before. Online publishing makes it possible for authors to take control of the publishing process and place their work before their primary audience, bypassing the gatekeepers of the publishing industry completely.

All writers suffer rejection at some time in their careers. And many tend to believe in their heart of hearts that this means there's something wrong with their work. This is not necessarily the case. Very often, the only thing wrong with the writer's work is that their name is unknown, and publishers are looking for sure things.

By understanding the dynamics of book publishing, and realizing that it's not personal, writers can take charge of their careers and turn their carefully crafted work into books that they can be proud to present to the world. So, stop procrastinating. Get your book published! No one will read it until you do.

Good luck and best wishes,  
Deborah Greenspan

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Number of Words: 4,417 (approx.)  
Number of Characters: 25,181 (approx.)