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1St books Library?

Author: [J.T.Killain](#) (---.c3-0.rdl-ubr5.trpr-rdl.pa.cable.rcn)
Date: 12-28-01 09:23

Ann or Victoria, I keep getting letters from a publisher called 1st books library, Do you or anyone know anything about this group? I got a letter from them, I'll save you the details but they harking about putting some of my material in print? Are these people the same as the rest of e-publishers? I have become so guarded anymore I'm not sure I trust myself ! Thank you, you two have saved so many of us from future heartaches.

Killain

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Re: 1St books Library?

Author: [Victoria Strauss](#) (---.ne.mediaone.net)
Date: 12-28-01 11:00

1st Books is a fee-based electronic/print-on-demand (POD) publishing service. It's not a publisher or bookseller in the traditional sense, but a purveyor of publishing services to writers. As such, it promotes its own services and its own website, but not the individual books it publishes. An author using this kind of service must provide all his or her own marketing and promotion.

Additionally, there are some basic disadvantages that attach to publication via fee-based POD--there's more information at Writer Beware's [Print on Demand](#) page .

1st Books' publication package is one of the more expensive available from a fee-based POD; Xlibris and iUniverse, two other major fee-based POD companies, can be far cheaper. Also, I've been told by people who've seen and handled the books that 1st Books' product is of lesser quality than other PODs--apparently the company uses lower-quality paper and cover stock.

1st Books also employs unsavory promotion tactics, including aggressively soliciting writers whose names have been taken off the Internet or obtained from copyright registration lists, offering incentive fees to agents who refer rejected writers to 1st Books, and presenting itself (deceptively) as a literary agency through a separate website. Obviously this has no reflection on the quality of 1st Books' services. But it does say something about company philosophy, IMO--especially 1st Books' attitude toward writers.

- Victoria

Victoria Strauss
THE GARDEN OF THE STONE (HarperCollins Eos)
Homepage: <http://www.victoriastrauss.com/>
Writer Beware: <http://www.sfw.org/beware/>

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Re: 1St books Library?

Author: [J.T.Killain](#) (---.c3-0.rdl-ubr5.trpr-rdl.pa.cable.rcn)
Date: 12-28-01 19:03

Thank you Victoria, I sent one of my manuscripts into the library of congress for copyright so i assume that is where they scraped up my name. I had a hunch that it was 'Unsavorly' by the why they sounded in their letter. Thank you again.

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Re: 1St books Library?

Author: [Chris Rennie](#) (216.9.128.---)
Date: 01-09-02 10:07

I have been reading some of these posts and I have read the Writer Beware's Print on Demand page and I wanted to clarify some misconceptions.

First, Victoria is correct when she says we are a fee-based service. She is incorrect in saying we only promote our services but not individual author's books. She states that our authors must provide all his or her own marketing and promotions. This is simply not correct. On top of providing distribution and order fulfillment services we also provide promotions and marketing services. We send out press releases to the media and send out free review copies upon request. This has resulted in our books being reviewed in every major newspaper in the country like the NY Times, LA Times, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, Washington Post, USA TODAY, and hundreds of other papers. You name the paper and I will tell you the book that was in that paper. Third Quarter alone we had over 350 articles written about our books. We are now taking out ads in the NY Times and the LA Times book review section. Each ad lists 12 of our books. So don't say we do not promote our books, we do!

Victoria also says we are one of the most expensive fee-based POD out there. Has she really ever compared, apples-to-apples, what we provide for our services? Xlibris charges \$500 for their basic service. We charge \$598 and do not require authors to work with interior and cover templates. We custom design all our covers and interiors. Considering we use Lightning Source for the printing of our books the quality we offer is the exact same as luniverse and Xlibris only our covers look much better. Our paper stock is 60# acid-free paper.

When reading the writers beware page I had to agree with what they said. Several POD companies do have authors sign exclusive contracts that take the author's rights away. 1stbooks does not. Many POD companies do not offer book stores traditional discounts. 1stBooks does. Many POD companies books are to expensive. \$25-\$30 for a trade paperback is too high. Our 250 page books would be priced at \$13.50-\$17.50 retail and \$10.50-\$16.50 on our website.

Victoria also mentions that we have a separate website where we deceptively present ourselves as a literary agent. I would like to see that web page because I have never heard of such a thing.

If you are doing research please make sure you get information from someone who knows the real story and not from someone who is passing on misconceptions. You could be missing a big opportunity.

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Chris...

Author: E.N. (---.biz.mindspring.com)
Date: 01-09-02 10:56

Are you crazy? Defending 1stBooks' business practices on a writer's internet message board is what INSANE people do. Look, since you're obviously new to this online game some people call RL (that's cyberspeak for Real Life) i'm going to be gracious and impart a bit of superhighway gospel:

Welcome to the Internet.

No one here likes you.

We're going to offend, insult, abuse, and belittle the living hell out of you. And when you rail against us with "F**K YOU YOU GEEK WIMP SKATER GOTH LOSER PUNK FAG BITCH!!!!", we smile to ourselves. We laugh at you because you don't get it. Then we turn up the heat, hoping to draw more entertainment from your irrational fuming.

We will judge you, and we will find you unworthy. It is a trial by fire, and we won't even think about turning down the flames until you finally understand.

Some of you are smart enough to realize that, when you go online, it's like entering a foreign country ... and you know better than to ignorantly f**k with the locals. You take the time to listen and think before speaking. You learn, and by learning are gladly welcomed.

For some of you, it takes a while, then one day it all dawns on you - you get it, and are welcomed into the fold.

Some of you give up, and we breathe a sigh of relief - we didn't want you here anyway. And some of you just never get it. The offensively clueless have a special place in our hearts - as objects of ridicule. We don't like you, but we do love you.

You will get mad. You will tell us to go to hell, and call us "nerds" and "geeks". Don't bother ... we already know exactly what we are. And, much like the way hardcore rap has co-opted the word "nigger", turning an insult around on itself to become a semiserious badge of honor, so have we done.

"How dare you! I used to beat the crap out of punks like you in high school/college!" You may have owned the playing field because you were an athlete. You may have owned the student council because you were more popular. You may have owned the hallways and sidewalks because you were big and intimidating. Well, welcome to our world.

Things like athleticism, popularity, and physical prowess mean nothing here. We place no value on them ... or what car you drive, the size of your bank account, what you do for a living or where you went to school.

Allow us to introduce you to the concept of a "meritocracy" - the closest thing to a form of self-government we have. In The United Meritocratic nation-states of the Internet, those who can do, rule. Those who wish to rule, learn. Everyone else watches from the stands.

You may possess everything in the off-line world. We don't care. You come to the Internet penniless, lacking the only thing of real value here: knowledge.

"Who cares? The Internet isn't real anyway!" This attitude is universally unacceptable. The Internet is real. Real people live behind those handles and screen names. Real machines allow it to exist. It's real enough to change government policy, real enough to feed the world's hungry, and even, for some of us, real enough to earn us a paycheck. Using your own definition, how "real" is your job? Your stock portfolio? Your political party? What is the meaning of "real", anyway?

Do I sound arrogant? Sure ... to you. Because you probably don't get it yet.

If you insist on staying, then, at the very least, follow this advice:

- 1) No one, ESPECIALLY YOU, will make any law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.
- 2) Use your brain before ever putting fingers to keys.
- 3) Do you want a picture of you gettingby Bill Clinton while you're performing

on a cow saved to hundreds of thousands of people's hard drives? No? Then don't put your f**kg picture on the Internet. We can, will, and probably already HAVE altered it in awful ways. Expect it to show up on an equally offensive website.

4) Realize that you are never, EVER going to get that, or any other, offensive web page taken down. Those of us who run those sites LIVE to piss off people like you. Those of us who don't run those sites sometimes visit them just to read the hatemail from fools like you.

5) Oh, you say you're going to a lawyer? Be prepared for us to giggle with girlish delight, and for your lawyer to laugh in your face after he explains current copyright and parody law.

6) The Web is not the Internet. Stop referring to it that way.

7) We have already received the e-mail you are about to forward to us. Shut up.

8) Don't reply to spam. You are not going to be "unsubscribed".

9) Don't ever use the term "cyberspace" (only William Gibson gets to say that, and even he hasn't really used it for two or three books now). Likewise, you prove yourself a marketing-hype victim if you ever use the term "surfing".

10) With one or two notable exceptions, chat rooms will not get you laid.

11) It's a hoax, not a virus warning.

12) The internet is made up of thousands of computers, all connected but owned by different people. Learn how to use *your* computer before attempting to connect it to someone else's.

13) The first person who offers to help you is really just trying to f**k with you for entertainment. So is the second. And the third. And me.

14) Never insult someone who's been active in any group longer than you have. You may as well paint a damn target on your back.

15) Never get comfortable and arrogant behind your supposed mask of anonymity. Don't be surprised when your name, address, and home phone number get thrown back in your smug face. Hell, some of us will snail-mail you a printed satellite photograph of your house to drive the point home. Realize that you are powerless if this happens ... it's all public information, and information is our stock and trade.

16) No one thinks you are as cool as you think you are.

17) You aren't going to win any argument that you start.

18) If you're on AOL, don't worry about anything I've said here. You're already a f**king laughing stock, and there's no hope for you.

19) If you can't take a joke, immediately sell your computer to someone who can. RIGHT NOW.

Pissed off? It's the TRUTH, not these words, that hurts your feelings. Don't ever even pretend like I've gone & hurt them.

We don't like you. We don't want you here. We never will. Save us all the trouble and go away.

(<http://deeplight.net/editorials/redpaw/welcome.shtml>)

EN

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Re: Chris...

Author: [Chris Rennie](#) (216.9.128.---)
Date: 01-09-02 13:55

LOL. I thought this might have been a newgroup for people who want to seriously discuss publishing. I had no idea I entered alt.abuse Reminds me of a Monty Python episode.

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Re: Chris...

Author: [Victoria Strauss](#) (---.ne.mediaone.net)
Date: 01-09-02 14:39

I stated that 1st Books is one of the more expensive POD options, not one of the most expensive. Yes, I have compared prices. iUniverse charges \$99. Great Unpublished charges \$199. There are others in a similar range. \$598 is getting into the upper range for POD services.

I can't fault 1st Books' contract or its book prices, which are among the more reasonable available from a fee-based POD. Nonetheless, I'm not aware that its books are returnable, which will make booksellers reluctant to stock them, even if a standard discount is provided.

As for promotion--press releases are an ineffective promotional method, unless accompanied by personal contact on the part of an author or publicist. The growing number of self-published authors has inundated media outlets with press releases, and they're as likely to be ignored (especially if ill-targeted) as to be read. Additionally, 1st Books doesn't send out the press releases and review copies for free. The author must pay extra for a publicity package.

The literary agency used to be online at this address:
<http://www.1st-literary-agents-and-electronic-books.com/>. In the couple of months since I last checked the website, something else has replaced it. I'll amend my information accordingly.

- Victoria

Victoria Strauss
THE GARDEN OF THE STONE (HarperCollins Eos)
Homepage: <http://www.victoriastrauss.com/>
Writer Beware: <http://www.sfw.org/beware/>

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oh, it is...

Author: E.N. (---.biz.mindspring.com)
Date: 01-09-02 15:54

a group that likes to discuss publishing. most here are newbies, a few are veterans of the publishing wars -- my post to you was in jest -- if you found it offensive, please refer to #19 :-) welcome to writers.net.

EN

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Re: oh, it is...

Author: Gary Kessler (---.dialup.mindspring.com)
Date: 01-09-02 16:50

Thanks to both Victoria and Chris for this exchange of ideas on the Print on Demand process. I do think this is going to be a very viable form of book publication for all and that authors, POD publishers, and booksellers are going to meet in the middle one of these days to make it a strong option. I've worked on this for my last book, which I have had to do as a POD for specific reasons (it had to meet a tight deadline for targeted release and its a hybrid category book for a small market). But working with

a flexible publisher and taking some risks myself, we've managed to negate the most common bookseller objections to POD--long waits for orders (we've printed up a goodly number for the first run), high prices (we've set the book retail at a price well under the normal POD price), and no returns (we've set up a returns policy for a limited number of books--which has been well within the range of what the bookstores are offering). Having tried to work with the bookseller's problems, we've found that they are trying to accommodate us as well. So, it's still a rough option--but it's getting better and should come out strong in the end.

E.N: I don't even want to think what that was all about (although some of it was quite fun).

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POD and 1stBooks

Author: [Chris Rennie](#) (216.9.128.---)
Date: 01-10-02 09:21

Victoria,

The day we can set up our books up as returnable will be a great day for us. I see that as the biggest obstacle POD companies face. On the other hand returns are one of the biggest obstacle traditional publishers face. I have been keeping a close eye on the printing and binding machines that will be installed at the book stores. I can see this making a big difference but just today I read about Instabook in Canada that installed one of these machines in a book store in November. They sold only 10 books since. Not the big numbers I was hoping for but it's a start.

E.N. Do you know what Gopher is? Does the name Veronica or Archie mean anything to you? Don't assume someone is a newbie just because it was their first post to a newsgroup. You may find out that it is you who is the newbie. I'm glad to see your last post was actually written by you and not copied and pasted off a website. Hate to think you were a bot.

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a bot?

Author: EN (---.biz.mindspring.com)
Date: 01-10-02 11:19

Chris--

The copy and paste was a courtesy to you and the other forumites. Easier than following the link, which was for credit due. Duh. Still haven't grasped Netiquette, eh?

I assume nothing. And neither should you.

Personally, companies like 1stBooks turn my stomach. I'd love nothing more than to see all vanity publishers go belly up and its salespeople, like you, go to jail for scamming money out of 99.9999% of the people you "publish" who have no business calling themselves writers. Companies like 1stBooks desecrate the craft of writing, polluting the publishing waters with what would otherwise be unpublishable works, unpublishable by any stretch of one's imagination. The only people making money from having books printed with 1stBooks, are the people at 1stBooks.

Yeah, yeah, we've all heard of the handful of success stories, how "POD can be beneficial to niche material" blah blah blah. See my last sentence above.

I've been solicited by 1stBooks. In the same scammy way 1stBooks obtains 99.9999% of its clients -- through a list of names with registered copyrights via the library of congress. 1stBooks preys on the naive writer, right down to mailing direct solicitations to the newbie writers, yes newbies, who don't understand that copyright is effective the moment the words leave the brain and are fixed in tangible form, and that it is the PUBLISHER who, when they purchase your work, obtains formal copyright at their expense -- like mind did. See, that's how it works in REAL

publishing. Publishers PAY THE WRITER.

I'm no newbie. And I delighted in the phone call I placed to 1stBooks after I was solicited, demanding that they remove me from their mailing list, which they haven't -- I've even gone so far as to file a complaint with the BBB. I'll say it again. The only people making money from having books printed with 1stBooks, are the people at 1stBooks. Oh, I know, folks are going to flame me saying "It's not about money. It's my dream, my life's goal, my legacy to my kids. I'm not in it for the money." Bull****. I say if you want to call yourself a writer, you must earn the privilege. Not simply write a check for the title.

While on the phone with the 1stBooks salesman, I asked him about 1stBooks' editorial department. Do they screen applicants? Do they edit manuscripts? No, and no. Anyone with \$\$ is good to go. I said, "so, I can send you 500 pages of gibberish and as long as my check is good, 1stBooks would print it?" Yes! I then asked about his publishing experience. What DID he know about publishing books, anyway. Know what he said? His previous job was selling mattresses at JC Penney. Before that, he did telephone solicitation. He knew didly-squat about publishing, marketing, and even less about WRITING.

1stBooks is a ripoff and I'm happy to go around the Net saying so.

EN

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PS. Chris...

Author: EN (---.biz.mindspring.com)
Date: 01-10-02 11:36

Might want to take a stroll over the Literary Agents forum. In a thread titled: What Publicity Services Should I Pay For? one of your customers is asking about publicity for his 1stBooks book. Gee, how much will THIS service cost him?

Again, just another failer of 1stBooks poor business practices. Everything has a price, eh? A traditional publisher provides the author with, gasp!, a publicist, for free.

EN

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Re: PS. Chris...

Author: David Spiselman (---.dsl.sntc01.pacbell.net)
Date: 01-10-02 12:19

Whatever you do, DON'T GIVE AWAY ANY RIGHTS TO ANYONE BESIDES A BIG PRINT PUBLISHER. Victoria is correct that writers must promote their own work for an ePublished eBook, regardless of who the ePublisher (or even the print publisher) is. But for ePublishing, many of the companies (including CyclopsMedia.com, of which I am one of the cofounders) are bootstrapped and can't afford advances. As such, we offer a place where the writer's eBooks can be sold, and our publicity is more about the eBookStore website than any of the eBooks our writers have there.

What we've discovered is that direct writer promotion is what causes sales, and writers have to diligently promote themselves.

Dave Spiselman
CyclopsMedia.com

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Re: PS. Chris...

Author: [Chris Rennie](#) (216.9.128.---)
Date: 01-10-02 17:09

E.N.(If that is your real name....)

You really do not have a clue. Do you really feel that traditional publishers do all the marketing for a book they publish and the author is not required to do anything? You are so wrong. I have an author who published 7 books by Dell. His first print run was for 25,000 copies. What promotions did they do for him? They scheduled him on Inside Edition and that was it. He had to pay his own travel expense and only after six months a bugging Dell did they reimburse him. He has sold over 1.6 million copies of his books since then and it was as a result of his efforts.

You claim none of our authors have made any money. Wrong. More then 40% of our authors make all their money back in the first quarter. With the high royalties we pay most authors can make back their investment after only 160 books have been sold.

BTW(thats BY THE WAY), 20% of all new books submitted to us are books from returning authors.

You speak of Netiquette. You say your not a newbie. You should know that when people read a post by someone who is obviously ranting and abusive their first reaction is to ignore what that person is saying. If you were an intelligent person you would behave in a more mature way.

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hehehe

Author: EN (---.biz.mindspring.com)
Date: 01-10-02 18:08

Chris, forgive me for laughing, but honestly, you just don't "get it". You really are one of the offensively clueless and have made a special place in my heart.

Of course all authors must self promote. BUT, self-promotion for a REAL published author is very different from the self-published writer. There is no comparison. Rather than repeat posts, read Victoria's post in the Agent forum. Same thread on publicity I refered you to earlier, you know, the one started by a 1stBooks client!

So, what'd Dell do, dump the 7 book author for dwindling sales? And his only place to go was 1stBooks?! Good grief. That's the saddest thing I've read all day.

Your 40% claim return on investment is bull****. Well, maybe there are exceptions. I'm sure the average 1stBooks writer purchases a few boxes of his/her own books (for retail) to hand out to friends and relatives, the same friends and relatives who initially critiqued the manuscript and said things like, "I love it!" and "This is GREAT!" and "When's the movie coming out?"

I've no doubt that your claim on returning clients is true. If a writer has one unpublishable novel under his/her bed, he/she has several. What a well 1stBooks has tapped into. Tell me, does 1stBooks offer discounts for multiple submissions?

And what of my claim that 1stBooks would publish 500 pages of gibberish so long as that gibberish was accompanied with a check? True? Does 1stBooks have ANY screening process or editorial standards in place for materials accepted for printing?

Netiquette schmettiquette, Chris. I'm feeling younger by the minute.

EN

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Re: hehehe

Author: [Chris Rennie](#) (216.9.128.---)
Date: 01-11-02 10:32

I'm sorry E.N, Was I offensive? I thought you were the offensive one. You really don't

have a clue do you? So tell me, what big publishing house published your book? You say you called us. Why would you do that if you already had a contract signed? My guess is your an unpublished author who doesn't have \$598 saved and that has pissed you off. I guess your paycheck from Burger King doesn't allow you to save much.

I really appreciate you giving me the opportunity to explain our company in more detail.

The author who published with Dell left them because he disliked their business practices. He was paid a low royalty and felt with the overall volume of sales he had he should have made a lot more money. He would have made 3 times as much if his book sold with 1stBooks. Because he had to do most of his own promotions anyway he felt 1stBooks was perfect for him.

My claim of author's making their money back is true. Most authors only need to sell 160 copies of their book to make back their investment. Easy even for the worst book. I bet even your book could sell that many.

Your statement about publishing gibberish is true. You have \$598 and 500 pages of gibberish we will publish it. So what. What reporter will do a story about it? Who will tell their friend to buy the book? No one will buy it. Only the books we have that are well written will received any press coverage.

What kind of press coverage you ask? NY Times, LA Times, Washington Post, Boston Globe, Chicago Tribune, USA Today, Publisher's Weekly, The Midwest Book Review, People Magazine, Time magazine, US News & World Report, Womans World Magazine, The Woman's Voice Magazine, MotorWeek, the Today Show, CBS Early Show, MSNBC, Fox News Report, ABC News, Power Lunch with Dave Cohen, The Howard Stern Show, BET, and I could go on and one but I wont.

When you insult 1stBooks and say our authors are no good you are insulting authors who deserve better. Authors who's books have been turned into movies. Author's books who have made best seller lists and who have won awards. Keep in mind 1stBooks offers an opportunity, nothing more. If you have a good book you CAN succeed. If you do not have a good book you should be able to make your money back. If you want to rant about someone how Vantage or Dorance. They charge author's \$10K-\$20K. Try making your money back with them!

Fun Fun Fun

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Re: hehehe

Author: [Victoria Strauss](#) (---.ne.mediaone.net)
Date: 01-11-02 12:31

As E.N. notes, It's very misleading to imply, by saying a commercially-published author "has to do most of his own promotion anyway", that the task of self-promotion for a commercially-published author is the same as for a self- or fee-based POD-published author. It's not. Self-promotion for a commercially published author--who can be sure his/her publisher will actually get the books into bricks-and-mortar bookstores (where the majority of the bookbuying public does its buying, despite the hype about online shopping), obtain reviews in industry venues, and provide a whole menu of behind-the-scenes assistance to even the most insignificant of its authors--is a completely different ballgame than for a self- or vanity-published author, who must do everything from start to finish--from convincing stores to stock his/her books to begging for reviews.

There's also the pay-to-publish stigma and the fee-based POD stigma. Like it or not, fair or not, these exist, and an author who chooses fee-based POD is going to have to deal with them.

As for the Dell author, if he decided he didn't like Dell's business practices and wanted to go it on his own, the obvious move would have been real self-publishing, in which he could control the entire process and keep all sales proceeds. I suspect there's a bit more to this story than has been told here--such as that he wanted to do

a novel his current publisher wasn't willing to publish and turned to fee-based POD as a convenient alternative, or that his last book had 80% returns and his publisher gave him the heave-ho. Given the absence of serious problems, I find it hard to believe an author who'd sold 16 million books would abandon the commercial book market for POD.

I'd be curious to know who the author is.

- Victoria

Victoria Strauss
THE GARDEN OF THE STONE (HarperCollins Eos)
Homepage: <http://www.victoriastrauss.com/>
Writer Beware: <http://www.sfw.org/beware/>

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oooooooooooo

Author: EN (---.biz.mindspring.com)
Date: 01-11-02 13:12

Good morning, Chris--

Yes, I did call 1stBooks, several times in fact, demanding that they remove me from their solicitation mailing list. And my complaint to the BBB about 1stBooks included "false advertising" among other offenses. What false advertising? How 'bout 1stBooks' claim that the writer's book will be available in book stores all over the country. It simply isn't true. By paying 1stBooks to print a book doesn't guarantee the writer that that book will get shelf space at Borders or any other recognized bookstore. Claiming it will be available is a lie.

Okay, I'll give you your Dell author, I mean, mid-list writers get dumped all the time by imprints, even when they're selling, but you can hardly compare him to the average Joe Writer who signs up with 1stBooks. No track record, no audience, and I'll wager Joe Writer is the one who buys 160 of his books to BREAK EVEN. How many books does the writer get as part of his/her 1stBooks package, or does it depend on the package?

Your lack of artistic sensibility is exactly the point I was making about the book of gibberish. Really, Chris, try and keep up. Quality writing, polished prose, means nothing to you or anyone at 1stBooks. The only thing that matters to 1stBooks is the \$598 check with each submission. Oh, and those press sites you listed, how much does an ad in say, the NY Times, cost the AUTHOR? \$2k? Is there a 1stBooks catalog that goes out to bookstores? If you expect me to believe that the average 1stBooks book will be reviewed by the NY Times, I'd like you to send me whatever it is you are smoking. My address is 1122 Boogie Woogie Avenue NY NY 10022.

I'm thinking I will have 1stBooks print a book of gibberish. Perhaps my publicist can get Madonna to award me \$40k for my artistic expression of what a 1stBook book means to literature.

Wow, comparing 1stBooks to Vantage and Dorance, well, THAT's certainly saying something. If the dust jacket fits...

EN

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Re: hehehe

Author: [Chris Rennie](#) (216.9.128.---)
Date: 01-11-02 13:39

Victoria,

The author who was with Dell sold 1.6 million copies. He did not like the covers they put on his books. He did not like the fact he had to sign away his rights. He did not

like the royalties he was getting. Yes he could have gone with true self publishing but then he would have had to hire someone to take order and to package and ship books out. He would have to handle all the 'backend' process which he simply did not want to mess with. This is only example. We have many authors who have been published by traditional publishing houses. We have even lost authors to traditional publishers. It works both ways.

1stBooks does have a promotions department who takes calls from reviewers and ship out free review copies. We coordinate interviews and basically act as the go-between. Is there more we could do? Yes. Do we do more when we see a book is doing well? Yes. Will we put extra effort promoting all our books? No.

If an author can get signed up by a traditional publisher they should do it. I never try to convince someone to pass on a Random House offer. We do not want to replace the traditional publishing houses. We want to be the best alternative. The traditional publishers do not always pick up on every good book that is sent to them. Victoria, did you get signed after sending out only one query letter? Surely you had to deal with several rejections before HarperCollins signed you up?

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Re: hehehe

Author: [Chris Rennie](#) (216.9.128.---)
Date: 01-11-02 13:57

EN,

Please try to pay attention. I never expected you to believe that Joe Writer will get their book reviewed by NY Times. Did I say that? If the book is good enough it has a chance. We have a lot of books that are good enough. Don't judge our books if you have never read any of them.

I must have missed something. Who did you say was your publisher? If your book is not published you have less chance of getting reviewed then our worst author.

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Publishing Hierarchy

Author: EN (---.biz.mindspring.com)
Date: 01-11-02 17:38

Hi Chris--

This thread is not about me. You posted in defense of 1stBooks and I challenged that defense. Please stick to the topic -- vanity publishing.

"If a book is good enough it has a chance." Finally, something we can agree on.

This is the real publishing hierarchy, with the reasons why--ranked best to worst:

1) Traditional contract. Publisher pays you an advance and assumes all the risks of publication. Advances range anywhere from \$5000 to \$50K to \$100K or more. That is money in your pocket, regardless of how well the book does. Yes, you still have to do a lot on your own to market your book, but your publisher provides you (free!) all of the basic distribution channels that get your books onto store shelves all over the country, thousands of miles from your home.

2) Self-publication. You receive NO advance monies. Nobody assumes any risk for you, and if your book does poorly, as 99.9% of self-published books do, you lose money. If you work your ass off, you might be able to churn a profit of a few hundred dollars, but this is unlikely. There are no marketing or distribution people to get books into the stores. It is extremely time-consuming and difficult to get a self-published book into the stores on your own, even if you offer it on consignment. With traditional publishing--BOOM--thousands of books are in the stores, just like that, on publication day, all of it done by someone else. You sit back, enjoy the advance monies, and start your next book.

3) Vanity publication. (1stBooks, Xlibris, iUniverse, etc). No advance monies. No distribution network. And, unlike with self-publishing, you don't even get to keep the gross--these vanity presses will take up to 50% of the gross! All the while they are telling you that you are getting "50% royalties, more than New York pays." You have to be really really REALLY naive to fall for a lie like that--a New York house will pay you an advance that is far larger than anything 99.9% of 1stBooks authors will make through "royalties." Heck, with traditional publishing, it doesn't even matter if your book is profitable or tanks--you still get to keep the advance!

The best route for the author is the traditional one. If the writer is not good enough to get a traditional publisher and still wants to stroke his/her ego and go around claiming to be an "author," then that writer should self-publish. At least that way he/she gets to keep all the gross.

And no, I've never read a 1stBooks book all the way to The End. I have read excerpts at 1stbooks.com, and when I have time and if this thread isn't dead, I'll critique one, but before doing so, I'll remind you that it is accepted literary practice for reviewers to post short excerpts from books.

Have a nice weekend.

EN

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: [Victoria Strauss](#) (---.ne.mediaone.net)
Date: 01-11-02 22:04

Yes, of course I got rejections before winding up with HarperCollins (actually with Avon, before HarperCollins bought it--but that's another story). I don't know any writers, commercially published or otherwise, who haven't got at least one file folder full of rejection letters. The point is that it never occurred to me to consider anything but commercial publication for my books. I want to be paid; I want distribution. And that was before I knew a fraction of what I know now about publishing and the way the industry works.

Like the Dell author, I haven't liked some of my covers, nor am I crazy about 10-15% royalties (on the other hand, those royalties are on retail price, unlike the royalties paid by most fee-based PODs). Unlike the Dell author, I can't say I'm upset about rights, because I've always been savvy enough to keep the rights I might be able to exploit better than the publisher--and to leave with the publisher the rights it can exploit better than me. I also haven't sold anything even remotely approaching 1.6 million books (sorry about the typo above) in my career. Even so, I'm not planning on opting out of commercial publishing anytime soon, as long as it's in my power to make the choice.

- Victoria

Victoria Strauss
THE GARDEN OF THE STONE (HarperCollins Eos)
Homepage: <http://www.victoriastrauss.com/>
Writer Beware: <http://www.sfwa.org/beware/>

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: [Chris](#) (---.dialinx.net)
Date: 01-13-02 17:06

Victoria,

When you got several rejection letters did it make you feel like your book wasn't good enough? That did not stop you. You keep going until you finally made it. 1stBooks, and probably other POD companies, sign authors who did not keep at it long enough.

For EN to simply say all POD books sucks is a huge insult to those authors and I guess I reacted in a defensive way. I have been with 1stBooks for 2 1/2 years and although it is not my job to read books I do anyway and on my own time. I like to read what can I say. I'm currently reading my 57th book we have published. I read action adventure, mystery suspense and sci-fi books. I rarely read non-fiction. There have been books I did not like at all. There have also been books that blew me away. When I read a really good book that we have published I feel real good about my job, my company and myself. The one non-fiction book I read was "Long March To Freedom" by Thomas Hargrove. The movie "Proof Of Life" was based on his story. He wrote this book while being held captive for 11 months. I just had to read it.

1stBooks has distribution with Ingram and Baker & Taylor. I'm sure other POD companies do as well. Our books can be ordered in just about any bookstore that orders from Ingram. Getting shelf space is still going to be hard.

The other day I was told that some traditional publishers make authors payback some of their advances if they do not sell enough books. Has anyone else heard that? I know an author doesn't make any more money on his book until the publisher sells over X number of books, but paying back some of the advance? Does that really happen?

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: [Victoria Strauss](#) (---.ne.mediaone.net)
Date: 01-13-02 21:01

Chris,

I don't know of any commercial publisher that does this. That doesn't mean it never happens; but if it does, it's definitely contrary to prevailing industry standard. I certainly don't know of any author who has been asked to pay back the advance for a published book, no matter how poor the sales. The publisher may decide not to work with the author again, but that's about it.

A publisher can break even, or even make a profit, on a book even if the author doesn't earn back the advance.

- Victoria

Victoria Strauss
THE GARDEN OF THE STONE (HarperCollins Eos)
Homepage: <http://www.victoriastrauss.com/>
Writer Beware: <http://www.sfw.org/beware/>

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: [Eric Gilmartin](#) (64.46.174.---)
Date: 01-15-02 17:43

The mere fact that Mr. Rennie seems to have so much time on his hands to answer each of EN's diatribes in great detail should speak volumes about how busy he actually is, reviewing submissions for quality, getting their authors into bookstores, and so forth. Incidentally, sir, I can count the number of times Victoria's been wrong on matters of publishing on the fingers of my left ear.

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: Bruno St .Clair (---.cg.shawcable.net)
Date: 01-16-02 15:04

Very interesting posts on this thread! EN:If you do drugs you should stop, if you don't do them you should start.

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: [Lawrance George Lux](#) (---.proxy.aol.com)
Date: 01-18-02 15:22

The animus expressed toward PODs on this thread may be mis-placed. I have published twelve works with PODs, and have never tried the Traditional Publishing route. I enjoy writing, and do not enjoy promotion or marketing. I may never be read, but the works are out there. I do not publishe with 1stBooks, because I find their set-up fees too high. I have given up Xlibris, because they have raised their rate. I am currently going with iUnviverse, because they set up cheaply, set a reasonable price for the copies, and do some promotion--search engines.

Many of you would claim I should not be in print; but I am not, if Readers and bookstores chose not to have Me printed. I have the wish to be a famous author; it is sufficient to write.

Lawrance George Lux

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: [Kaz](#) (---.dsl1.lar.fiberpipe.net)
Date: 01-21-02 09:26

This debate isn't going to change anyone's mind that has either made a choice or is going to make one regarding traditional or POD publishing. Both have pros and cons. There are some traditional published authors turning to POD for various personal reasons. There are a few POD published authors jumping at signing traditional publishing contracts.

Publicity guru John Kremer said that it's imperative for POD published authors to take advantage of web marketing to build a readership. There has been some progress in that some of the reviewers who previously refused to review POD published books are now doing so.

Any published author who has a website is welcome to print out a web market list available on my website. Most of the sites listed are free and a few are low-cost. It includes Kremer's website. You can find the list at: <http://www.ckluz.homestead.com>

I don't think anyone needs to apologize for the publishing direction they choose. Nor should they be thin-skinned. Rolling with criticism is part of the package when choosing POD. Don't focus on the negative...work on marketing yourself and your books.

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: [Suzanne Westhaver](#) (---.208.84.80.Dial1.Stamford1.Level3.net)
Date: 01-24-02 17:18

Walt Whitman self-published Leaves of Grass... or was it Blades of Grass? Oh, hell I don't like Walt Whitman anyhow.

I read this entire thread and I think everyone is right.

Stephen King is the kind of the comma splice yet his book On Writing actually has a grammar section and even funnier his book has some great advice, not only about the business but the writing craft.

Despite my pleasure at reading this book of his, I have read some pretty bad books that he's written. He could sell anything at this point and actually has.

I've read plenty of books published by mainstream publishers that were terrible.

Despite this, I'm not willing to go Vanity yet. I do not think that all self-published books are crap though.

Beware of scams, that is my motto.

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: Ricardo (---.dialsprint.net)
Date: 01-28-02 22:42

Some comments about all the comments...

Like Ms. Westhaver, I read this entire thread -- but I do not agree that everyone is right. I do agree with Mr. Lux that the animosity directed towards POD publishing is misplaced. I thought Kaz's advice was good -- that nobody should apologize for the publishing direction they choose. The hostility comes in when people like EN insist on comparing POD to traditional publishing -- duh. They are two very different routes, with pros and cons to each, as Kaz points out so correctly. Although EN's rants made for a stimulating discussion, they support the argument that the anonymity of web-posting can encourage cyber rage. EN was evasive, offensive, uncivil and filled with bitterness (EN, cut back on the caffeine), and yet the stupidest comment came from Mr. Gilmartin, who decided that because Chris Rennie cared enough to answer his critics with patience and honesty, that he and his company were liars. I think Mr. Rennie gave a very good accounting of himself and 1st Books under difficult circumstances. Mr. Gilmartin obviously doesn't understand that there are some people who care about their reputation. Thanks to Victoria Strauss for sharing her experience and being nice about it.

-Ricardo

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: Joe Steinbicker (199.218.247.---)
Date: 01-30-02 11:39

Status of my book...How come I'm still here?

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: [Carissa L. Walker](#) (63.144.217.---)
Date: 02-19-02 10:45

Hello,

I'm a new black emerging author myself who is publishing my first book with 1stbooks.com and they are good but I tell you that for my second book I rather self-publish with Pagefree- Publish--too much money... My book is a new release coming soon March/April 2002- "Looking For Love In All The Wrong Places". Check me out at 1stbooks.com and type in my full name...

God Bless you in everything...

Carissa L. Walker

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: [Tina](#) (---.williamsgva.com)
Date: 04-17-02 09:18

I'm currently considering First Books for my first book: a non-fiction story about finding a boy I knew when I was 6 years old. He had a birthday party. I was the only one who attended. I never saw him again.

At a writers networking conference, I met a very reputable literary agent whom I told about my book. She got really emotional when I told her the story. She said when it was done, I had to send it to her. In the meantime, I bought the book she had written which is very well known as a great resource for people wanting to be published. In that book, it is mentioned that a commercial publisher CAN ask for an advance (or part of one) to be returned if the book doesn't sell well. She recommended putting your advance in the bank until the book has made some money!

Anyway, point being, when I finished my work, I sent her a query - it was my first. I was so nervous. Within two days I got back a form rejection. I was heartbroken. It's happened hundreds of times since with the same theme (first-time author, non-fiction story, no sell). I knew that going into it and it is a great story that I really wanted to tell and so I'm self-publishing so I can get it out there.

I've had other work published in anthologies, print and on-line, and magazines. I feel that I'm a good writer with talent who just hasn't hit the right chord with the commercial publishing industry. Self-publishing helps someone like me put their work out there so that when I talk about my book and people say "Where can I get it?" I can tell them: "Go on-line and order it!" Instead of "Well, I have some queries out there..." And I can get to work on my next book, a book of letters to a friend lost to heroine.

Anyway, I hope this helps somewhat. Keep writing!

ctl

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Re: Publishing Hierarchy

Author: [Tina](#) (---.williamsgva.com)
Date: 04-17-02 09:18

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ctl

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