

Professional Publishing

Pros and Cons

Printed materials are extremely popular in Canada. According to a new report by Statistics Canada, entitled *Who Buys Books in Canada?*, Canadians spent \$1.13 billion on books in 2001 (up 23 per cent from 1997, or up 15 per cent after accounting for inflation). Book buying is the third-highest category of cultural spending (after newspapers buying and visits to the movie theatre). Books are nowhere close to becoming obsolete, despite the increase in on-line publishing.

The largest advantage to traditional print publishing is exposure. If you are looking to reach as large an audience as possible, then print is for you. Another advantage is professional help. A publishing company will edit, design, print, distribute and promote your book. This is not to say that being a professionally published author is a piece of cake either.

It comes as a shock to some authors when they see the changes imposed on their work by a

professional editor. The final copy may be completely different from your original manuscript. You may hate the cover of the book, or think that the back of the book has a terrible description. When you publish with a company, you effectively lose control of the book. Be prepared to let go. You will be asked to sign over the rights to your work in exchange for a cheque and a royalty agreement. You become a partner in a much bigger process. That process may leave you feeling a bit left out.

Agents and editors

Some very successful authors have never used an agent. It is not a requirement. But remember, publishing is a tough business. Just because you submitted your manuscript does not mean that a publisher will take you seriously. A literary agent is a salesperson for your book. You pay them to promote your work. Especially for first-time authors, an agent will encourage publishers take you seriously. There is a lot to consider when choosing an agent. For an excellent resource, sponsored by the Fiction Writer's Resource Web, take a look at <http://literaryagents.org/>