



Why Study Self Publishing?

- A lot of trad pub authors don't know about self pub, and I believe that harms their career.
- You'll be surprised to find a lot of these tools/ strategies work for everyone.
- Knowing the value of your IP rights help negotiate better contracts.
- If you already self publish, you know all of this already.
- But you love talking about it because it changes every day. And things change so fast, every day is like the first day.



There's a lot to Talk About

- I'm going to try and give a little of everything:
- How it started
- Why you would or would not want to do it
- What the landscape looks like
- What has changed over the years
- What still works and what doesn't
- Resources and communities(so you can publish that trunk novel that will never get sold)



About that Trunk Novel

- People think bad books hurts the industry
- I can promise you that if you Self Publish a terrible book, in 2019 noone will see it.
- Now more than ever the mechanisms are in place so that readers alone decide what they like.
- Readers a lot harder to trick into reading a bad book than 10 years ago. So we don't trick them. We write good books.
- You can try to give Self Publishing a bad name. Good luck getting any exposure. There's too many good authors out there for the bad ones to make any impact.

Modern Self Publishing is Not

- Not a Bulk Print Run (garage full of boxes)
- Not Staple bound DIY
- Not Indie Presses or indie bookstores
- Not Print on Demand POD (So ten years ago. Still useful.)
- Not Vanity Publishers (Pay someone else to pub you.)
 - A few of these pay to publish presses are worthwhile. But do research. (Do they support their authors? Do you retain your rights? You need to control rights, to control pricing, to adapt your marketing strategies and sell on diverse platforms)



Self Pub comes from but is also not

- Author Websites
- Web Publishing
- Early Epub(Believe it or not)
- Early Ereaders(Innovative but not easy to use)

It Started with Kindle

- World of books at your fingertips
- Days of battery life
- Paperlike screen
- #1 No side loading: Purchase directly on the kindle. Books are beamed directly onto your device. Anywhere there is cell service or wifi.
- No more struggle to get book out there. All this vying for store placement, and visibility. Then suddenly every kindle (smartphone) owner already has it in their pocket.



Amazon Terms

- We call amazon the 400lb gorilla in the room, World's Longest River, the zon, the powers that be.
- Amazon feels omnipotent.
- For good reason, they make up 60-100% of self published Author Income.

Kindle Gold Rush

- Pay attention to the strategies. All of these still work to some degree.
- Ye' Olden days of 2009 (None of the dates I'm going to give you are accurate. I'm just guessing. Important thing is that you realize it has been an evolution.)
- ~2010 and 99 cent millionaires. (30%)
 - Someone figured out if they drop the price to \$1 it's a lot easier to sell a million books.
 - $0.99-1.99 = 30\%$ $2.99-9.99 = 70\%$ $>9.99 = 30\%$
 - 99c works because 99c sale boosts ranking and visibility on Amazon.com as much as a 5.99 sale

2013 freebie revolution (bans affiliate links)

- Amazon does not allow you to make your book free. What is Permafree
- A lot of people had success with permafree
- Freebierevolution ended when amazon changed Affiliate Links. Basically, it became unprofitable for websites to advertise your free books for you.
- Also free downloads don't earn the same ranking boost as 99c sales.
- Permafree still works somewhat but relies sellthrough for income.
 - If you have written a good book you will see sellthrough to rest of series(much less for non series)
 - Some people say freebies hurt the market. But I think it improves it. Readers are Loyal. Readers are discerning. Only good books get sellthrough. Bad freebies get slammed with one stars. No faster way to expose a bad book than to make it free and watch the one stars roll in.
 - It does advantage series, Luckily, there are other strategies that work better with standalones.



2014 production model + algorithm (KU preference)

- Everyone here knows the amazon storefront. They're the biggest retailer in the world.
- And all of that money goes into funding the algorithms.
- Algorithms have power. Every recommended product, every "people who bought this also bought that," every search result. Is a product of the algorithms. Only google can compete with Amazon's algorithms.
- Amazon books is the oldest department, and the place where a lot of the new algorithms get tested.^{10 / 26}

Algorithms Serve Readers what they want. And Readers want NEW books.

- Someone found out that Amazon algorithms give books a ratings boost for the first 30 days after publishing.
- 30 day Cliff 90 day cliff
- 4 books a year means you never lose momentum. Books feed each other, so one new book, pushes browsers to your back catalog too. A new release is the cheapest and most effective form of advertising. Gives you something to blog about and a reason to engage your readers.
- Rapid Release model is as old a pulp fiction, as old as Charles Dickens never became ineffective, but Amazon made it less effective by giving better algorithmic exposure to authors who sign up for KU.
- Which brings us to the KU goldrush.

2015 KU Gold Rush

- KU – Kindle Unlimited is a subscription service that lets readers read as much as they want. Works like Netflix. Flat fee, unlimited reading authors get paid based on the number of pages read.
- It rewards authors with extra visibility in the algorithms, and whale readers, who consume a book a day. Make more \$\$\$.
- Originally it was pay per book borrowed. Authors abused it by releasing a slurry of pamphlets 10 page book. Or publishing serial installments as full books.
- Amazon changed it to page reads, and authors started writing long books. Epic fantasy made a lot of money. We saw a huge increase in book bundles. Amazon had to make a rule against book stuffing.
- To be in KU a book must be exclusive to amazon.

Scammers

- Scammers use clickfarms to milk the system. A lot of them don't have original content, so they steal books to use as ammunition.
- That is where the recent controversy in plagiarized ghostwritten books arises.
- It makes legit ghostwriters look bad.
- No legit authors are publishing these, and no real readers are enjoying them. It is just a clever way to disguise clickfarm activity.
- Not everyone in traditional publishing understands this but many in the indie community are working hard to combat it.

2016 book bundles come back, promo groups (bc of those KU changes)

- Teaming up with fellow authors to release short story collections and book bundles is still a good plan and has allowed for an explosion of short stories on the market.
- I think that some of you literary fiction writers should consider that SF/F And Romance authors are breaking ground in your territory. I think you should try self pubbing your own short story collections and see what happens.
- Some authors make money. But often the goal is a newsletter signup. That way you control that fan experience, and not Amazon. Notify of releases.



The Revolution Continues

- 2017 write to market - mean focusing on better genre targeting +better plots/ professional covers now necessary.
- 2018 Amazon Marketing Services Ads bigger. All things being equal quality-wise. Advertising budget becomes more important. Authors started spending more on advertising or relying heavily on their newsletters.
 - I don't have time to talk about AMS ads. But you should go learn about them.
- 2019 Trad Pub Begins to Advertise on AMS. Budgets go up. It costs a lot more to use AMS ads.
 - Today: No silver Bullet.
 - Best Practices+Fundamentals(Ads work O.K.)



How to publish outside of zon

- I'm going to define some non amazon terminology.
- In doing so I'll also be explaining a lot of the mechanics of self publishing and marketing your books that work outside of the amazon environment.

Indies: Like it or Not

- A few years ago self published authors began calling themselves Indie Authors even though they are not published by Indie publishing houses and often aren't affiliated with Indie Bookstores.
- Too late to talk them out of it. Indies has stuck.
- Self Published isn't a dirty word or an insult, but can signal that you're new to the community to some. So I call myself an indie Author. There are a lot of stereotypes attached to self published books: bad covers, bad editing, don't know their ideal reader, don't understand the genre even though they're writing genre.
- When someone tells me they are an Indie I know they are aware of the community and are following the best-practices. Good covers, refined editing process, a diligent and workmanlike writing process, firm understanding of plot conventions and a clear idea of who their target reader is. It also implies respect for the marketplace and each distributor's Terms of Service.



Going Wide

- Means you are publishing your book everywhere you can.
- Wide authors still depend a lot on amazon income. But those who stick with it, can earn 30-40% of their income outside of amazon.
- However, you also lose 30-40% of your amazon income because you are not allowed access to KU.
- Also as of 2019, Established Authors have been seeing dramatic increases in print and audio sales so Amazon's margins are narrowing.
- So indies, mind your print and audio rights.



Platform

- This is your online presence as an author.
 - Bio, Articles, Bibliography
- Website, Blog, Social Media
 - It is more important to connect with readers on a personal level, then to try and sell books.
- Email Newsletter (Mailchimp or others)
 - Important to control your relationship with reader. Not dependent on a single platform
- Platform is also Back Matter
 - Letter from the author
 - CTA – Call to Action - back of book.

Distributors and Aggregators

- KDP Dashboard. Simple, easy, intuitive.
- Kobo – bigger than zon in Europe/Canada
- Barnes and Noble – Nook
- Itunes
- Google Books
- AGGREGATORS
 - Draft2digital – Publishes to multiple Platforms
 - I use them for everything except zon & Kobo



Advertising

- AMS Ads Through Amazon
- Facebook Ads
- Book Sale Newsletters
 - Bookbub newsletter – the largest influencer outside of Amazon.
- Free Book Newsletters
- Giveaway and Hosting Services
- -Bookfunnel -Prolificworks
- Don't throw money at anything, until you have done your research on forums.

Quality Control

- I don't have time to show you all of the tools. But if you spend some time on the forums you will learn where to find.
 - Editors, Proofreaders, Beta Readers
 - Cover Designers, Formatters
 - Marketing Advice
 - Community Support and Feedback
 - Split Testing
 - Market Research Tools

You may grab my business card for editing..

Is Self Publishing worth it.

- I don't know. But I have a theory.
 - It is just as difficult to become a full-time self published author as it is to get published by a traditional publishing house.
 - It will take just as long and involve a lot of rejection. Perhaps more embarrassment, when you get your first one star review and decide to take your first book down and rewrite it.
 - Most people say you have to publish three books before you have any sales. 5-15 Before you earn enough to replace a part time job.
 - Hugh Howey's book Wool took off and made it big. Wool was at least his 10th book and he had been writing for a decade.
- But the % are good. $\$2.99-9.99 = 70\%$ 100 books @2.99= 200
- When you self publish, You keep your rights.
- You would have to do all the social media and newsletter work anyway.
- No longer blacklisted from traditional publishing. You can use a penname if that worries still you still. Some authors choose to go hybrid. Now trad authors are self-pubbing their short stories and passion projects that aren't a good fit for their publisher. And indies are getting offers from pub houses after showing good sales #.

Conflicting Reports

- Recent publishers reports show % of ebook sales is down. Also % of people reading SFF is down.
- Recently saw some new data that said
 - Trade pub ebook sales are down because indie ebook sales are way up.
 - SF/F is booming. But they only seem to be down because the report did not count ebooks, audio, or indie authors. And when you add those together you see an upward trend.



Why not to do it?

- No one will stop you from publishing a bad book.
- No one will force you to use an editor or a proofreader. But you really should.
- You aren't a graphic designer. You will end up with a bad cover if you don't follow advice.
- You will lose \$ on advertising if you don't follow advice.
- You won't get the same prestige/credentials.
- You probably won't make \$ from literary fiction. (There is some hope for the future, but I don't know anyone making \$ outside of genre writing.)
- But if none of that has dissuaded you. You're not alone. There are a lot of great resources you can use, and a large and enthusiastic community to help you along the way.



What next:

My resource sheet includes everything talked about here and a lot more.

Start by checking out some of the podcasts and discussion forums. Learn how people are using these tools.

I think everyone should read the book Newsletter Ninja by Tammi Labrecque, learn how to connect with your readers.