

The Self Publishing CONFERENCE

**Gilbert Murray Hall
Stamford Court Conference Centre
University of Leicester**



24th March 2013

Welcome

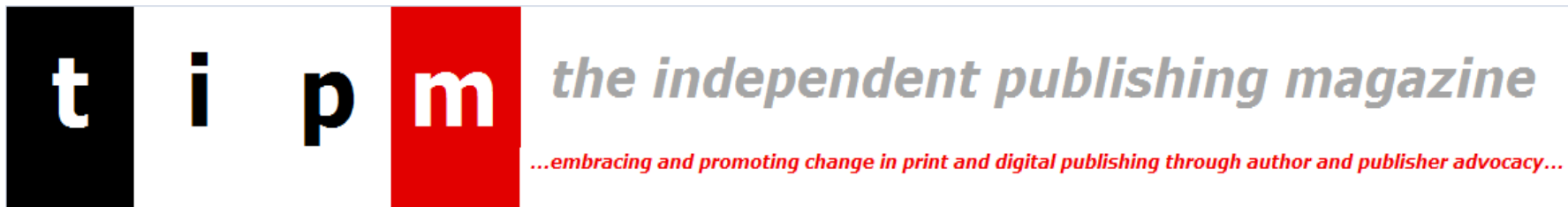
“Authors produce story. Readers consume story. If anyone is in the path between Author and Reader they must add value to that connection.”

Bob Mayer, whodareswinspublishing.com

The Self
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Mick Rooney is Editor of *The Independent Publishing Magazine* (TIPM), founder of TIPM Media, a publishing consultancy, and an author. As a writer and researcher, he has written many informative and illuminating articles in print and online about the publishing industry and the growth of self-publishing over the past thirty years.





Session 1 (a)

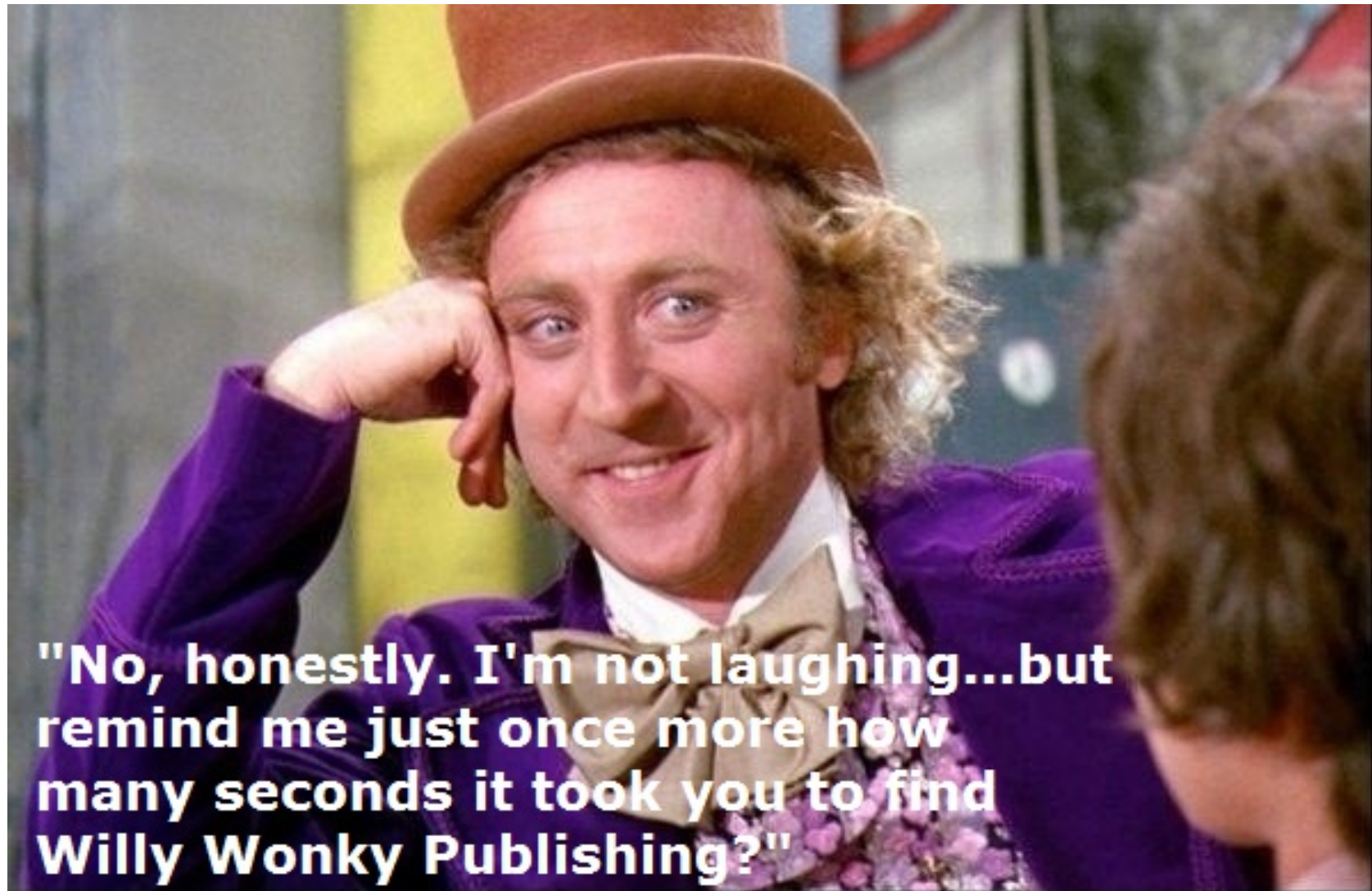
Choosing a self-publishing provider

And the choices are...



Oh my God!
Which one is right for my book?

Do Your Homework! Research and Prepare.



"No, honestly. I'm not laughing...but remind me just once more how many seconds it took you to find Willy Wonky Publishing?"

Prepare

- **Understand the reasons why you are self-publishing. It is not an 'only' choice if it is your first book and you have never submitted to traditional agents and publishers before.**
- **Carefully measure your expectations of self-publishing against the market realities of book publishing today.**
- **Make sure your book is the best it can be and work with a professional editor before choosing a self-publishing service. If you can't afford professional editing, then you can't afford to self-publish a professionally produced book.**
- **Get involved with writing workshops and critique groups and create reader interest in your work at local community level as well as through your online social media connections.**

Consider

- **Your budget – proper self-publishing, beyond the private readership of family and friends, is a commercial endeavour and involves investment risk. The moment your book becomes available to the retail book market, it becomes a product, and your readers become more than just fans. They are consumers purchasing your book. No book is worth an absent meal at your kitchen table, and no book’s predicted success can guarantee that meal.**
- **Your format – E-book only (one outlet or multi), print only (POD, short digital run, offset), a combination.**
- **The skills you possess and how you can best use them in the self-publication of your book. You might be a good designer; you might have sales and marketing skills; you might already have experience of running a business; or you might be an expert or public speaker on themes and ideas in your book. You may have none of these skills beyond your gift for writing. But all of this should have an influence on which self-publishing provider you choose.**

Research & Discover

DO	DON'T
Find out how the publishing business works	Just leave it to the nice people at Wonky Publishing
Refer to reliable and established writing orgs and bodies	Use Google solely as a research tool
Talk to professionals and fellow self-published authors	Rely on online testimonials and company sales reps
Look for flexibility and a best match for your needs	Purchase rigid all-in-one packages
Compare services and pricing	Accept the first provider you discover
Look at a contract and terms of service before agreeing	Pay before understanding what services you are getting
Consider a provider that offers all book formats	Go for a POD (print-on-demand)-only provider unless you know the limitations of POD
Purchase a sample book from a potential provider	Assume all self-published books are equal in production quality

Types of Self-Publishing Providers

 POD (print-on-demand) -only Providers
(Aventine, Xlibris, AuthorHouse, Xulon, Infinity)

 DIY Self-Publishing Providers
(Lulu, CreateSpace, Kbuuk, Amazon KDP, Blurb)

 Full Service Publishing Providers
(Silverwood, Matador, Acorn, Authors Online)

 Vanity Publishers/Providers
(PublishAmerica, Minerva, Sovereign)

 Hybrid Publishers
(Hillcrest Media, Penguin, Hay House, Simon & Schuster)

POD (print-on-demand)-only Providers

These are something of a dying breed of publishing service providers. The print-centric providers have been somewhat overtaken by the e-book revolution and their roots and experience often lie within the print industry and not the publishing industry. POD-only providers often lack or offer very limited editing, distribution and marketing services. This option is best suited to small private self-publishing projects requiring a small or non commercial return, or used in combination with another service provider.

DIY Self-Publishing Providers

Perhaps the largest area in the self-publishing service market today. Dominated by online retailers and sophisticated software developers, this is sometimes the most efficient, cost-effective, easy and fast way to get your book to market in print and e-book. This is hands-on book preparation and design using an online toolkit combined with an author's competence and self-taught skills. DIY publishing providers are a means to publication and not publishers of themselves. Used by publishers and authors alike, some offer additional editing, design and marketing services through outsourcing to freelancers.

Full Service Publishing Providers

This might be the shape of all publishing in the future. Full Service Publishing Providers offer an array of services from critique, editing, design, print and production, marketing and promotion, and distribution (online and physical). These providers usually offer the option of a basic publishing package or a menu of individual services which can be contracted or added to basic service packages. A Full Service Provider will normally have a number of external partners/freelancers specialising in the individual areas of book publication. A Full Service Publishing Provider can often offer a number of varied contracts from subsidy to partnership deals.

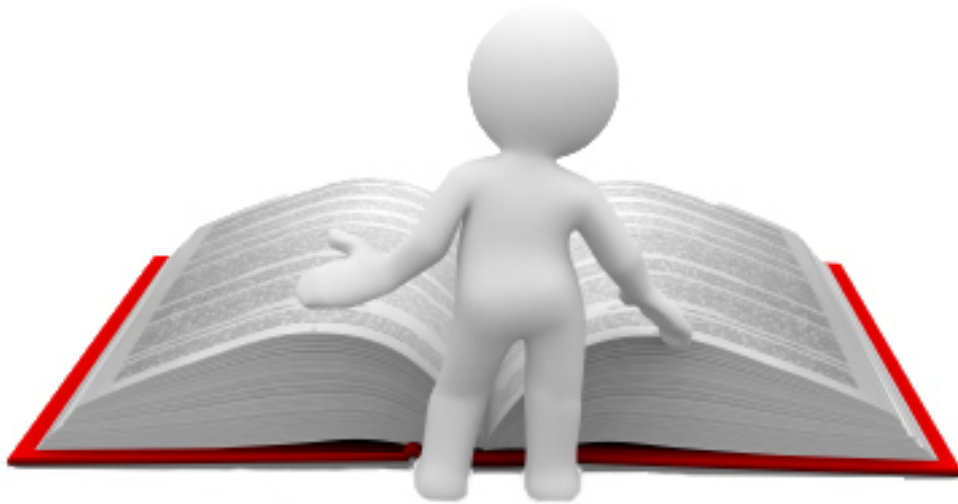
Vanity Publishers/Providers

This is a publisher or service provider engaged in misleading or deceptive practices with the sole intent to extract as much money as possible from a consumer or client. The Vanity Publisher/Provider is underpinned by the sale of exaggerated and marked-up services presented in a manner that best exploits the naivety and dreams of new authors. Vanity Publishers/Providers sell the dream of a published book to an author, not the services or business of book publishing.

Hybrid Publishers

In recent years we are seeing more traditional publishers and self-publishing service providers explore new business models. Several major publishing houses like Penguin and Simon & Schuster have developed self-publishing imprints, and likewise, a few self-publishing providers have now developed more traditional-styled imprints. We are still in the early days of these new publishing models, and while more will emerge, it remains to be seen how successful or viable a model of publishing they will prove to be.

Things to Evaluate & Ask When Choosing a Self-Publishing Provider



- **CONTRACTS** – If you self-publish, ensure you sign a non-exclusive contract with a service provider. You are contracting a menu of services. Never sign away rights to your book. If you stop using a service provider, your book needs to leave with you!
- **BOOK FILE OWNERSHIP** – If you pay for editing, design and formatting services of a book, then you should own the completed files of the book from these paid services should you later move to a new service provider.
- **BOOK FORMATS** – As a self-publisher, you want flexibility. Your self-publishing provider should be able to offer your book in all formats; print (paperback and hardback) via POD, short digital print runs and offset; e-book distribution to all major e-reader platforms.

- **BOOK-CENTRIC** – While providing self-publishing services, your chosen provider also needs to be book-centric, not just service-centric. Does your service provider host an online bookshop? Does your service provider display and actively try to sell books to the book trade/readers and not just you?
- **TRANSPARENCY** – Your service provider should always be transparent about fees and willing to discuss the pros and cons of self-publishing.
- **STAFF SKILL SETS** – Your service provider should have a staff of professionals with relevant skill sets or access to external partners and not just excel or offer expertise in a single area like print production, web or book design, or marketing and promotion.
- **ISBN OWNERSHIP** – Your service provider should offer you the ability to self-publish using your registered ISBN's and imprint name as well as offering their registered imprint ISBN's.

- **GLOBAL WHOLESALE & DISTRIBUTION** – A book wholesaler is not a distributor. A wholesaler is responsible for the storage and logistical delivery of books. A distributor is a sales-driven company with representatives actively promoting and selling books to the book trade. Many service providers only have contracts with wholesalers and do not have specific distribution deals in place. A wholesaler reacts to orders. A distributor is proactive to secure orders.
- **MARKETING & PROMOTION** – The reality of self-publishing is that you will need to be the driver of your book's marketing and promotion, whether through contracting the services of a PR agency, or doing much of the product awareness for your book through social media networks, press releases, school and bookshop visits, book signings, or radio and TV appearances. Avoid providers offering nothing more than bookmarks, posters and postcards as a way of marketing your book.

- **COMMUNICATION** – This is the most critical area when it comes to choosing a provider. Avoid providers with free phone numbers or providers that communicate using only email. Lack of communication is one of the biggest complaints from authors dealing with providers. Make sure you have a single point of contact with your provider and it does not operate out of a virtual office address. A provider you can meet with face to face is ideal.

Questions and Answers

