



## The Pros and Cons of Self Publishing

This document was developed in 2009 to assist authors wrestling with the decision to self publish a book or to seek an established publishing house. If you have corrections or suggestions, please email us at [info@aidandabet.org](mailto:info@aidandabet.org).

| Self Publishing                                              |                                                                                                          |                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PRO                                                          | Neutral (could be positive or negative)                                                                  | CON                                                                                                |
| You maintain control of book content and design              | You must sell individual copies on your own                                                              | You pay for upfront printing costs. This can be expensive.                                         |
| You receive more money from the sale of each book            | You will need to do your own website for the book (it is likely you would make your own site regardless) | You must hire and pay a designer                                                                   |
| You won't need to write a proposal/pitch publishers          |                                                                                                          | You must do all outreach on your own                                                               |
| You can publish on your own schedule                         |                                                                                                          | It may be more difficult to sell your book through bookstores or more traditional markets          |
| You have final say over editing                              |                                                                                                          | You will need to find (and probably pay for) your own editor                                       |
| You are considering publishing ONLY online as a PDF download |                                                                                                          | Self-publishing does not offer the prestige or validation of working with an established publisher |

### Working with an Established Publisher

| PRO                                                                                                                   | CON                                                                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Publisher pays upfront printing costs                                                                                 | You give up some creative control                                                                                                                     |
| Publisher pays for or has a staff designer & editor                                                                   | You earn a smaller percentage of book sales (often 8 to 10 percent)                                                                                   |
| Though unlikely, advances from publishers are possible                                                                | Publishers often need a long lead time (1 to 2 years) and have strict deadlines and schedules                                                         |
| Publisher may have a publicist on staff or a built-in plan for marketing/publicity                                    | Many publishers do not pay for book tours and do not have marketing budgets. You may still need to publicize your own book or hire your own publicist |
| Publisher has an existing distribution framework and access to traditional book outlets like bookstores or Amazon.com | Yours will be one of many projects publisher is working on                                                                                            |
| Publisher sells individual copies for you through their website                                                       |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Publisher has an editor that will work with you                                                                       | Editor may suggest changes you disagree with (and often editor has final say)                                                                         |
| Publishing with an established company may offer a certain amount of prestige or validation, depending on your market |                                                                                                                                                       |
| Publisher will have a web page on their site devoted to your book                                                     | You will probably still need to make your own website for the book                                                                                    |

## Criteria

Consider the following questions:

1. Do you have/can you get the funding to publish the book yourself? The cost would depend on the book size, design, and quantity printed.
2. Do you want to/can you reach your audience outside of bookstores or other traditional markets? This could be your organization's membership, your existing mailing list, or some other network.
3. Do you have/could you create the capacity to sell individual and bulk orders through your own website? This would mean having the ability to process credit card transactions, respond to customer inquiries, and package/ship orders in a timely manner.
4. How important is it to capture the contact information from everyone who buys your book?
5. How important is creative control over the content or design?
6. Do you want to release the book sooner than 1 to 2 years from now?

If the answers are "yes" or "very important" to the above questions, you should consider self publishing. If the answers are "no" or "not very important," consider pitching your project to an established publisher, and moving to self-publishing if you do not find a publisher.

### A. Reasons to work with a publisher:

1. You already have an established contact with a publisher
2. You don't have the money to publish it on your own
3. You or your organization aren't relying on income from the sales of the books
4. You don't have an established audience and/or you want to reach your audience primarily through bookstores or other traditional outlets
5. Controlling the timeline is not important to you
6. You don't have capacity or desire to sell individual copies of the book yourself through the internet.

### B. Reasons to publish the book yourself

1. You have or can get the funding to print the book yourself
2. You or your organization would benefit from the book sale income
3. You already have direct access to your audience through your current organization's membership, mailing list, or similar.
4. When the book is published is important to you (you want to control the timeline) and/or the desired publication date is very soon (within 6 – 12 months).
5. You have or can create the capacity to sell individual copies of the book through the internet.