

Reviewing self-publishing

Locally an increasing number of online publishing companies are providing want-to-be authors with a seemingly more lucrative and faster option towards getting their name and work into the market place, as self-publishing continues to be a growing trend worldwide.

However, there are pros and cons of going that route as Eugene Ashton, sales director of Jonathan Ball Publishers explains. "Both the digital and the traditional publishing route have their merits and drawbacks and deciding which route to go depends on a variety of factors such as the subject matter being written about, as well as the culture and dynamics of the targeted readership. Also important to consider is to what extent you as an author would like to be involved with the process."



Marketing success

While self-publishing may be seen as being at a disadvantage from a marketing point of view, there are two differing takes on this. "Authors, particularly mainstream fiction writers, have to build a social media profile, run blogs and appear at events. This means that marketing success is increasingly determined by author activity.

"Some may see this as detracting from their writing time. In terms of print sales - given that print particularly in South Africa comprises 80% of the overall market - an author would want to gain the maximum marketing advantage that comes with being signed to a well established publishing house."

A publishing house, more than anything else, puts its name to a book. "So in most cases that means that it has gone through a selection process, an editorial process and that someone has thought about the positioning of the book in the market. Self-publishing on the other hand often lacks the control processes, granted not always, but almost always, and as a consequence does not benefit from what is effectively a peer review process."

Cost and time to market are additional considerations one needs to ponder before deciding whether to self-publish or make use of a traditional publishing house. "When it comes to self-publishing, publication is almost instant and you have complete control over every aspect of your book, such as price, cover art, title etc. Going the traditional publishing route on the other hand is more time consuming and it may take up to 18 months before publication and not every decision concerning the book is yours."

Use South African Book Fair as a guide

This year's South African Book Fair provides an ideal opportunity for new authors to make an informed decision about which platform will work best for them. "As a publisher, the fair allows us to introduce the public to not only the books that we have published, but also authors that they may not as yet have come across. With digital a key focus at this year's fair, authors have the opportunity to explore a variety of avenues and engage first-hand with experts in the publishing field."

Louise Barry-Taylor, executive of sales and sponsorship of South African Book Fair says that the Fair is the ideal place for even the most technologically challenged to familiarise themselves with the latest technological and e-publishing offerings.

"The Fair offers something for absolutely everyone. It is not often that writers looking to publish have the opportunity to network and interact with all industry stakeholders under one roof. Writers that miss the fair will certainly be missing out," she concludes.

For more information, go to www.southafricanbookfair.co.za.

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