

How To Leverage Indie Publishing as a Recent Trend

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Abstract

Indie publishing is a new form of publishing in which the authors publish their books in electronic gadgets. This is the result of growing opportunities for authors with the emergence of indie. This paper aims to give a glimpse of publishing and predict the future of publishing industry. It raises debates like pros and cons, its effects on publishing houses and conventional publishing. It also raises issues like the advantages and disadvantages of the Indie Publishing.

Keywords: Publishing, Indie-Publishing, Industry.



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Introduction

Nowadays, publishing of the written text has gained greater importance. This is the result of growing opportunities for authors with the emergence of Indie publishing. Authors become creative directors in Indie publishing and play independent role in publishing their books. The new developments in publishing also include publishing literature on the electronic gadgets and e-book readers.

My work on individual publishing tries to give a glimpse of publishing and predict the future of publishing Industry. It raises debates like pros and cons of Indie publishing, its effects on publishing houses and conventional publishing. I want to bring out new traits, trends available in Indie publishing.

To a student of literary history and cultural studies, the act of publishing relates itself to what Benedict Anderson has called print capitalism. Publishing before printing machine was done by scribe, transcribe and transliterate, this made copies available only for a limited number of readers. In the year 1450 Johannes Guttenberg invented the printing press and easy production of books was made possible. Printing resulted in sharing of ideas, improvement of general knowledge and common people began to read books which caused a rise in the literacy rate.

My paper concentrates on the recent developments in the publishing by publishing literature in the electronic gadgets. Books sold in the physical form are one of the best forms of reading literature till today, but unlike this conventional style, the industry is preparing itself in many different forms with which it can reach consumers. These new forms include literature available in the digital formats, that can be read in the new technological breakthroughs such as mobile phones, tablets, computers etc., Books can be bought over the internet and could be read with the help of reading gadgets such as Amazon kindle, Barnes and Noble Nook, Kobo Aura etc., Mobile phones too, with all other features can be used as a book reader, this can be

done by using a suitable app. These new ways of reading has raised many challenges to the publishing houses and an important challenge among them is the emergence of Indie publishing.

Mark Coker, founder of Smashwords, (Smashwords is one of the largest distributor of Indie e-books) says how self-publishing has transformed the book publishing landscape.

With e book self-publishing, every writer in the world has democratized access to the tools and knowledge of professional publishing. It's now possible for writers to make their books instantly accessible, discoverable and affordable to readers around the world.¹

The new form in publishing has raised expectations and curiosity among budding writers, research scholars and popular authors. The evaluation of Indie publishing therefore is an important argument of the hour.

What is Indie publishing?

Though the sales figures in the Indian market is not revealed and kept confidential, it is reported that sales by Kindle Direct publishing or sales in any other e-book format in India is not as satisfying as it is in other countries.² The difference in reading preferences in India compared to other countries may be the reason for a prolonged pick up in e-book sales in India. The possibility of present technology savvy generation's preference to read their favorite books or content in their apparatuses can't be discarded altogether. With this idea of a possibility in a rapid growth in different means of publishing, it is a need of the hour to understand the concept of Indie publishing. The evaluation of the Indie publishing therefore directs us both towards the advantages and disadvantages over the conventional book publishing.

There is an argument that with the developments in technological developments the reading public has been considerably decreasing. People have a lot of opportunities for their pass time activities. Publishers too complain that they face difficulties in sales because of people's disinclination towards reading. This argument is contradicted by new books published in the physical book form and growing number of e-books available electronically over the internet. Authorearnings.com specifically shows that there is an increase in the sales of e-books, it also gives the description of increase in the sales of Indie self-published e-books. A summary of the report shows that how Indie publishing is dominating the publishing industry³.

¹ <http://blog.smashwords.com/2014/12/2015-book-publishing-industry.html>

² <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/tech/tech-news/EBook-readers-fail-to-Kindle-sales-in-India/articleshow/45802786.cms>

- **Author Earnings reports analyze detailed title-level data on 33% of all daily eBook sales in the U.S.**
- **30% of the eBooks being purchased in the U.S. do not use ISBN numbers and are invisible to the industry's official market surveys and reports; all the ISBN-based estimates of market share reported by Bowker, AAP, BISG, and Nielsen are wildly wrong.**
- **33% of all paid eBook unit sales on Amazon.com are indie self-published eBooks.**
- **20% of all consumer dollars spent on eBooks on Amazon.com are being spent on indie self-published eBooks.**
- **40% of all dollars earned by authors from eBooks on Amazon.com are earned by indie self-published eBooks.**

The word Indie stands for individual who is not affiliated or connected with a company or label. Indie publishers are the individuals who are not connected with any major publishing houses but publish their works on their own. There are many platforms which gives opportunities for these Indie authors to sell their works. These platforms are websites such as Smashwords, Kindle Direct Publishing, grapewineindia.com, pothi.com etc. Once an author sends their formatted manuscript to anyone or all websites, these websites changes the format of the manuscript into html (online reading),mobi(kindle), epub(Apple iPad/iBooks, Nook, Sony Reader, Kobo) pdf (for PC reading) and more to serve different reading apparatuses such as Kindle, Kobo, Sony, iPad/iPhone, Nook, Personal Computers, Smartphones etc.,

With Indie publishing the power in the publishing industry has shifted from publisher to author. Indie publisher is one who publishes his work on his own, Indie publisher has to take the role of writer, publisher, promoter, agent etc., and all this responsibilities comes with a reward. Indie publishing reaches people easily, it can draw attention with a bit of work, it can be sold easily and cheaply, it doesn't require any initial investment and at last best part of all: you receive a high percentage of the royalties. The process of publishing is easy; first you have to register yourselves in any websites that helps Indie publishing. You have to follow the guidelines given by the websites regarding the format of your work. You can also design and give a cover page to your work and you are published.

Advantages of Indie publishing:

When we look at the history of publishing, we find that there was a revolution earlier in paperbacks, now we can count on a swift progress in the reading of eBooks and electronic reading. For any writer it is a profitable exercise to go for Indie publishing, profiting both in terms of royalty, popularity and readership. Contrary to the books published by conventional publishing: Indie publishing is beneficial to the readers as well. This is because the e-books are available over the internet at a fraction of the price of physical books. People can check different genres of literature even before buying by reading the free chapters available, by reading the detailed description or by analyzing the feedback. These e-books are available all over the world and accessible in split of a second. The best part is that there are thousands of free e-books already available to choose from and sometimes we can get a good bargain and discounts in buying e books.

For new, upcoming and well known authors Indie publishing gives a lot of freedom. This freedom includes the liberty to think of what to write and when to write. Author will be their own boss and they can format their work, make changes to their work and can supply a good cover for the e book. Most of the websites that gives services to Indie authors such as KDP, smashwords, Abbott press, give all the rights to the authors. Author can decide the price of their work and sometimes if they feel right, they can give it for free too. Authors are given a major share in the royalties while the websites keeps a small portion for the services they provide. In Indie publishing the sales figures and information about the payment to the author is available to the author. Unlike the traditional publishing Indie publishing takes less time and charges nothing for an author to get published. An Indie publisher can promote their work through social media, they can get feedback from the readers in their websites and people can even write them by email.

David Jay Ramsden explains that the self-publishing world is honest as it posts your sales and sends your money for those sales.⁴ Steve Carter and Antoinette opine that without the self-publishing many brilliant artists and writers would have disappeared into obscurity waiting to be discovered by a major publisher.⁵

Some of the Limitations of Indie publishing is

1. No literature in regional languages is available in India because of the non availability of scripts common for many devices.
2. The reading apparatuses have not become so successful in India yet, so bibliophiles may take a while to make Indie publishing successful
3. As there is no proper regulation on the Indie publishing books, there are chances of plagiarism.
4. If Indie publishing becomes too successful then, there is a chance (but not in the near future) that all data available in the internet may become unavailable for free.
5. An author is creative when writing becomes the primary and only goal. The time and energy required to take the role of publisher, promoter, and accountant is huge. If the author spends time in keeping the accounts, keeping the fans and fan clubs happy etc., then when shall he/she get time for writing?
6. A complaint at Indie books is that they are poorly written and flawed with grammatical errors. This may be because assistance from a professional editor is not taken in Indie publishing.

Conclusion:

A successful writer finds success by their skill and talent but a major share in the profit is shared by publishing houses. Without a great product a publishing house can't sell and the producer of this great product doesn't get all the credit. In other words it is not fair when a major share of the profit is snatched away from the writer.

Self-publishing allows understanding and getting the profit where the writer can have most of the profit.

A new writer who has written their first piece of work can try Indie publishing rather than waiting for the publishers to recognize and give them an opportunity. Indie publishing itself is that opportunity where you give your work not to the expert in a traditional publishing house for judgment but you give your work to the readers who can grade your work, appreciate your talents and skills and more than everything you may get recognized by the reading public. There is a chance that after being a success in Indie publishing, you can publish your physical book by a traditional publishing house too. If you have written a poem, a novel, a novella, a short story, an essay or anything that you think that people should read, then there is no problem in going for Indie publishing and get your work published. You can do this because if you do, you don't lose anything.

⁴ The quote is an extract from "You've got Nothing to Lose" which is an article by David Jay Ramsden from the book *Ditch the Publisher:40 Indie Authors on Their Unique Self-Publishing Journeys* .

⁵ The quote is an extract from "Freedom" which is an article by Steve Carter and Antoinette Ryder from the book *Ditch the Publisher:40 Indie Authors on Their Unique Self-Publishing Journeys*