

# *Rowse Reviews*

Special Publishing Collection

May 12 2003

## In This Issue

If the text is blue a mouse click will take you somewhere, just like links on a web page.

[All-by-Yourself Self-Publishing](#)  
[The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing](#)  
[Make Money Self-Publishing](#)  
[The Self-Publishing Manual](#)  
[Everything You Wanted to Know...  
Successful Nonfiction](#)  
[No More Rejections: Get Published Today!](#)  
[The Publishing Game: Best-seller in 30 Days](#)  
[Unlocking the Secrets of Publishing](#)  
[Publication Production using Pagemaker](#)

## All-by-Yourself Self-Publishing

★★

David H. Li, PhD

Premier Publishing 1996

Paperback 6 x 9 254pp. indexed

\$22.00

Premier Publishing

P. O. Box 341267

Bethesda MD 20827

301-469-7051

FAX 301-469-6544

davidli@erols.com

ISBN 0-9637852-6-5

Li is a prolific and erudite author, with books on such subjects as Kriegspiel and Chinese poetry. This earlier work in the self publishing genre is noteworthy for its dogged honesty and its careful, detailed description of a self-publishing effort. Li's description of his gentle war with the Library of Congress is a classic. His discussion of self-generated Cataloging-in-Publication Data will save you money.

Li is not a hype and hoopla author. The business of doing business as a self-publisher is a point of emphasis. He discusses costs down to the difference between airmailing a book printed on 50 lb stock versus the same book printed on 60 lb stock.

The book was written before the advent of POD printers and on-line publishing. Certainly it needs an update. But it is worth a read even in its present state.

## The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing

\*\*\*

Tom & Marilyn Ross  
 Writers Digest Books 2002  
 Paperback 6 x 9 521pp. indexed  
 \$19.99

Communication Creativity  
 P.O. Box 909-NR  
 Buena Vista CO 81211  
 Marilyn@About Books.com  
 www.CommunicationCreativity.com

800-331-8355 ISBN 1-58297-091-2

The Ross book is the standard by which other books on self-publishing must be measured. No other book has so much information on the field. The coverage is authoritative and in most cases up-to-date. Nothing succeeds like success. This book on self-publishing is now offered via a traditional publisher. The authors have diligently rewritten the book and have added both topics and hundreds of new pages for the current edition.

Like most such books The Complete Guide is entirely too optimistic. The chapter on subsidy publishers discusses (honestly) a topic best dismissed in a sentence or two. The chapter on financing would have the publishing wannabe putting up their house and their life savings on what is always a chancy venture. None of the books on self-publishing talk sufficiently about the downside; the Ross book is no worse than the others in this respect.

Today it is brutally difficult to keep up to date on publishing technology. "The Com-

plete Guide to Self-Publishing” covers in detail prepress topics glossed over or neglected entirely by competing authors, including Poynter and Sansavieri. Unfortunately the PDF revolution has not yet caught their attention. They barely mention the format.

The Ross book is the best in the field. But even this encyclopaedic work needs to be read with caution. And supplemental reading in Poynter, Sansavieri et al. is prudent. A self-publisher can never have too much information or do too much research.

## Make Money Self-Publishing

★★

Suzanne Thomas

Gemstone House Pub.

Paperback 6 x 9, 380pp. indexed.

Gemstone House Pub.

P. O. Box 19448

Boulder, CO 80308

800-324-6415

ISBN 0-9664691-2-7

We read many books. Some we read with great interest. This one inspires us to action. Contributor Angela Adair-Hoy could get some business from this corner as a direct result of our reading *Make Money Self-Publishing*.

Despite the somewhat pedestrian title *Make Money Self-Publishing* has significant impact on the reader. Fourteen successful self-publishers tell us their stories—their failures as well as their successes—what worked and what didn't. For those interested in the self-publishing field this is fascinating reading.

The stories are varied. One author updates and reissues a single title year after year; others have extensive backlists. Some publish only their own work, others have parlayed their success into publishing the work of others. The abiding lessons are: there is no single formula for success, rules are made to be broken, and often the key element for success is discovered by accident.

Prefacing the fourteen tales is a chapter called “Self-Publishing 101” which outlines succinctly much of the material told in greater detail in the other books reviewed in this collection.

Ironically it is the tale written by an E-book publisher that highlights the continuing need for paper books. Through that story we found an Ebook publisher well-suited to our needs. Internet seaches had not come up with this information.

We are very high on this book. Libraries should order one for each branch.

## The Self-Publishing Manual

☆☆☆

13th Edition

Dan Poynter

Para-Publishing 2002

Paperback 5.5 x 8.5 430pp. indexed

\$19.95

Para-Publishing

P. O. Box 8206-380

Santa Barbara, CA 93118

800-968-7277

Fax 805-968-1379

orders@ParaPublishing.com

<http://ParaPublishing.com>

ISBN 1-56860-073-1

The Self Publishing Manual is one of the two must-have books for the self-publishing genre. Like the Ross book Poynter's book packs great amounts of pertinent information into one low-cost volume. The author continues to update his book every one or two years while publishing many others on the same or similar subjects. Others in the selfpublishing clan refer to Poynter as the 800 lb gorilla of the field. This is his signature work. Which is better, Ross or Poynter? Both are excellent, both have weaknesses. So for the personal bookshelf we suggest both, and others as well.

Like many successes in the field Poynter is at heart a salesman. In this book he sells the concept of self-publishing, offers much advice on marketing, and of course promotes his many other offerings, from audio tapes to printed reports.

He makes it all sound too easy. Self-publishing is for most a brutal business, requiring much labor for uncertain rewards. But even as we

reread our latest version he is stoking our fires anew.

Poynter continues to give confusing and sometimes contradictory advice on the pivotal questions of typesetting and layout. His own books tend to oscillate between excellent and mediocre. In the 13th edition (which was typeset using the low end program Ventura Publisher) he states on page 87:

“TYPESETTING can be done with your word processing program and laser printer.

LAYOUT Can be done with your word processing program, or it can be automated somewhat by pouring the file into a page layout program such as Microsoft Publisher, Pagemaker, Indesign QuarkXpress or Ventura Publisher.”

On page 341, dealing with electronic books, he gives much better advice:

“ . . . Or they may be given a more profession-

al polish by using page

design and layout programs . . . These programs will aid in page design and refine the page layout and typesetting of your book beyond that of standard word processing software. ”

And in the much handsomer book *Successful Nonfiction* (2000) he offers perhaps the best advice:

“Your typesetter and book printer can deliver any format you wish.

Just give them some guidance.”

Poynter in the year 2000 used Cirrus Design for his layout and typesetting. The layout of the Poynter books we have seen from that era was exceptional. His offerings haven’t reached that level of excellence since, although it is quite acceptable.

Like many of the genre Poynter's book is in large part a book of lists. Appendix 2, "Resources for Publishers" runs 22 pages (38 pages in the previous edition) and has many hundreds of valuable entries. One could spend weeks on the internet and not assemble half this information.

Electronic publishing, including e-books, short run digital and POD printing, are covered in a new chapter. He does not cover POD publishers such as Booklocker.com and 1stBooks.

In sum you can have either Ross or Poynter, with caveats as noted. But if you are serious about self-publishing it makes sense to have both.

## Everything You Wanted to Know...

★★

John F. Harnish

Infinity Publishing.com 2002

Paperback 5.4 x 8.4 606pp. indexed  
\$24.95

Infinity Publishing.com

519 West Lancaster Avenue

Haverford, PA 19041

www.buybooksontheweb.com

877-289-2665

610-520-2500

FAX 610-519-0261

ISBN 0-7414-1121-0

This is a big book with an enormous title: Everything You Always Wanted to Know About POD Publishing but Didn't Know Who to Ask

—hereinafter called “the book.” Settle back—this will be a long review also. This is the magnum opus of POD Publishing's strongest voice of advocacy. John Harnish is an “author's advocate” employed by Infinity.com. Clearly he loves his job and the whole POD Publishing movement. The book is full of fascinating material not found anywhere else. The author's enthusiasm and painfully honest approach make us want to really like this book.

Unfortunately the book exemplifies much of what is wrong about POD published books. It has an overlong title and perhaps the most garish layout we have ever seen. Huge serif type is used for chapter headings. The chapter entries in the Table of Contents are followed by short topic headings that unfortunately have no page numbers attached. The author's two favorite type styles are bold and italic, with

inappropriately placed Sans Serif coming up third.

The author offers an apology up front for using Microsoft Word, stating that he wanted to build his book using the tools that his customers used. There are two passages much later in the book that bear on this choice. In one he describes his discomfort with being forced to use WordPerfect instead of MSWord by his first potential publisher. This is what drove him into the arms of the predecessor to Infinity.com.

To be blunt Harnish could have done a very much better job of formatting his material even within the limitations of a bottom end product like Microsoft Word. He could do even better with a more sophisticated product like WordPerfect, had he taken the time to learn it. He should not apologize for using the Word Processor, but for using it badly.

Later, a quoted essay by Mike Swedenborg be-

gins “You must learn to use the Word Processor before you begin to write your book.” The essay goes on to describe the horrors awaiting the novice attempting to use Microsoft Word for typesetting. It is the root assumption, that one can typeset a book in MSWord and have good results, that is faulty.

The cited essay also recommends using both the spell checking and grammar checking features of the word processing program. As Harnish himself points out, those who rely on such tools are leaning on two very slender reeds. Our policy is that if you can’t spell, can’t handle English grammar, and can’t edit your own work with a critical eye, find a new avocation.

Harnish’s twin presumptions, that real typesetting software is too expensive and that therefore POD books must be keyed in and typeset using a Word Processor program are both absolutely wrong. You are reading a review keyed on a free editor program and typeset by a free, and very sophisticated, typesetting

program.

Sometimes Harnish's passion for his own employer's business model leads him astray. He asserts as fact that POD Publishers do not review and reject works based on a qualitative assessment. Yet competitor Booklocker.com by their own report reject 70% of what is submitted to them. And once a book is rejected they will not consider it again. Frankly that business model gives us more comfort than the "we print anything" business model.

So what is good about this badly flawed book? As it turns out there is much to praise. He conducted extensive surveys of POD publishers, asking them some pertinent questions such as

\* Why did you decide to publish your book with a POD publisher?

\* If you were publishing your book today, what would you do differently?

\* What have you been doing to promote your book? . . . and so on. The answers to these questions are extremely valuable to all of us. They reinforce the theme that publishing is no longer the problem, marketing is. Many POD publishers wish they had engaged the services of a proofreader and/or a copy editor before rushing to print. Not a few regret misunderstanding the traditional review process and schedule.

Another valuable feature is the inclusion of (in somewhat condensed form) the heart of Penny Sansavieri's seminal work *Get Published!*: a list of POD Publishers, their offerings, terms and prices.

Reading the book one gets the sense that at some point Harnish became weary, and his usually good sense of grammar and style deserted him. We quote the following without comment:

"How this fits on my bookshelf is because of

reading about the ways self-publishing is attempting to mimic traditional publishing and thereby sensing the veiled put-downs regarding POD publishing because it's very different than the costly way of doing commercial press runs, and a major change for the better than the way traditional publishing has always been.”

Harnish could improve the value of his book by concentrating more on the how-to and less on the lengthy arguments with POD detractors. This tendency gets less sufferable as one plows through the book.

It bears noting that an index set in Helvetica is odd and annoying. And no professional indexer would include 73 page references for a single term! Even if the option of indicating page ranges were taken (an indexing technique apparently not known to his indexer) the number of page references remaining would be way beyond any reasonable maximum.

It is not the worst presented book we have seen, however. Infinity.com's execrable sales piece *Become aPublished Author*

holds that distinction. Happily most of the client books they publish are at least marginally better than their own product. The shoemaker's children, it seems, still go barefoot. We weep a little.

## Successful Nonfiction

☆☆☆

Dan Poynter

Para-Publishing 2000

Paperback 5.5 x 8.5 142pp. indexed

\$14.95

Para-Publishing

P. O. Box 8206

Santa Barbara, CA 93118

800-727-2782

Fax 805-968-1379

orders@ParaPublishing.com

<http://ParaPublishing.com>

ISBN 1-56860-061-5

In Successful Nonfiction publishing guru Dan Poynter practices what he preaches. Handsomely made and cleverly written, it is at once an abundantly useful book and a fit example of how to do it right.

Poynter abandons the traditional chapter-section-subsection organization of most non-fiction books and instead deals with 124 aphorisms, one per page. The aphorism is stated in a header line, restated in a subtitle, then explained in a few sentences. A pertinent example is narrated, and finally a suitable quotation is appended. Different typefaces distinguish the five elements on each page.

The result is a book that reads quickly yet conveys much pertinent information. The reader's attention does not flag and useful advice is located without difficulty.

The one-page-per-topic organization is not unique. It enjoyed a vogue in the 1960's and 1970's in documentation of systems. Never-

theless Successful Nonfiction utilizes the format as well as we have seen it done.

Some of the topics are repetitive, and occasionally the advice borders on contradiction. But the overall impact is positive and instructive.

This is a candidate for the most handsome book offered to us for review. The gold embossed cover with French flaps, the pertinent cover illustration, the distinctive endpapers and of course the excellent interior design set a standard to be emulated. Yet it retails for a low price.

We strongly recommend this book to authors, self-publishers, and those who simply admire well-crafted books. The content is provocative. Additionally it sets a new level for design and presentation of the paperback nonfiction title.

## No More Rejections: Get Published Today!

★★★

Penny C. Sansevieri

Infinity Publishing.com

October 2002 Paperback 5.5 x 8.5 264pp. indexed

\$15.95

BooksbyPen

P.O. Box 421156

San Diego, CA 92142

penny@booksbypen.com

www.booksbypen.com

858-560-0121

ISBN 0-7414-1111-3

When we reviewed the first edition of this book, under a shorter title, we stated: “Sansevieri has put together one of the truly useful books on selfpublishing. No one else covers the world of POD and On Line publishers in such detail.” We have no reason to reverse that judgement. Indeed by pursuing an annual update Sansevieri has declared her intention to play in the big leagues with Ross and Poynter.

So what is new about this book—what is better—what still needs attention?

The author has enhanced the readability of the book by way of pertinent (and sometimes impertinent) quotes at strategic points. The layout has been freshened, and a better cover and bright white paper in place of cream makes the previous edition look a bit dull in comparison.

Although the content is similar, the central feature of her offering, the section on Print on Demand Publishers, (POD) has been updated and expanded with new vendors and in some

cases more complete data. As before she devotes two pages or more to each such vendor, including a chart with data on pricing, time-to-print, discounts, promotion effort (or lack thereof) and so on. Coverage of these vendors is the greatest strength of the book.

. . . *Get Published Today!* also offers the author's views on the Amazon.com ranking system and gives extensive coverage to other marketing and publicity issues and resources. Practical marketing detail is the other great strength of . . . *Get Published Today!* The media resources section has been heavily edited, with additions and subtractions.

On the other hand necessary details like getting an LCCN and sources for CIP data are omitted again: . . . *Get Published Today!* has neither. There is no discussion of layout and typesetting, or of frontmatter design.

The layout is good—the cover better than before—but for some reason an oddball body

font is used. This is better than the previous sans-serif typeface, but we wish authors and layout artists would remember that a body font is like a butler, there to serve, not to be noticed.

The dimensions and page count have changed in part because of a switch of POD vendors. Essentially it is the same book in content and length. We find the title a bit odd. Is the first phrase part of the title or a subtitle placed first? In either case we find it a bit confusing. The spine only shows the second phrase, so that is how we deal with it in this review (with a leading ellipsis to cover all bases.) The author is inconsistent on this point in her marketing materials. Heaven help the library or bookstore cataloger who has to choose between “N” and “G” for alphabetic placement of the book.

Once again we would not suggest that this be the only self-publishing book on your shelf. But in its areas of concentration it is still the

most complete, authoritative and current offering around.

## The Publishing Game: Best-seller in 30 Days

★★★

Fern Reiss

Peanut Butter and Jelly Press 2003

Paperback 5.5 x 8.5 207pp. indexed  
\$19.95

Peanut Butter and Jelly Press

P. O. Box 590239

Newton, MA 02459

Phone/FAX 617-630-0945

orders@PublishingGame.com

ISBN 1-893290-88-3

. . . Bestseller in 30 Days is a significant addition to the self-publisher's library, offering both in-depth coverage and a unique, calendar based sequence.

Make no mistake, Fern Reiss has figured all the angles and covered all the bases. Instead of one encyclopaedic work covering everything she has subdivided her work The Publishing Game into three books, with in-depth coverage of part of the information in each. Instead of a single sale she hopes for two or three to each customer. Do the math.

The three titles are:

- The Publishing Game: Publish a Book in 30 Days
- The Publishing Game: Bestseller in 30 Days
- The Publishing Game: Find an Agent in 30 Days

The bad news is that these titles exceed the

30 character limit for a Books in Print Listing. If she is unlucky all three will be entered under the first three words, causing endless confusion. We wish her better luck than that.

The title *Bestseller in 30 Days* may be a bit of hyperbole but the step-bystep plan with target dates will, if followed to the letter, at least ensure some success in a reasonable period of time. Marketing is the theme, and most authorities will agree that the marketing plan is the most important element for success.

Reiss doesn't miss a detail, from reminder postcards sent to bookstores to the arcane rules for qualifying for a CIP. Her presentation is crisp yet thorough.

The book is itself a good example of the self-publisher's art. The review copy has some messed up typesetting, but the author assures me that all this will be cleaned up in the final version. In other respects the book is handsome, with a better front cover than any of

the others mentioned below.

The serious self-publisher needs to refer to the Reiss book, the Ross book, the Poynter book, if POD is a factor then the Sansavieri book or the Harnish book—have you blown your book-buying budget yet?

## Unlocking the Secrets of Publishing

☆☆☆

Sylvia Hemmerly

Inkling Press 2002

Paperback 6 x 9, 96pp. indexed

\$12.95

Inkling Press

Imprint of Publishing Professionals of Pasco,  
Inc.

11120 Tyler Drive

Port Ritchie, FL 34668

727-868-8657

ISBN 1-892104-10-5

The Romans had an expression *multum in parvo*—much in little. Hemmerly’s slim volume fits that description. A publishing pro first and self-publisher second, she has assembled much useful information—some of it unique—in *Unlocking the Secrets of Publishing*. Topics covered include book packagers, (she is one), forming a publishing compa-

ny, prepress, printing and binding, CIP etc., BISAC codes, bound galleys, press kits and dealing with reviewers. The appendices are helpful without being overwhelming in length, and include coverage of professional contacts, early reviewers, media contacts in some major markets, and finally a useful glossary that is heavy on printing technology terms.

The book itself is a good advertisement for her work, unlike some others we have reviewed. And by its utility we are reminded of another compact but extremely useful book, David Li’s *All by Yourself Self-Publishing* which after seven years in print remains one of the truly valuable contributions to the self-publishers bookshelf.

In short Hemmerly has assembled the necessary facts in sufficient detail without wasting much paper, ink or reader’s time. The more we browse in it the higher it ranks on our personal publishing bookshelf.

## Publication Production using Pagemaker

★★

Gordon Woolf

The Worsley Press March 2002

Paperback 6 x 9 1/4 192pp. indexed

\$34.95

FAP Books Inc.

P. O. Box 540

Gainesville FL 32602-0540

Fapress@worldnet.att.net

888-511-5125

FAX 6352 331 6003

ISBN 1-875750-17-7

Publication Production using Pagemaker is a guide for users of Pagemaker 7, and especially those involved in laying out serial publications such as newspapers or magazines. It is based in part on the author's earlier works covering earlier versions of Pagemaker.

Clearly the author knows his stuff. Woolf's book reflects his four decades in publishing and an intimate hands-on experience with Pagemaker over many years. The book itself is a fine example of the skills of an accomplished book designer and layout artist.

Many books of this type are written "on assignment" by a generalist technical author and offer little more than a rehash of existing user manuals and guides. Woolf's book is a happy exception. He covers what the manual doesn't and provides an expert tutorial for the Pagemaker user. Woolf pulls no punches when it comes to the shortcomings and failure points of the Pagemaker product. He guides the reader around the land mines and pitfalls.

The book expands beyond just Pagemaker with sections covering Photoshop, prepress plugins for Adobe, typefaces and even the next step forward in the Adobe product line—InDesign.

Many useful Pagemaker scripts are available at the author's website. A username and password is provided to give access to these resources.

At Rowse Reviews we don't use Pagemaker. But we are hanging on to the review copy for future reference, just in case.