

ROWSE REVIEWS

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In This Issue

Editorial Comment

About This Issue	1
Publishing Books — Books about Publishing	1

Publishing

The Self-Publishing Manual	2
Make Money Self-Publishing	3
How to Get Happily Published	3
Complete Publishing Resource Manual	4
All-by-Yourself Self-Publishing	5

Writing

Writing Nonfiction	6
UnTechnical Writing	6

Fiction

Bloodsworth Island	8
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Editorial Comment

About This Issue

Here is another sample issue, provided for free to Maryland library systems. Diligent readers will note that *Rowse Reviews* can be ordered with index covers, a more practical arrangement for shelving or vertical filing. Extra copies for branches are available at very low rates. Take a peek at the subscription form printed on the back cover and also furnished as a separate item. We hope our readers will take the time to complete one of the forms and help this fledgling publication develop stronger wings.

Publishing Books — Books about Publishing

The new technology is revolutionizing publishing from within and threatening it from without. Electronic publishing on the internet and printed book sales via the internet are both rocking the industry. *

But the real, and mostly unreported, revolution is occurring in print publication. Small publishers, self publishers and home publishers sprout like flowers in Spring (or depending on your viewpoint like crabgrass in August.) Technology is opening the door to this blossoming. Every kind and shape of publishing configuration and sales volume is represented, from the one book wonder who sells only to the author's relatives to the mini-empire like Dan Poynter. We don't even have a good name for this grouping. We know of a fellow who "prints" using a high end laser printer attached to his computer. He farms out the covers in batches of 3,000 to a conventional printer. He binds the books with an old but serviceable perfect binding machine (cost about \$6,000). Is he a home publisher, a self publisher or a small press? No matter what you call him, he is in business and is to be reckoned with.

Predictably many of the books published by these providers are books about publishing, and about self-publishing in particular. That is the focus of this issue. Let the games begin!

* We are of the opinion that the printed book and the printed journal more or less conventionally published and distributed will be with us for decades to come. When we solicit review copies the first question we are asked is: "are you a print publication?" The second question deals with circulation.

Publishing

The Self-Publishing Manual

11th ed. Dan Poynter 1999

8 1/2 x 5 1/2 458 p. indexed

ISBN 1-56860-059-3

List price \$19.95

Published by

Para Publishing

P. O. Box 8206

Santa Barbara, CA 93118

1-800-727-2782

☆☆☆☆ *The Self Publishing Manual* is the must-have book for the self-publishing genre. Poynter packs more pertinent information in one volume than anyone else. The author continues to update the book while publishing others on the same or similar subjects. Others in self-publishing clan refer to Poynter as the 800 lb gorilla of the field. This is his signature work. If you don't shelve it yet we strongly suggest one copy per branch or outlet. If you have it you might consider updating to the latest edition.

Like many successes in the field Poynter is at heart a salesman. In this book he sells the concept of self-publishing, offers much advice on marketing, and of course promotes his many other offerings, from audio tapes to printed reports. To be honest he makes it all sound too easy. Self-publishing is for most a brutal business, requiring much labor for uncertain rewards. But even as we reread his book for this review he is stoking our fires anew.

The book design and typography are by Cirrus design. The result serves as a good advertisement for their services. But Poynter lists many others in that field. Indeed *The Self-Publishing Manual* is like many others a book of lists as well as an instruction manual. For example he lists 20 publishers' organizations, with name, address, phone, website etc. The glossary has nearly 300 entries. All in all he devotes 53 pages to the appendix area of the book, and 5 pages to the index.

Even in a book this large some areas get light treatment. The guerrilla war going on between small presses and the Cataloguing in Publication staff at the Library of Congress is not mentioned. On the subject of typesetting and book design he only offers the following:

“All you need for book publishing are a good computer (486 or higher), a word processing program such as *Word for Windows* or *WordPerfect* a page layout program such as *QuarkXpress*, *Framemaker*, *Corel-Ventura* and a laser printer with 600 dpi or better output.”

There is more to it than that. He omits two major products, *Adobe PageMaker* and *Microsoft Publisher*. He does not mention the no-cost alternative T_EX. And he does not follow even this minimal advice on pagemaking in one of his later works (see *Writing Nonfiction* reviewed below.)

Given these flaws we still give *The Self Publishing Manual* four stars. Nobody does it better. It is available from the publisher or through Amazon.com.

Make Money Self-Publishing

Suzanne Thomas 2001

9 x 6 in. 380 p. indexed

ISBN 0-9664691-2-7

List price \$19.95

Published by

Gemstone House Pub.

P. O. Box 19448

Boulder, CO 80308

Phone (800) 324-6415

☆☆☆☆ We read many books. Some we read with great interest. This one inspired us to immediate action. Contributor Angela Adair-Hoy of *booklocker.com* will get some business from WexfordPress directly as a result of our reading *Make Money Self-Publishing*.

Despite the somewhat pedestrian title *Make Money Self-Publishing* has great utility and immediate impact. Fourteen successful self-publishers tell us their stories — their failures as well as their successes — what worked and what didn't — warts and all. For those interested in the field this is fascinating reading.

The stories are varied. One author updates and reissues a single title year after year; others have extensive backlists. Some publish only their own work; others have parlayed their success into publishing the work of others. The abiding lessons are: there is no single formula for success, rules are made to be broken, and often the key element for success is discovered by accident.

Prefacing the fourteen tales is a chapter called "Self Publishing 101" which outlines succinctly much of the material told in greater detail in the other books reviewed in this issue.

Ironically it is the tale written by an e-book publisher that highlights the continuing need for paper books. Through that story we found a POD publisher that suited our needs. Internet searches had proven fruitless.

This is one of the books we metaphorically jump up and down about. We suggest a copy in each branch. Order from the publisher.

How to Get Happily Published

5th ed. Judith Appelbaum 1999

8 x 5 1/4 380 p. indexed

ISBN 0-06-273509-8

List price \$14.00

Published by

Harper Perennial

10 E. 53rd St.

New York, NY 10022

<http://www.harpercollins.com>

☆☆☆☆ If the *Self Publishing Manual* is number one for self-publishers, the Applebaum book has been the choice for the rest of the flock of aspiring authors. Until recently *How to Get Happily Published* was also the champion book of lists, but Able's exhaustive work reviewed below has taken that title.

There is a degree of overlap between Applebaum's book and Poynter's reviewed above, but there are enough differences to make each worth having in its own way. Applebaum starts out with the assumption that the reader is seeking a publisher. All the details of dealing with agents, attracting publishers, contracts, getting noticed, building a portfolio of previous publications and so on are discussed in detail. She also covers the self-publishing option briefly.

Applebaum writes in a style that is supportive without becoming condescending, cheerful without becoming annoyingly cute.

The book is highly successful. Over a half-million copies have been sold. Chances are good that you shelve it already. We include it here to provide a complete view of the classification.

Now about those resource lists. The bibliography is broken down by category. The thumbnail descriptions are helpful, but the lists are a bit dated,

with no entries newer than 1997. The Internet mailing list of the Publishers Management Association is listed, but not its effective successor the pub-forum list. In short, in this very volatile field a book like this needs annual revision.

How to Get Happily Published has a spot on our credenza. If by rare chance you do not yet shelve this classic order through the usual distributors.

Complete Publishing Resource Manual

Linda Able 1999
8 1/2 x 5 1/2 284 p.
ISBN 1-890357-05
List price \$22.95

Published by

Florida Academic Pub. Inc.
P. O. Box 540
Gainesville FL 32602
(352) 332-5104

☆☆☆ For a long time Judith Applebaum's book *How to Get Happily Published* held the title for most resource pages for authors and publishers. No more. Able's *Complete Publishing Resource Manual* has more of everything. The annotated bibliography runs 158 pages and contains more than 1,200 entries. The very useful glossary of publisher's terms runs 68 pages and offers more than 1,200 definitions. The last section, the resource listing, is subdivided into three parts: a list of vendors, suppliers, associations and contacts, a list of electronic discussion groups, and a list of important web sites. Again there are thousands of entries.

With all this quantity there is quality. All the books on our own publisher's bookshelf are listed as well as some other significant writings not listed elsewhere, for example the two books on LaTeX (a typesetting system) written by Lammport and Goosens. The glossary is a short course on printing and publishing technology. The resource section is incredibly detailed. On topics related to writing and publishing don't search the web, search the *Complete Publisher's Resource Manual*. Put a copy on your personal bookshelf, but buy one for circulation as well.

It is of course not practical to provide a general index for a book that is itself a huge index of resources. As a result there is one major flaw in the bibliography section. It is sorted by author's name, a traditional arrangement but unhelpful here. It should be sorted into major topic headings, with a brief author index added for those who wish to search by author's name.

The *Complete Publishing Resource Manual* is now the definitive work in its field, a necessity to own and a pleasure to use. Our copy collects no dust. Order from the publisher.

All-by-Yourself Self-Publishing

Davd H. Li, 1996
9 x 6 254 p. Indexed
ISBN 0-9637852-6-5
List price \$22.00
Published by
Premier Pub. Co.
P. O. Box 341267
Bethesda MD 20827
(No phone listed)

☆☆ This older book (written by a Maryland author) should not be passed over in your consideration. More modest in scope and approach by far than other efforts, *All-by-Yourself Self-Publishing* nevertheless contains vital information not found elsewhere. The book is older, the title awkward, the cover plain, the price higher than others — nevertheless this book qualifies as a useful reference. The how-to information on Publisher's Catalog in Publication data will save any small publisher more than the cost of Li's book. The approach is sober, serious and scholarly. It is no surprise to find that the author's other works include treatises on esoteric board games and on public affairs.

It must be said that the style is a bit pedantic. Sometimes the obvious is stated with great solemnity. Not all of the advice is good. Li recommends a P. O. Box as an address, unaware perhaps that established publishers usually offer a street address.

Li walks the reader through a lengthy post-mortem of a book publishing effort. There is a sense of reality imparted by this blow-by-blow account. It is not all whizz-bang and instant success. Ever honest, if Li does not know an important piece of information he admits it — a rare virtue in any author.

Most of the books reviewed in this issue of *Rowse Reviews* were submitted by the publishers. This is one that we bought. We suggest that you do the same, and have at least one copy in your system. Available from the publisher or from Amazon.com.

Writing

Writing Nonfiction

Dan Poynter 2000

8 1/2 x 5 1/2 154 p. indexed

ISBN 1-56860-064-X

List price \$14.95

Published by

Para Publishing

P. O. Box 8206

Santa Barbara, CA 93118

1-800-727-2782

☆☆ *Writing Nonfiction* might better be titled *Packaging Nonfiction*. The concentration is on marketing, packaging, and using the new media forms. Every page is packed with useful information, anecdotes, quotes and tidbits. Poynter boldly posits a “new book model” where the electronic version comes first and the print version is optional. Portions of the book previously appeared in his book *Write and Grow Rich*.

The author has done his homework on the changes in the world of book creation. He educates the reader on such novelties as POD (print on demand), PQN (print quantity needed) and the variations of e-book presentation. There are points where an in-depth rather than a summary treatment would have been appreciated, but perhaps breadth precludes depth.

The book shows evidence of the electronic influence. Each page looks a bit like a web page. Typically there are about ten typeface changes per page. There are distractors galore. It is nearly impossible to read this book cover to cover. Worse, Dan Poynter seems to have forgotten what he knows about book design, pagemaking and typesetting. The book is actually set using a word processor (MSWord according to the colophon.) We contacted Poynter on this issue and he noted that typography and pagemaking had been farmed out. He evidently chose the wrong farm. As much as we praised the appearance of *The Self-Publishing Manual* reviewed earlier we dispraise the presentation of *Writing Nonfiction*. Hopefully Poynter will not repeat the mistake, sparing us sentences that look like this.

This is a good book with something fresh to say and lots of information to offer. It could be better. Poynter has done better. Available from the publisher or Amazon.com.

UnTechnical Writing

Michael Bremer Sept. 15 1999

9 x 6 in 226 p. indexed

ISBN 0-9669949-0-6

List price \$14.95

Published by

UnTechnical Press

P. O. Box 272896

Concord, CA 93118

1-888-592-6657

☆☆ Bremer addresses a narrow but important segment of the writing profession. *UnTechincal Writing* can be recommended as definitive on the subject of technical writing for non-technical consumers. Clearly the author is expert at his trade, and expert also in sharing his knowledge with others. His treatment goes beyond writing to cover the management of the writing task in the product development environment. A veteran of the corporate wars, Bremer gives us a “been there, done that” insiders view.

We have a few reservations about this book. The subject is narrow; the book details a specialty within a specialty. The bibliography is idiosyncratic, reflecting the author's eclectic interests more than the reader's specific needs. Also, Bremer (in this book and others) tends toward a somewhat gaudy presentation of the material. If one is to read and reread the material all those extra-bold sans-serif headings and multi-page sidebars distract and irritate. Techniques suitable for writing the users manual are perhaps inappropriate for a reference work *about* writing the users manual.

This book is by no means the worst example we have seen; Bremer sins less than some others. But as reviewers who read book after book we have developed a rule to the effect that the longer the book and the more times it is to be reread the quieter should be the typography. Placing the 18th century novel at one end of the spectrum and the circus poster at the other, Bremer's book is a bit too posterish.

Decent books on technical writing are few. If your system's shelves don't have a title to offer this is a safe bet. If you have aspirations as a technical writer for a second career it is an even safer bet. Order from the publisher.

Fiction

Bloodsworth Island

J. Slate & D. Rearden Feb 2001

9 x 6 in. 344 p. paper

ISBN 1-58851-351-3

List Price \$14.95

Published by

AmErica House Book Pub.

P. O. Box 1109

Frederick, MD 21702

www.EricaHouse.com

☆☆☆ It is always a pleasure to welcome a fresh voice to the fiction ranks. In this case two voices speaking as one; Jeff Slate and David Rearden have crafted a rattling good adventure story as their first fiction effort.

Set in locations as diverse as the rain forest of Ecuador and the eponymous island in the Chesapeake Bay, *Bloodsworth Island* crackles with crisp dialogue, rivets with plentiful action and attracts with realistic description.

There is a guy, a girl and an evil scientist, all the more evil because he believes he is saving humanity. There are caged animals, brainwashed assistants and deadly viruses. There are even a few misguided bureaucrats. The authors aren't at the John Grisham level yet but they are on their way. We look forward to their second novel, already in progress.

With its many Maryland connections this book when available might rate a little promotion in your system. Contact the publishers or visit www.bloodsworthisland.com.

COMING SOON

About Shoestring Publishing: a book by Rowse Reviews editor John Culleton.

After years of experimenting and research author Culleton has at last hit on the formula for essentially no cost and no risk self-publishing. Using technologies both old and new, the author maps a path that requires significant effort but essentially no up-front money. His recommendations are radical (and sometimes painful) but they work. His book is an example of the technique.

Culleton was first published (in a newspaper feature) in 1943. He has worked with computers since 1968 and has been putting books together for publication since 1997. This is his first book published under his own name.

Cumulative Index

All-by-Yourself Self-Publishing David H. Li, 1996	NOV
Bloodsworth Island J. Slate & D. Reardon Feb 2001	NOV
Circle of Healing, The Cathy Holt, September 2000	OCT
Complete Publishing Resource Manual Linda Able 1999	NOV
How to Get Happily Published 5th ed. Judith Appelbaum 1999	NOV
Jazz Guitar Chords and Accompaniment Yoichi Arakawa 2000	OCT
Make Money Self-Publishing Suzanne Thomas 2001	NOV
Master Instructs, The Richard Kuslan, Aug 2000	OCT
Midwife's Song, The Brenda Ray Oct. 2000	OCT
Self-Publishing Manual, The 11th ed. Dan Poynter 1999	NOV
UnTechnical Writing Michael Bremer Sept. 15 1999	NOV
Writing Nonfiction Dan Poynter 2000	NOV

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