

So Many Publishing Options

Contributed by Judith Ellison Shenouda
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Self-Publishing or Traditional Publishing?

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Genre and Form of Book Publishing

Be clear about the form your work is taking. Is it an essay, an investigative report, a short story? Is it a novel, a book-length memoir, a how-to workbook? Before you can ask publishers to consider your work for their publication or ask consumers to read your work, these audiences and others will want to know the genre and form of this written work and if and how it fits in their world.

Paper and/or Electronic

With the many options available, consider how it makes sense for your target audience to have access to your publication. If your work is a novel that you envision proudly displayed in a bookstore, a travelogue that readers might take on their summer journeys, or a reference book that libraries would make available to researchers, paper might be the likely option. With the large number of subscribers to online publications, consider the many electronic outlets, including magazines, newspapers, online training sites, and more. Web site and blogs -- both those of others as well as your own -- can offer potential readers easy access to your work.

Established Publisher or Self-Publishing

Let's say that you have written a guide to succeeding at your favorite pastime -- maybe it's chess or poker, golf or tennis, kayaking or fishing. You believe that there is a considerable audience of other aficionados who will find your unique approach and experiences compelling, interesting reading. You've decided to publish both paper and electronic versions. Now what? It's important to consider the pros and cons of pursuing an established publisher or taking the self-publishing route. Where established publishers offer various services, including editing, graphic design and layout, legal guidance, marketing, and more, you might be relinquishing the level of control you seek. Self-publishing might offer you more control over your work; in return, this approach places greater responsibility on your shoulders. Explore the tradeoffs and decide on the best approach for you.

You might find that self-publishing your work can prompt an established publisher to show interest in your work. You might also find that your experience with an established publisher does not produce the results you seek and makes the self-publishing route appealing.

Agent or Direct to Publisher

You've completed the first few essays that you envision as part of a collection concerned with peacemaking strategies and do not want to self-publish. You'd like to interest an established publisher that deals with societal issues in your work. Now the question becomes, do you query publishers directly or do you find an agent? In both cases, you need to prepare a strong query or proposal and have a sample of your work ready. You need to research the agents or publishers who deal with the subject and genre of your work. In making this decision, ask others about their experiences working with or without an agent. When you decide on an approach, be prepared to contact a number of agents or a number of publishers. Rejections feel personal, but may indicate that you just haven't found the right agent or publisher, one that clicks with you and your work.

On Demand Publishing

You might decide that you'd like a small run of your guidebook on obedience training for dogs to sell with your seminars on the subject. Your manuscript is ready and you've found some online resources that will turn your manuscript into a

graphically pleasing, publishable book. With on demand publishing, you can publish a modest quantity. You can continue to update your book and publish additional copies whenever you like.

Recommended Reading

You'll find many resources available to guide you to the right outlet for publishing your work. Do an Internet search on words such as publishers, digital publishing, electronic publishing, self-publishing, on demand publishing, and literary agents to get you thinking about the best way for you to proceed. There's an audience of readers who are eager to benefit from what you have to say.

About the Author

Judith Ellison Shenouda is principal of Shenouda Associates Inc. She earned a Master of Arts degree in Literacy Journalism from S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University in Syracuse, New York, USA. She completed additional courses in curriculum design and development, group dynamics, information studies, publication management, and project management; and has New York State Certification to teach Secondary English. Prior to starting Shenouda Associates Inc. in 1986, she taught English and Language Arts courses, provided academic support and career services, and worked as a freelance writer. She is a senior member of the Society for Technical Communication, a member of Toastmasters International, and a frequent presenter at local, national, and international conferences. She would be pleased to speak to your organization on topics related to starting a business and keeping it going; creating effective technical, business, and marketing communications; and managing the projects in your professional and personal life.