

A brief update on self-publishing: 2022

Publishing is a fast-paced and ever-changing industry and so we at ALLi thought it might be useful to many writing-based organisations to offer both a brief update on the importance of self-publishing today and on how organisations can ensure they are including high quality indie authors in their work, for mutual benefit.

Many organizations, of course, already welcome indie authors and ALLi runs an ongoing campaign to encourage and aid literary events, festivals, prizes, reviewers, booksellers, government bodies, and other interested parties to find ways to include self-publishing authors in their programs, events, listings and reviews.

INDEPENDENT AUTHORS: Examples of Reach, Recognition and Representation

Reach

Indie authors today can self-publish in almost two hundred countries around the globe, in formats including hardback, paperback, eBooks and audiobooks. Thanks to Print on Demand (POD) technology, physical books can be printed and distributed one at a time, allowing books to be kept permanently 'in print' with little storage space required. And because authors retain their rights while self-publishing widely, many are also selectively licensing their translation, film and TV and other subsidiary rights to a variety of rights buyers.

Books by indie authors account for 30-34% of all e-book sales in the largest English-language markets, as reported in Publishers Weekly. In 2020 8% of Alliance of Independent Authors members had sold more than 50,000 books in the past two years.

Indie authors have comfortably exceeded six-figure turnovers, including to mention just a few from different genres: Joseph Alexander, Joanna Penn, Hugh Howey, Elana Johnson, Ines Johnson, DC Kalbach, Helen Scheuerer, and Octavia Randolph. Author LJ Ross has sold 10 million books and rising. Mark Dawson has a seven-figure turnover from his books and has sold film and TV rights. In 2019 Amazon's review of Kindle sales said that 'thousands' of indie authors had earned more than \$50,000 and that 'more than a thousand' had already passed \$100,000 in royalties.

Because indie authors make up to 70% commissions from sales (minus the cost of publication) rather than traditional 5-15% royalties (minus the 15% which goes to their agent), for those authors prepared to merge artistic and business skills there is far greater scope for making a real income from their writing than has previously been the case.

And self-publishers are gaining traction as the creator economy expands, with more readers willing to buy books directly from author websites, subscribe to author memberships, and offer patronage in return for direct engagement and exclusives.

Recognition

Indie authors have made the USA Today bestseller list, won literary awards, achieved MAs and PhDs in Creative Writing, as well as taking up paid positions as Writers in Residence in prestigious organisations such as the British Library. The Martian, a sci-fi thriller first self-published by Andy Weir, was turned into a movie directed by Ridley Scott and starring Matt Damon, which grossed over \$630m. Amazon created the Kindle Storyteller Award, whose £20,000 prize fund is larger than the Pulitzer and similar to the Costa. The Bookseller Magazine, the UK publishing trade magazine, has repeatedly named Orna Ross, founder and Director of the Alliance of Independent Authors, as one of the 100 most influential people in publishing, acknowledging the growing importance of self-publishing within the industry.

Representation

The rise of, and accessibility to, self-publishing, has allowed many people who might not otherwise have been published to self-publish their work, opening up to a far greater diversity of voices. A study by FicShelf found that women wrote just 39% of traditionally published titles, but 67% of self-published titles. Multiple indie authors from under-represented groups or even genres have referred to self-publishing having been a positive path for them, including Latinx author Maria E Cantu Alegre and Indian-Canadian Rupri Kaur, who sold 8 million copies of her first two poetry books. *Fatal Shadows* by Josh Lanyon became the first LGBTQ mobile game created by *Moments: Choose Your Story*.