



PRESENTS

WHAT ADVANTAGES DO TRADITIONAL PUBLISHERS OFFER AUTHORS?

A COMPARISON OF
TRADITIONAL AND INDIE
PUBLISHING FROM THE
AUTHORS' PERSPECTIVE

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Digital Book World: Starting with the only conference designed to address the radically changing commercial publishing environment, F+W Media's Digital Book World has evolved into a year-round platform offering news, analysis and educational and networking resources for consumer publishing professionals and their partners-including agents, booksellers and technology vendors-online and in person.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The author community is abuzz with news of self-published authors who are making very good money by going indie. With the stigma of self-publishing diminishing, this alternative mode of reaching readers has become increasingly attractive to both new and seasoned authors. However, the 2013 Digital Book World and Writer's Digest Author Survey found that despite the excitement about self-publishing and complaints about traditional publishing, authors held a strong preference to publish with traditional publishers. Among many other things, this report seeks to understand why.

What advantages do traditional publishers offer authors? The 2014 Digital Book World and Writer's Digest Author Survey was designed specifically to compare the perceptions, experiences, and economic returns to authors associated with traditional publishing and self-publishing respectively. In this report, we take a close look at the case to be made to the author community in favor of traditional publishing as well as the areas where traditional publishers might enhance what they offer their current and prospective authors.

More than 9,210 authors responded to the 2014 survey and included aspiring authors who had not yet completed or in some cases even started manuscripts as well as seasoned authors with multiple traditionally published and/or self-published books. Authors were characterized as aspiring (not yet published), self-published (indie-only), traditionally published (traditional-only), and hybrid (both self-published and traditionally published). This report examines their perceptions of self-publishing and traditional publishing and, for published authors, their experiences and outcomes with each mode of publishing.

The Profile of Authors in the Survey

On balance, the profile of the typical author in the sample was of a commercial fiction writer who might also write non-fiction and who had a proj-

ect in the works that might soon be ready to publish. Most of the authors in the sample did not treat their writing as a full-time job, but some did, especially among hybrid authors, who reported spending significant time both on writing and on activities aimed at engaging readers. In addition, a substantial minority of the published authors responding to this survey viewed supporting themselves by writing books as an extremely important priority. For the typical author, publishing a book that people would buy was a key goal, suggesting a strong interest in selling books as well as a related interest in distribution and marketing. Finally, most authors in this sample made relatively little money if any from writing books, and on the whole they were not satisfied with their writing income.

Authors' Perceptions: Comparing Self-Publishing and Traditional Publishing

The aspiring and traditionally published authors in the sample had the most favorable views of traditional publishing and were more likely to show a marked preference for traditionally publishing their next book than were self-published and hybrid authors. Nonetheless, the majority of authors across types showed an interest in traditionally publishing their next book. The authors in the sample viewed traditional publishing as offering advantages related to marketing, print distribution, and professional services, as well as in terms of advances and lower personal costs that shifted risk from the author to the publisher. However, they also viewed traditional publishing as offering less creative control, slower speed to market, lower royalty rates, and no guarantee of a higher quality finished product or of having a best-seller compared to self-publishing.

Published Authors' Experiences Publishing Their Latest Book

In terms of actual experiences, traditional publishing seemed to deliver lackluster results relative to expectations. To the extent that marketing, print distribution, print sales, and professional services were viewed by authors

as advantages of traditional publishing, authors were less than thrilled with these aspects of their experiences in traditional publishing. They also found traditional publishing offering less creative control, slower speed to market, lower royalty rates, and no guarantee of a higher quality finished product.

Furthermore, the pattern of movement for hybrid authors is predominantly from traditional publishing to self-publishing, and there seem to be both push and pull factors at work. On the push side, these authors tended to be less happy with their treatment by traditional publishers than were the authors who had only traditionally published. On the pull side, they benefited from more satisfying royalty rates, earnings, and a highly satisfying amount of creative control. While a minority of hybrid authors published their last book with a traditional publisher, we do not know from the survey whether they are using self-publishing in tandem with or in place of traditional publishing. However, given the high conversion rate from traditional publishing to hybrid publishing, the higher satisfaction with self-publishing among hybrid authors, and the fact that only 16.1% of hybrid authors reported an intention only to traditionally publish, we anticipate that more authors will elect to become hybrids and that, even if they continue to traditionally publish, traditionally published books may represent a shrinking proportion of their publications—unless traditional publishers provide these authors with advantages they cannot achieve on their own.

While traditional publishing left authors less than completely satisfied on the whole, so too did self-publishing. The proportion of high satisfaction related to various aspects of publishing differed little between the two types of publishing. These results may reflect the difficulty for the majority of authors of making a splash in the book market and a crisis of expectations that may be unrealistic or uneasily met. Alternatively, they might point to areas where traditional publishers could focus on enhancing services to authors in order to make themselves more attractive to authors or reduce attrition.

Outcomes for Authors: Sales and Income

While advances were seen as a key advantage of traditional publishing, most of the authors in this sample who traditionally published did not receive them, while the royalty rates were also lower than those of authors who were self-publishing. Self-published authors were more likely to incur additional costs for editing than were traditionally published authors, but both sets were similarly likely to hire someone to help with marketing and promotion.

Traditional publishers may do more for authors in terms of marketing and promotion techniques, although the gap narrowed and even disappeared when compared to what hybrid authors did to promote their self-published work, with the exception of advertising in magazines and newspapers. However, it is not clear from the survey questions what was done by the publisher and what by the author. Nor can we distinguish differences in aggressiveness, expense, quality, or efficacy of the techniques used by publishers or by different types of authors. Traditional publishers did have an advantage in terms of distribution to bookstores, but it did not apply to about half of the traditionally published authors in the sample.

Finally, sales and earnings looked about the same for the authors in the sample whether they self-published or traditionally published, despite differences in royalties (higher for self-publishing) and distribution (greater for traditional publishing). Given that so many of the authors in the sample published genre fiction and that so many of the traditionally published authors published with houses that emphasized ebooks, did not provide advances, and offered higher royalty rates, perhaps it is not surprising that the traditionally published and self-published authors looked so similar.

Taking into account the expenses that a substantial, though not the majority, of self-published authors incurred in preparing their books, self-published authors may on average be slightly worse off in terms of net income than their traditionally published counterparts, particularly given the similarities in median income between the two groups. Further research is needed

into whether greater upfront investments by self-published authors lead to greater sales and eventually income, in which case the income divide might diminish even further or reverse.

Conclusions

This report examined authors' attitudes toward, experiences with, and outcomes from self-publishing and traditional publishing. Authors held favorable views of traditional publishing and expected that traditional publishing would offer several advantages over self-publishing, and most of the authors wanted to publish their next book with a traditional publisher. However, authors' experiences with traditional publishing seemed to fall short of expectation, and authors were not overall highly satisfied with their experiences with traditional publishers. Nor, however, were authors wholly satisfied with their experiences with self-publishing. Neither mode of publishing, it seems, provided authors with what they hoped in terms of sales, earnings, distribution, or marketing in particular. Moreover, little if any difference was seen in terms of sales or earnings from an authors' latest traditionally published and self-published books. Finally, the rate at which traditional authors are embracing self-publishing and the correspondingly low percentage of latest books from this group that were traditionally published suggest that authors may be voting with their feet, despite a continued interest in traditional publishing.

While the study has several limitations and may not be generalizable to the population of authors, it nonetheless provides valuable information about the relationship between various publishing options and outcomes. Crediting the findings here that traditional publishing does not seem to differentiate itself from self-publishing in substantive ways for authors, what should publishers do?

Authors in general do not seem overly pleased with their publishing experiences, whether with traditional publishing or self-publishing. This unmet desire or expectation may be more a function of the disappointments

related to a crowded consumer market and issues of discoverability than a problem with the services attainable in each mode of publishing. In that case, traditional publishers looking to satisfy their authors might do well to manage expectations.

Alternatively, traditional publishers may consider ways to increase the value they offer their authors. One key area to nurture may be the relationship between author and editor, particularly as this relationship is a potential advantage to traditional publishers when more than a third of their authors found the relationship very satisfying and only a quarter of self-published authors had hired editors to help them with their self-published work.

Managing expectations and enhancing author services could be important avenues for reducing attrition, either of authors to other publishing houses or of authors to self-publishing. However, it is not clear the extent to which either is a problem for traditional publishers, in particular when there are so many authors and the majority would like to publish their books with traditional publishers.

A question for publishers to consider is the rate at which their authors leave them, either for other publishers or to self-publish, and to what extent these departures impact sales and revenue. Another key question to consider is the relationship between hybrid publishing and traditional publishing sales. To the extent that traditional publishers are benefiting from the self-publishing activities of their authors, they may seek various ways to partner or assist authors in these alternative publishing endeavors.

WHAT ADVANTAGES DO TRADITIONAL PUBLISHERS OFFER AUTHORS?

A Comparison of Traditional and Indie Publishing from the Authors' Perspective

The author community is abuzz with news of self-published authors who are making very good money by going indie. With the stigma of doing so diminishing, this alternative mode of publishing has become increasingly attractive to both new and seasoned authors. Consequently, some authors and publishers have questioned the future viability of traditional publishing. However, the hype for self-publishing has been based on anecdote and impressive individual stories, rather than data.

The 2013 Digital Book World and Writer's Digest Author Survey found that despite the excitement about self-publishing, authors held a strong preference to publish with traditional publishers.

Asked to rate themselves on a five-point scale from not interested to very interested in publishing their future manuscripts with traditional publishers, a full 69.1% of respondents described themselves as "very interested," the highest ranking. Among authors who had only traditionally published, a full 85% were "very interested" in publishing future manuscripts with traditional publishers, while only 1.2% were "not interested." Additionally, the option to publish with a traditional publisher was strongly attractive to authors who had experience with self-publishing. Among authors who had only ever self-published, 54.9% were "very interested" while 8.1% were "not interested" in publishing with a traditional publisher. Hybrid authors, those with experience in both self-publishing and traditional publishing, showed a similar pattern with 56.6% "very interested" in traditional publishing and only 7.3% "not interested," despite that group's having expressing dissatisfaction with several aspects of traditional publishing.

Despite the promise of self-publishing and the seemingly widespread complaints about traditional publishing, the 2013 results suggest that the

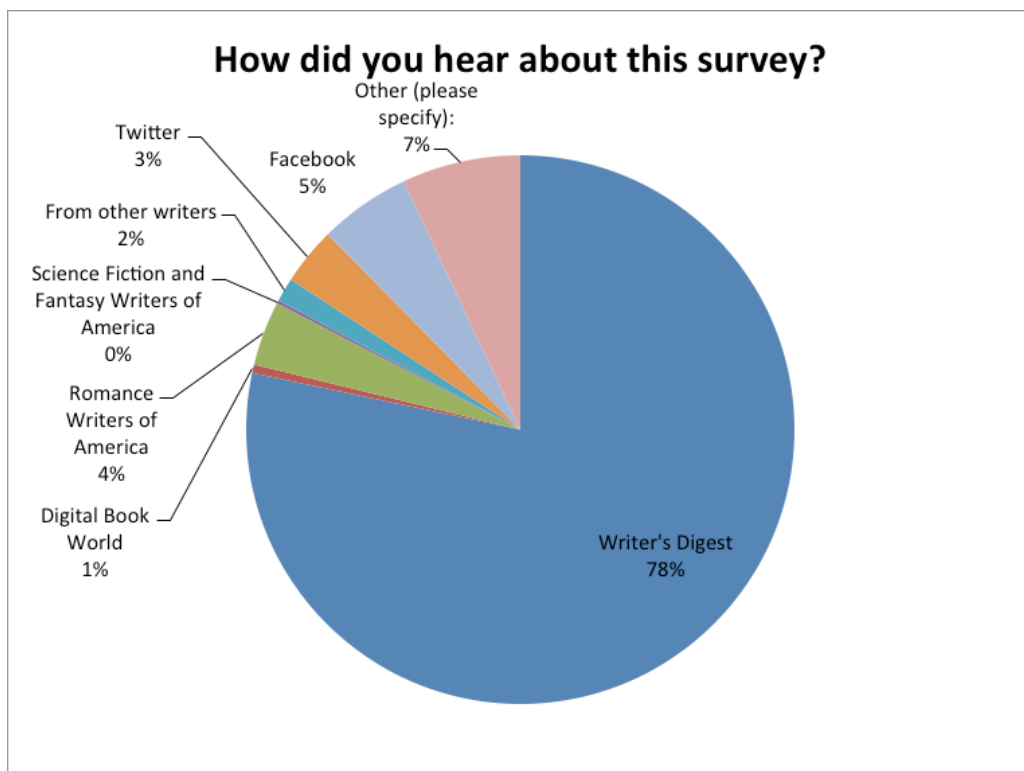
allure of traditional publishing remains quite strong. This report seeks to understand why. What advantages do traditional publishers offer authors?

The 2014 Digital Book World and Writer's Digest Author's Survey was designed specifically to compare the perceptions, experiences, and economic returns to authors associated with traditional publishing and self-publishing respectively. In this report, we take a close look at the case to be made to the author community in favor of traditional publishing as well as the areas where traditional publishers might enhance what they offer their current and prospective authors.

Survey Design and Methods

The 2014 Digital Book World and Writer's Digest Author Survey was posted online in November 2014 and open to anyone. Invitations to respond to the survey were sent via e-mail to lists of authors by Writer's Digest, Romance Writers of America (RWA), and Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. Announcements about the survey were also sent out over Twitter and Facebook. More than three quarters of the sample (78.4%) reported that they heard about the survey from Writer's Digest, 5.4% from Facebook, 3.8% from RWA, and 3.4% from Twitter. The remaining writers heard about the survey from other sources including other writers. In total, 9,210 authors responded to the 2014 Author Survey.

The survey utilized a voluntary sampling method. Although the number of respondents is quite large, we do not know how representative the sample is of writers generally, and it is possible that we have received responses from a certain segment of the author population. For example, the sample may over-represent authors with a serious focus on the craft and business of writing, given that so many came from the Writer's Digest contact. Or it may over-represent authors who regularly check their email. To the extent that there is some unobserved reason that authors responded to or did not respond to the survey, this underlying factor may shape the results in this report. For this reason, we provide as much information as possible about



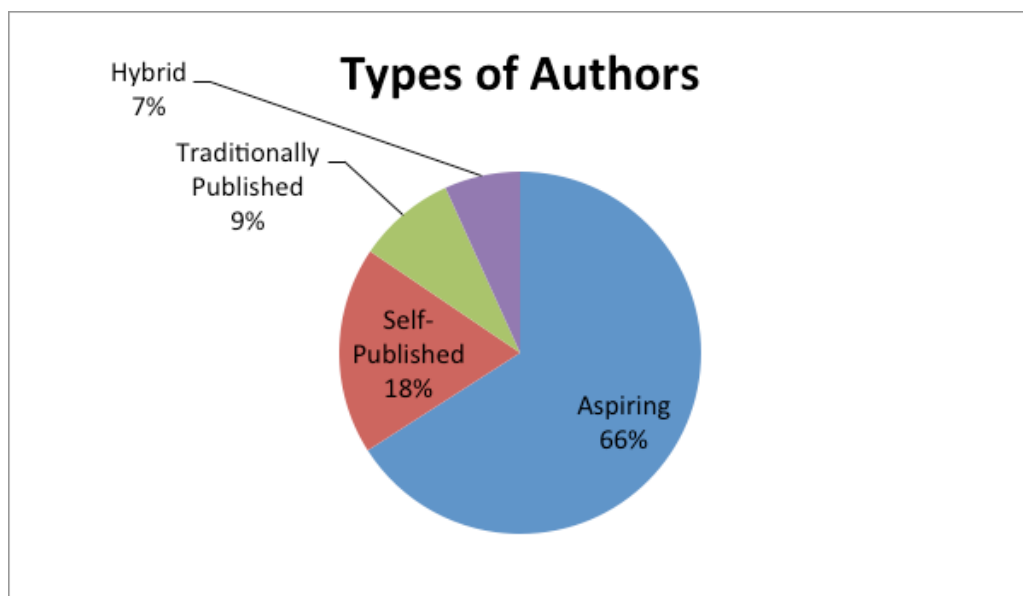
the characteristics of the writers in the sample, and we caution the reader against drawing broad conclusions about trends in the industry or among writers in general. By the same token, the large sample together with the array of detailed questions from the survey does enable us to examine the patterns of relationships and draw conclusions about the relationships between particular sets of expectations, behaviors, and outcomes.

Most of the writers responding to the survey (81%) did not list themselves as belonging to any writer's organizations. The most frequently listed membership among writers in the sample (7.3%) was RWA.

The Author Survey was redesigned this year to focus on comparing author attitudes and experiences related to self-publishing and traditional publishing. An extensive set of questions asks authors about the genres they write in and their perceptions of traditional publishing compared to self-publishing. Separate sections of the survey ask authors about their experiences

related to traditionally publishing and self-publishing with the questions anchored to their latest experience, if applicable, with each type of publishing.

The survey identified four types of authors: aspiring (not yet published), self-published only, traditionally published only, and hybrid (both self-published and traditionally published). We identified 8,831 of the respondents to the survey as belonging to one of the four types. The other 343 authors could not be identified due to missing information, and we therefore exclude them from the analyses in this report that compare the responses of the different types of authors.



The majority of respondents to the survey were aspiring authors who had not yet published a manuscript ($n=5,972$). Among these aspiring writers, a little more than a third (36.4%) reported that they had finished a manuscript, while 51.1% had started but not yet finished and with 12.5% reported they had not yet started writing one. We did not ask the 726 writers who had not yet started writing about their perceptions or experiences, and they are not included in the remaining analyses in this report.

While the numbers of self-published (n=1,636), traditionally published (n=774), and hybrid (n=598) authors are relatively small by comparison, the number of respondents from each group is nonetheless large enough to be considered a large sample and more than sufficient for analysis.

In comparing the perceptions and attitudes toward publishing, the report compares all four types of authors. When we move to an analysis of the experiences with particular types of publishing, those analyses are limited to authors who have published in each mode, and we provide side-by-side comparisons of the same sets of questions that were asked of respondents about their latest traditionally published book or their latest self-published book. Hybrid authors reported on both their most recent self-published book and their most recent traditionally published book. The results of the 2013 Author Survey showed that the hybrid authors appeared to follow different patterns in terms of career focus, behaviors, and income, we handle their responses separately in these comparative analyses, differentiating in category between hybrid (traditional) and hybrid (indie) in the tables and charts.

THE PROFILE OF AUTHORS IN THE SURVEY

To the extent that submitting one’s work to agents or publishers is a mark of professional interest in writing, the aspiring authors in the sample could be characterized as serious about their writing careers. Among those who had completed manuscripts, just under two thirds (62.6%) had submitted their work, and close to a quarter (22.5%) of the writers who had not yet completed a manuscript also had submitted their work for consideration.

The published authors in the sample were actively engaged in writing and publishing. The vast majority said that they were working on another book that they would like to get published (96.1%).

Genres and Audiences

The majority of respondents, 88.4%, reported that they wrote fiction. Fewer respondents (39.5%) reported that they wrote non-fiction, and a third of the authors who reported writing fiction also reported writing non-fiction. Of note, the published authors in the sample were far more likely to write non-fiction than were the aspiring authors, and they were also more likely to write in more than one genre.

	Aspiring	Self-published	Traditionally published	Hybrid	Total
Write Fiction	77.6%	87.0%	86.0%	90.3%	80.4%
Write Non-Fiction	28.4%	46.3%	50.8%	55.7%	35.8%

The authors represented a variety of different fiction genres. Aspiring authors were most likely to report writing Fantasy, Young Adult, and General Fiction. The self-published authors were more heavily represented in the Fantasy, Young Adult, and Romance genres. The traditionally published authors were more likely to report Romance, Young Adult, and Mystery/Detective, while the hybrid authors most frequently reported Romance, Fantasy, and Historical Fiction. For non-fiction, Biography and Autobiography were popular among all four types of authors. Self-Help was also one of

the top three choices for aspiring and self-published authors, while History was a frequent category for the traditionally published and hybrid non-fiction authors. Other popular categories were Family and Relationships for aspiring authors, Poetry for self-published authors, and Religion for traditionally published authors.

Fiction Genres by Author Type

FICTION GENRES	Aspiring	Self-published	Traditionally published	Hybrid	Total
Erotica	8.0%	8.0%	7.9%	12.9%	7.4%
Espionage/Thriller	11.3%	13.1%	9.4%	14.7%	10.6%
Fantasy	35.5%	28.5%	23.0%	28.9%	28.9%
General	25.9%	24.2%	15.1%	22.1%	21.8%
Graphic Novels (e.g., Manga)	2.4%	1.8%	1.2%	2.2%	1.9%
Historical	16.7%	18.0%	22.5%	27.6%	16.6%
Horror/Occult	14.1%	11.1%	7.6%	10.7%	11.3%
Literary	19.1%	16.4%	19.0%	19.7%	16.9%
Mystery/Detective	21.4%	22.1%	23.8%	25.6%	19.8%
Picture Books	9.4%	10.3%	10.1%	7.7%	8.6%
Religious	8.7%	9.4%	7.8%	9.2%	8.0%
Romance	22.5%	24.3%	29.2%	36.0%	22.2%
Science Fiction	24.9%	23.0%	15.1%	21.7%	20.7%
Women's Fiction	17.7%	18.2%	19.8%	25.3%	16.8%
Young Adult	31.4%	25.9%	26.4%	24.1%	26.1%
None of these	1.7%	2.0%	1.8%	.7%	1.6%

Non-Fiction Genres by Author Type

NON-FICTION GENRES	Aspiring	Self-published	Traditionally published	Hybrid	Total
Art & Architecture	1.1%	1.2%	1.7%	3.3%	1.2%
Biography & Autobiography	10.3%	12.1%	11.0%	13.2%	9.9%
Body Mind & Spirit	6.0%	6.4%	5.8%	7.5%	5.7%
Business & Economics	2.3%	4.6%	3.7%	6.5%	3.0%

WHAT ADVANTAGES DO TRADITIONAL PUBLISHERS OFFER AUTHORS?

Computers	0.8%	.9%	3.0%	1.8%	1.0%
Cooking	2.7%	3.5%	2.7%	4.2%	2.7%
Crafts & Hobbies	2.4%	2.9%	2.7%	2.2%	2.3%
Education	3.9%	6.3%	6.8%	9.0%	4.7%
Family & Relationships	7.0%	6.4%	7.1%	8.5%	6.4%
Graphic Novels	0.5%	.4%	.5%	.8%	.4%
Health & Fitness/Diet	2.7%	3.5%	2.7%	4.3%	2.8%
History	4.7%	6.4%	12.5%	10.7%	5.7%
House & Home	1.2%	1.1%	1.2%	1.7%	1.1%
Humor	5.0%	5.4%	3.9%	4.2%	4.5%
Law	0.7%	.6%	2.2%	1.7%	.8%
Literary Criticism	1.5%	1.3%	3.7%	2.5%	1.6%
Nature/Animals	2.9%	3.2%	3.7%	4.0%	2.9%
Performing Arts	1.5%	1.0%	2.6%	3.0%	1.5%
Philosophy	2.2%	1.5%	1.8%	2.8%	1.9%
Picture Books	2.4%	3.9%	4.9%	5.0%	2.9%
Poetry	7.0%	9.5%	5.6%	9.9%	6.9%
Political Science	1.2%	1.3%	1.9%	2.0%	1.3%
Psychology	2.1%	2.5%	2.5%	2.0%	2.0%
Religion	6.2%	7.7%	8.8%	10.2%	6.4%
Science & Medicine	1.6%	1.5%	3.2%	3.5%	1.8%
Self-Help	7.2%	11.9%	7.9%	14.7%	8.0%
Social Science	1.6%	1.1%	3.5%	2.3%	1.6%
Sports & Recreation	1.4%	1.7%	1.7%	3.0%	1.4%
Technology	1.1%	1.6%	2.3%	2.5%	1.3%
Travel	3.5%	3.7%	4.3%	5.5%	3.4%
True Crime	1.1%	.8%	1.6%	2.0%	1.0%
None of these	1.9%	2.5%	3.0%	3.0%	2.0%

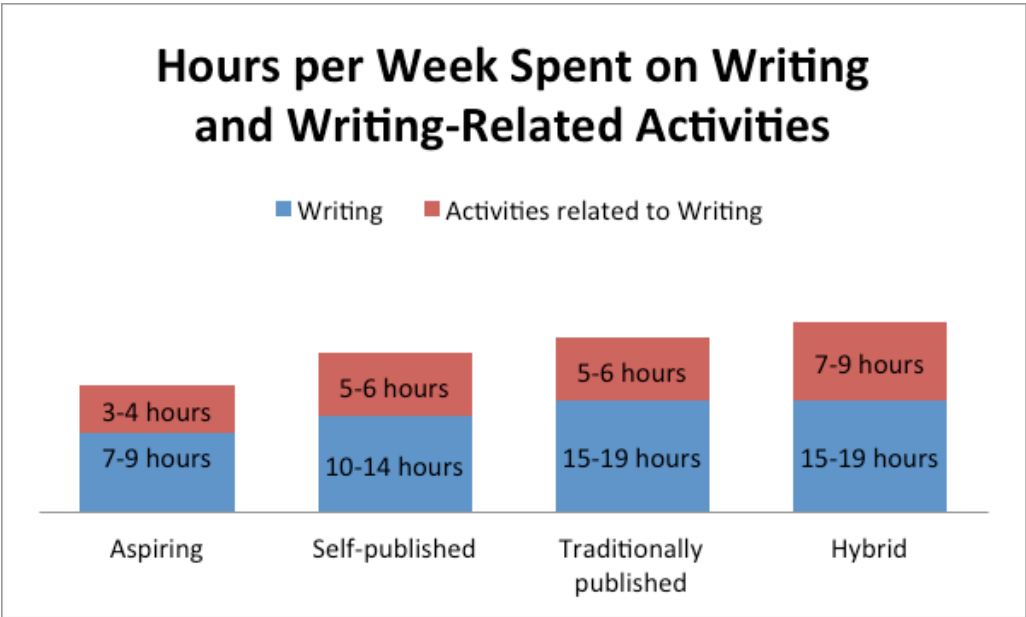
Across types, the authors in the sample wrote primarily for an adult audience. However, 36.2% reported writing for a Young Adult audience. The new adult audience (ages 18-25) was also a popular audience across types of authors, but it was more popular among self-published authors than among the other types.

Audiences by Author Type

	Aspiring	Self-published	Traditionally published	Hybrid	Total
Children	15.0%	21.1%	18.6%	16.4%	16.4%
Middle Grade	14.0%	17.0%	18.7%	17.7%	15.1%
Young Adult	36.7%	39.9%	34.9%	31.8%	36.2%
New Adult	30.3%	36.1%	25.5%	26.4%	30.2%
Adult	70.4%	90.6%	88.5%	94.3%	76.6%
Academic	6.4%	9.1%	13.8%	15.6%	8.3%
None of these	.4%	1.0%	.3%	.8%	.6%

Time Spent on Writing and Writing-Related Activities

Authors were asked how many hours per week they devoted to their writing and to other writing-related activities. The most frequently selected response for hours spent per week on writing was 10-14 hours for aspiring authors (16.7%), self-published authors (18.1%), and traditionally published authors (17.6%), while hybrid authors most frequently selected 20-24 hours (19.6%). For most of the authors in the sample, then, writing is a part-time activity. However, there were authors who reported spending 40 hours or



more per week on their writing: 3.1% of aspiring, 5.8% of self-published, 6.7% of traditionally published, and 8.5% of hybrid authors. The median time spent on writing was lowest for aspiring authors, 7-9 hours per week, and highest for traditionally published and hybrid authors, 15-19 hours per week.

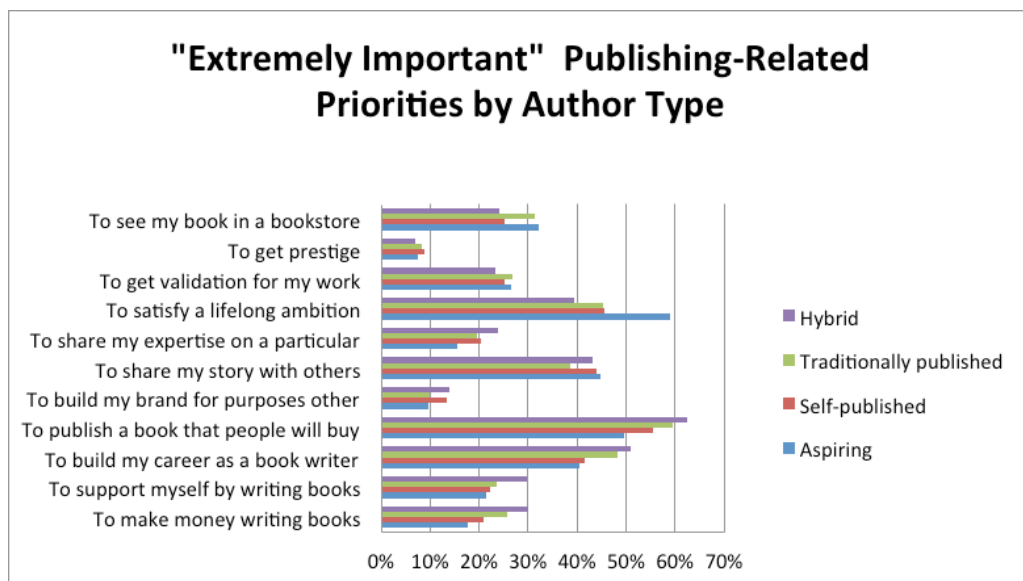
In terms of time spent on other activities related to writing, described as “social networking, marketing your titles, engaging with fans and other writers, etc.,” the most frequent answer choice was 1-2 hours for aspiring authors (25.0%) and for self-published authors (18.2%), while traditionally published authors (18.9%) most frequently reported spending 3-4 hours per week. Hybrid authors were more likely to expend more time on these other writing activities, with the 10-14 hours per week representing the most popular response choice (20.1%). The median time spent on writing-related activities was lowest for aspiring authors at 3-4 hours, the same for self-published and traditionally published authors at 5-6 hours, and the highest for hybrid authors at 7-9 hours per week.

Publishing-Related Priorities

Authors rated various publishing-related priorities on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 to 5: “Not at all important to me” (1), “somewhat important to me,” “moderately important to me,” “very important to me,” and “extremely important to me” (5). Comparing the averages for each of the four types of authors, the highest priority among the authors in the sample was “to publish a book that people will buy” (grouped mean=4.41) followed by “to build my career as a book writer” (group mean=4.12) and “to satisfy a life-long ambition” (grouped mean=4.02).

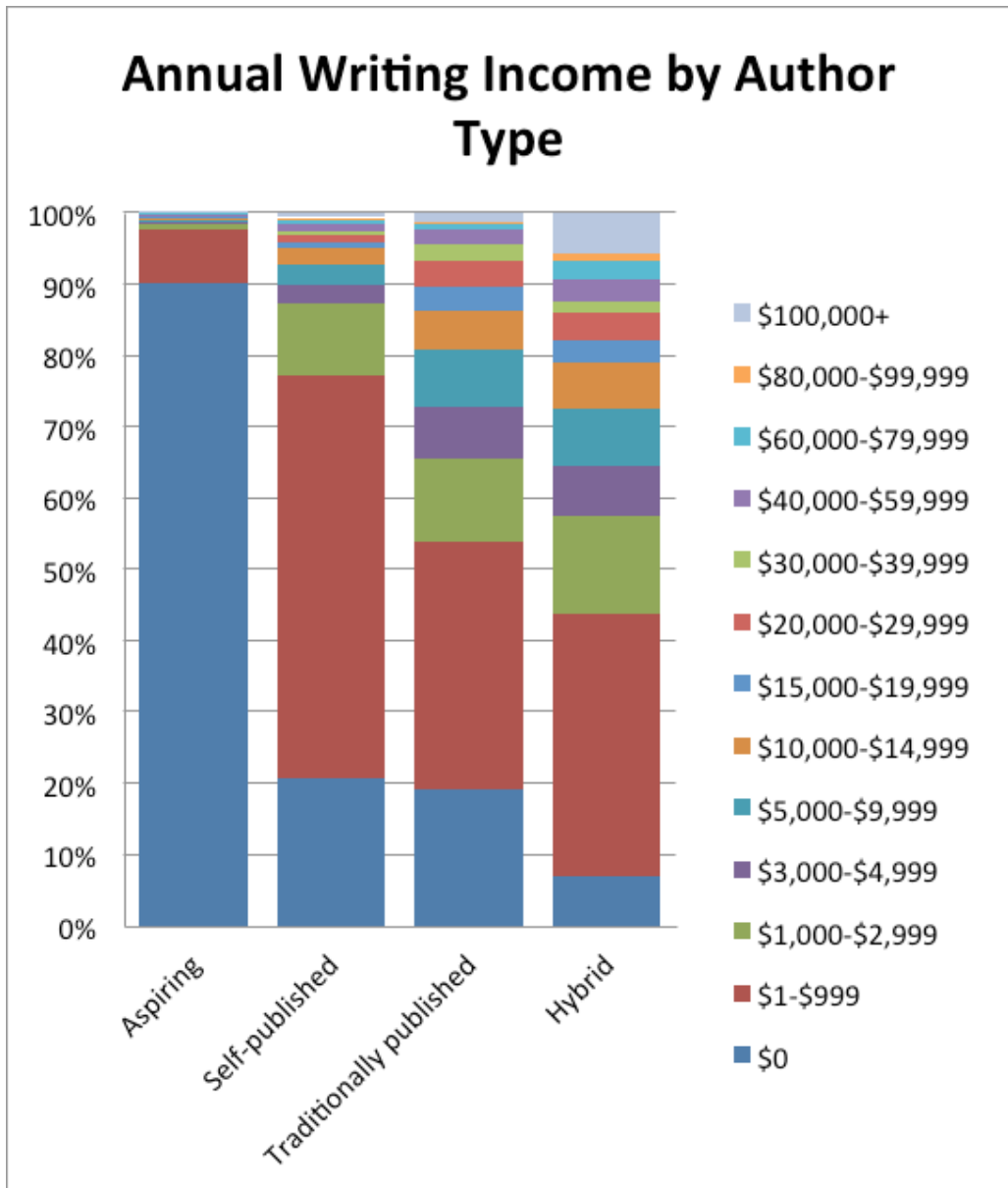
Examining the priority list for what was most frequently rated “extremely important” for each of the types of authors shows that the authors in the sample tended to place the strongest emphasis on publishing a book that people would buy, with more than half of all of the published authors ranking this as an extremely important priority. While selling books ranked highly among the authors, economic concerns received less emphasis: Making

money writing books and supporting oneself by writing books tended to be rated less frequently as “extremely important,” but more than 20% of published authors did feel each of these priorities were “extremely important.”



Annual Writing Income

Nonetheless, the authors responding to the survey did have financial concerns. On an ordinal scale ranging from \$0 to \$200k or more, the median annual writing income for authors responding to the survey was \$0 for aspiring authors, \$1-999 for self-published authors and traditionally published authors, and it was \$1,000-2,999 for hybrid authors. (In the chart, the categories from \$100k to \$200k or more have been collapsed due to the relatively small number of cases in each category.) The means (not shown) for the three groups of published authors are higher than their medians, and they are highest for hybrid authors followed by traditionally published authors. This pattern suggests that the distribution of annual writing income is skewed with a long tail of higher earnings as well as a higher proportional representation of hybrid authors at the upper end of the distribution compared to other groups.



The 2014 survey findings are consistent with last year's survey, which showed higher earnings for hybrid authors than for others. However, the overall annual income seems to be lower for all groups in the 2014 survey, and the differences in income between traditionally published and self-published authors is not as clearly demarcated.

Despite differences in income among the four different types of authors, none of the groups was satisfied on average with their writing income. On a 5-point scale ranging from “very satisfied” to “very dissatisfied,” the median score for all four groups was 4, “dissatisfied.” “Very dissatisfied” was not the most frequently selected answer for the three groups of published authors, while it was for aspiring authors, but substantial proportions of each type of author reported being “very dissatisfied”: 41.6% of aspiring, 31.3% of self-published authors, 26.1% of traditionally published, and 24.9% of hybrid authors were very dissatisfied with their annual writing income.

Summary

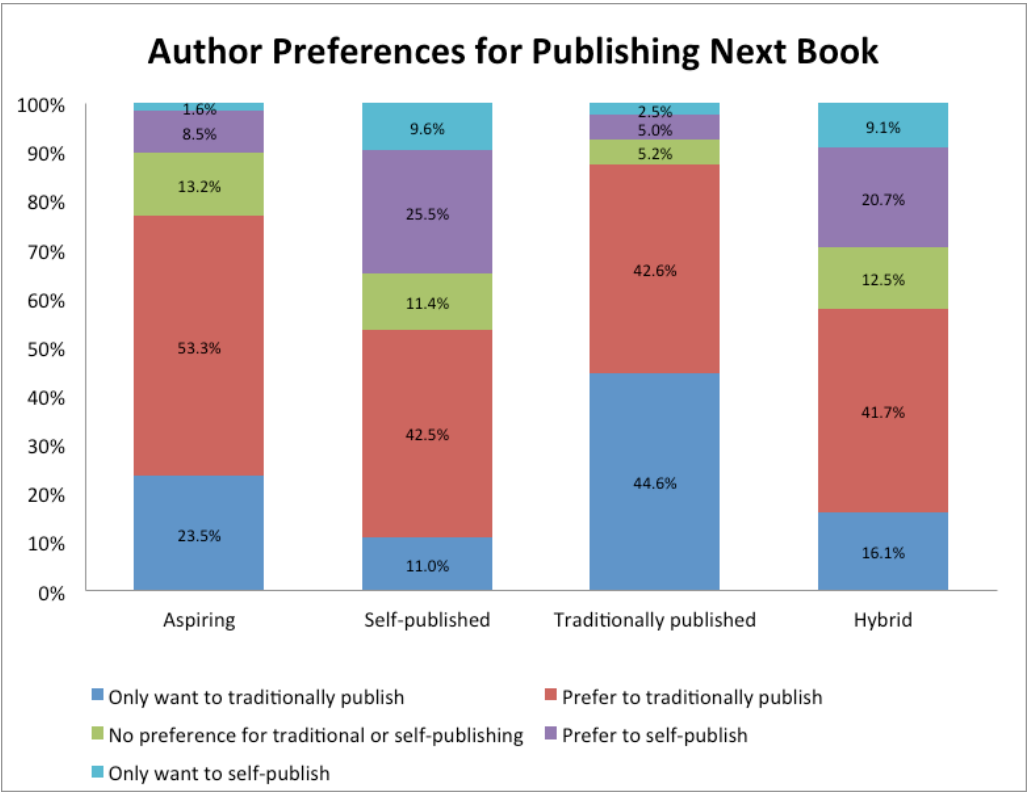
On balance, the profile of the typical author in the sample was of a commercial fiction writer who might also write non-fiction and who had a project in the works that might soon be ready to publish. Most of the authors in the sample did not treat their writing as a full-time job, but some did, especially among hybrid authors, who reported spending significant time both on writing and on activities aimed at engaging readers. In addition, a substantial minority of the published authors responding to this survey viewed supporting themselves by writing books as an extremely important priority. For the typical author, publishing a book that people would buy was a key goal, suggesting a strong interest in selling books as well as a related interest in distribution and marketing. Finally, most authors in this sample made relatively little money if any from writing books, and on the whole they were not satisfied with their writing income.

Are traditional publishers better at selling books? How much do writers who publish with traditional publishers benefit from this association over their self-published peers? We examine authors’ perceptions of the benefits of each type of publishing, their levels of satisfaction with various aspects of both types of publishing, and then we compare their sales and income.

AUTHORS’ PERCEPTIONS: COMPARING SELF-PUBLISHING AND TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

Publishing Preferences

The survey asked authors their preferences for publishing their next book. Among traditionally published authors, only 7.5% expressed a preference to self-publish rather than to traditionally publish, compared to 10.1% of aspiring, 35.1% of self-published, and 29.8% of hybrid authors. While the allure of traditional publishing appears strong for all four types of authors, only 11.0% of self-published and 16.1% of hybrid authors reported only wanting to traditionally publish their next book, compared to 44.6% of the traditionally published authors.



The difference between the authors who have ever self-published and those who have only traditionally published could be a product of the experience of self-publishing: Perhaps traditionally published authors are nervous about trying something new, or perhaps self-published authors and hybrids have had positive experiences with self-publishing and are willing to do it again. Another possibility is that the hybrid authors have differed in some significant way from their counterparts who have only traditionally published; perhaps, for example, hybrid authors have had less positive experiences with traditional publishing than the authors, which led them to seek alternative venues.

Comparisons of Traditional Publishing and Self-Publishing

How authors compared self-publishing and traditional publishing on a number of different dimensions might give us some insight into these stated preferences. We asked authors whether particular outcomes were more likely with self-publishing or traditional publishing. The questions covered the topic areas of distribution and marketing, production, costs, and sales and earnings.

There were a few questions where the different types of authors differed from each other in their opinions, but the results on the whole were fairly consistent among the groups. In the next four sets of charts, the statements that authors deemed “much more likely” or “somewhat more likely” for traditional publishing have white backgrounds. For ease of interpretation, other results indicating either “about the same in self-publishing and traditional publishing” or either much more or somewhat more likely in self-publishing are lowlighted with gray backgrounds.

Distribution and Marketing. The authors surveyed perceived traditional publishers as having superior distribution, except in regard to ebook distribution. They reported that if they published with a traditional publisher, their books were more likely to have larger audiences and wider print distribution. They did not see an advantage in the pricing of ebooks from tra-

ditional publishing, and they were more likely to see pricing as similarly appropriate for sales for self-publishing and traditional publishing. They were likely to agree that their books would have better marketing services with traditional publishing compared to self-publishing.

Production. In terms of producing their books, authors perceived traditional publishing as offering more help from industry professionals and better design services. Authors did agree that they were more likely to have creative control with self-publishing and that their books would reach the market faster. They perceived the available formats of the books to be the same for both self-publishing and traditional publishing. While aspiring and traditionally published authors perceived that their books were more likely to be of higher quality if published with traditional publishers, the hybrid and self-published authors were more likely to report that the book's quality would be the same with either type of publishing.

Costs. Hybrid authors perceived that the amount of time and money they would spend marketing and promoting their books was about the same for traditional publishing and self-publishing, while other authors associated these time and money costs more strongly with self-publishing. All four types of authors perceived that with self-publishing they were more likely to spend more of their own time and money on editing and preparing their books for publication.

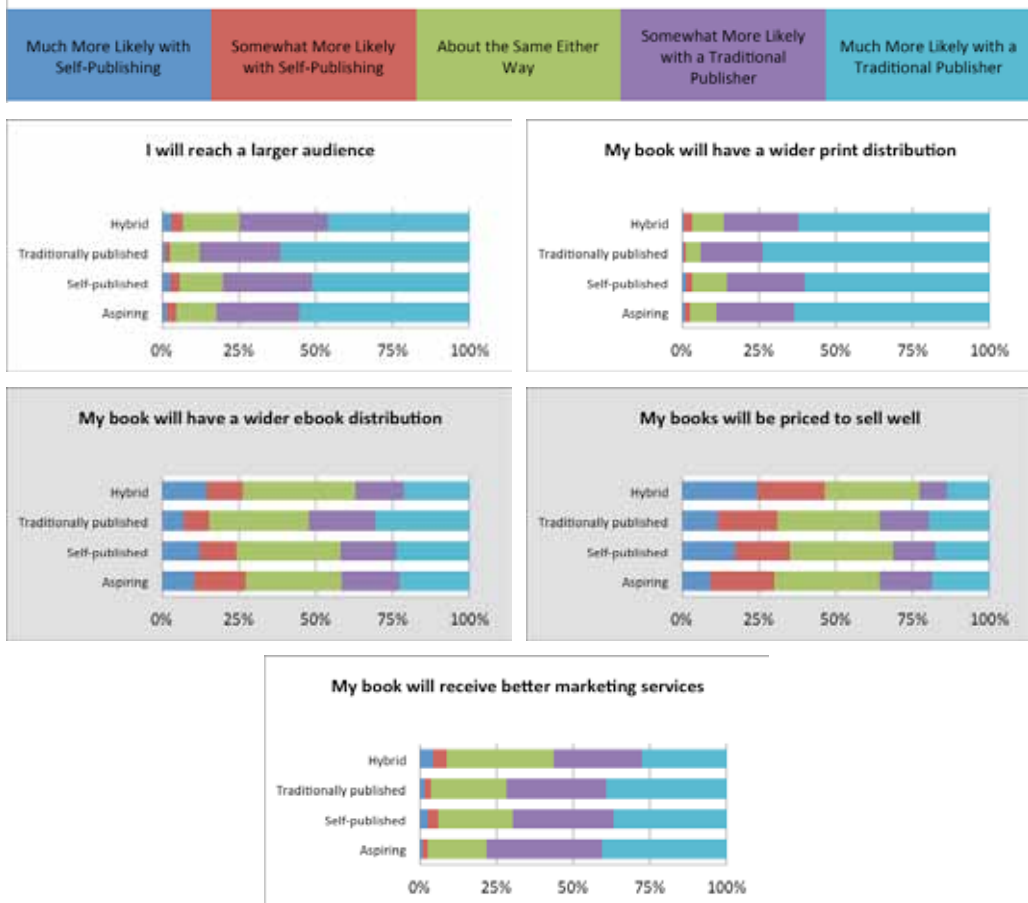
Sales and Earnings. Authors thought that they would earn a higher royalty rate per book with self-publishing. The authors in the sample were not likely to see a clear advantage to ebook sales for traditional publishing over self-publishing, but they perceived that they were much more likely to sell more print books if they traditionally published.

Interestingly, despite the perceptions of better marketing and distribution with traditional publishing, authors were most likely to place the odds of their books being a best-seller as similar whether a book was traditionally published or self-published, although a substantial proportion of au-

thors placed the odds of having a best-selling book as either much greater or somewhat greater with traditional publishers.

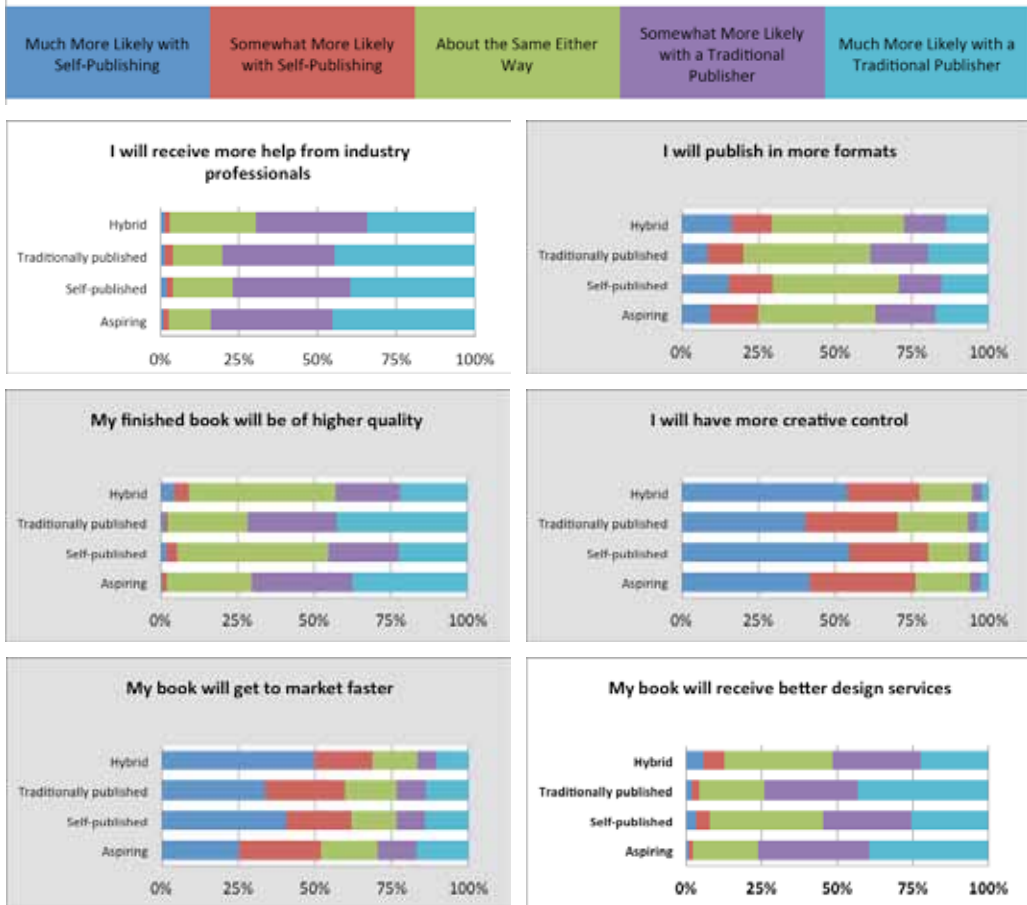
Distribution and Marketing

More Likely with Self-Publishing or Traditional Publishing?



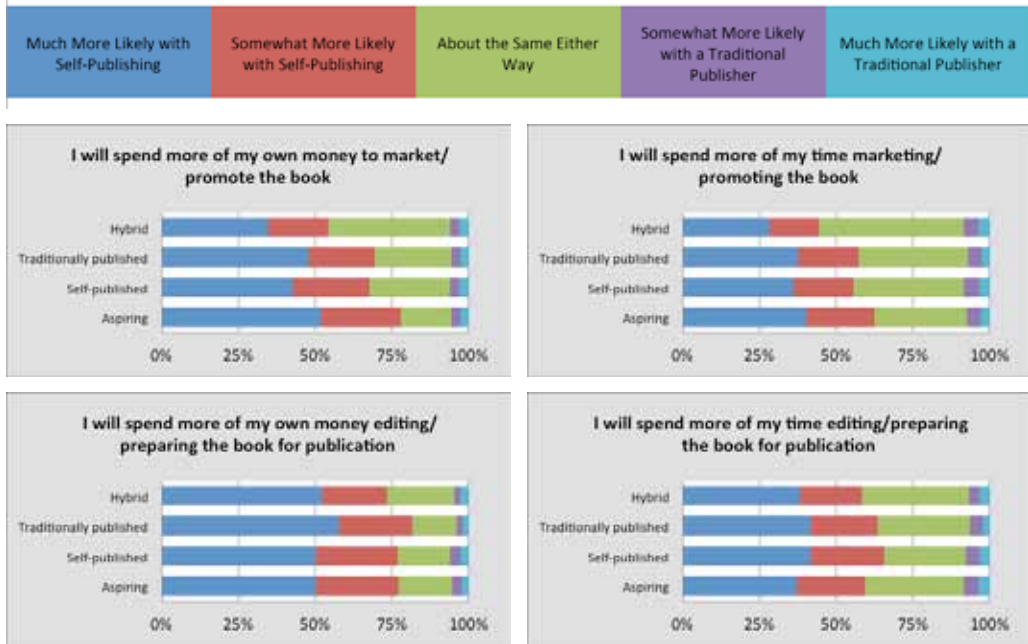
Production

More Likely with Self-Publishing or Traditional Publishing?



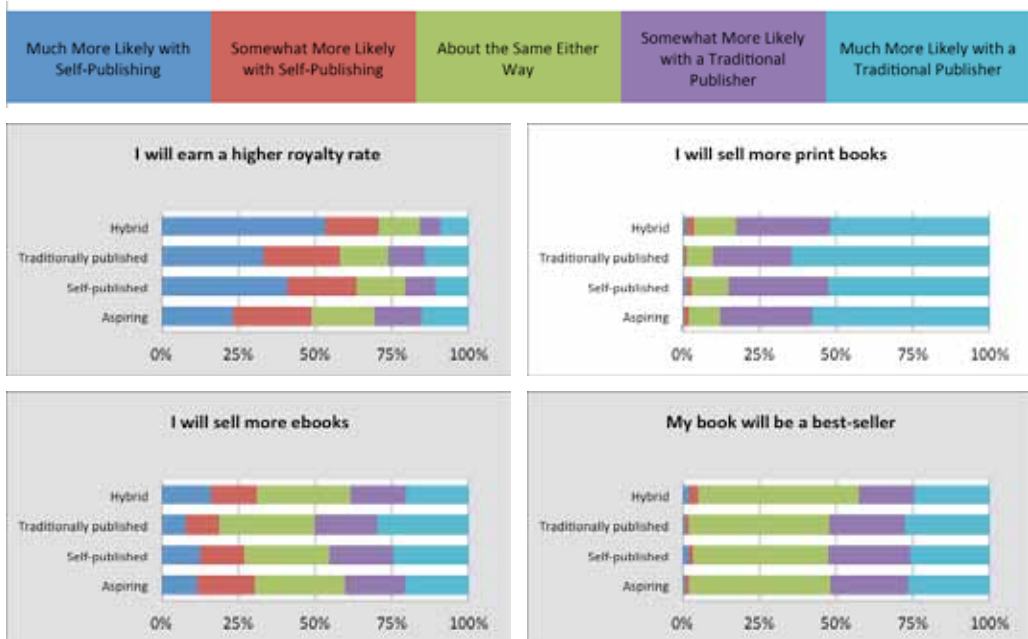
Costs

More Likely with Self-Publishing or Traditional Publishing?



Sales and Earnings

More Likely with Self-Publishing or Traditional Publishing?



Advantages and Disadvantages of Traditional Publishing

The survey also asked authors how much they agreed with various statements related to the potential advantages and disadvantages of traditional publishing. The responses were rated on a 5-point scale of “strongly disagree” (1), “disagree” (2), “neither agree nor disagree” (3), “agree” (4), and “strongly agree.” Examining the median response for each statement shows with which of these statements 50% or more of each type of author either agreed or strongly agreed (highlighted in yellow).

Authors’ Agreement with Statements about Traditional Publishers

	Aspiring	Self-published	Traditionally published	Hybrid
POTENTIAL ADVANTAGES	Median	Median	Median	Median
Publishing a book involves managing a lot of complexity that is best administered by a traditional publisher	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00
Traditional publishers add value by directing a book’s development to be more like what the market wants	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
By paying advances, traditional publishers transfer some risk from authors to themselves	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Working with an established publisher assures professional editing/presentation	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Books published by traditional publishers have more prestige than self-published books	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

WHAT ADVANTAGES DO TRADITIONAL PUBLISHERS OFFER AUTHORS?

Books published by traditional publishers are higher quality than self-published books	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00
Traditional publishers build authors' careers	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00
Traditional publishers understand the book market	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
POTENTIAL DISADVANTAGES				
Traditional publishers move too slowly	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Traditional publishers keep too much money	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Traditional publishers price ebooks too high	3.00	3.00	3.00	4.00

All four types of authors tended to agree that there were several advantages to traditional publishing, including development of books in response to the market, a better understanding of the market, advances that transfer risks from authors to publishers, greater prestige, and professional editing and presentation. Aspiring and traditionally published authors also agreed there were advantages related to managing the complexity of publishing a book and producing books of higher quality, while self-published and hybrid authors tended to disagree or be neutral. Aspiring, self-published, and traditionally published authors also agreed that publishers built authors' careers, while hybrid authors were less likely to agree that this was the case. In terms of disadvantages of traditional publishing, aspiring authors tended to see fewer than the other types of authors, who all agreed that traditional publishers moved too slowly and kept too much money. Only hybrid authors tended to agree that traditional publishers price ebooks too high.

Summary

The aspiring and traditionally published authors in the sample had the most favorable views of traditional publishing and were more likely to show a marked preference for traditionally publishing their next book than were self-published and hybrid authors. Nonetheless, the majority of authors across types showed an interest in traditionally publishing their next book. The authors in the sample viewed traditional publishing as offering advantages related to marketing, print distribution, and professional services. They also recognized advantages of traditional publishing over self-publishing related to advances and lower personal costs that shifted risk from the author to the publisher. However, they also viewed traditional publishing offering less creative control, slower speed to market, lower royalty rates, and no guarantee of a higher quality finished product or of having a best-seller compared to self-publishing.

PUBLISHED AUTHORS' EXPERIENCES PUBLISHING THEIR LATEST BOOK

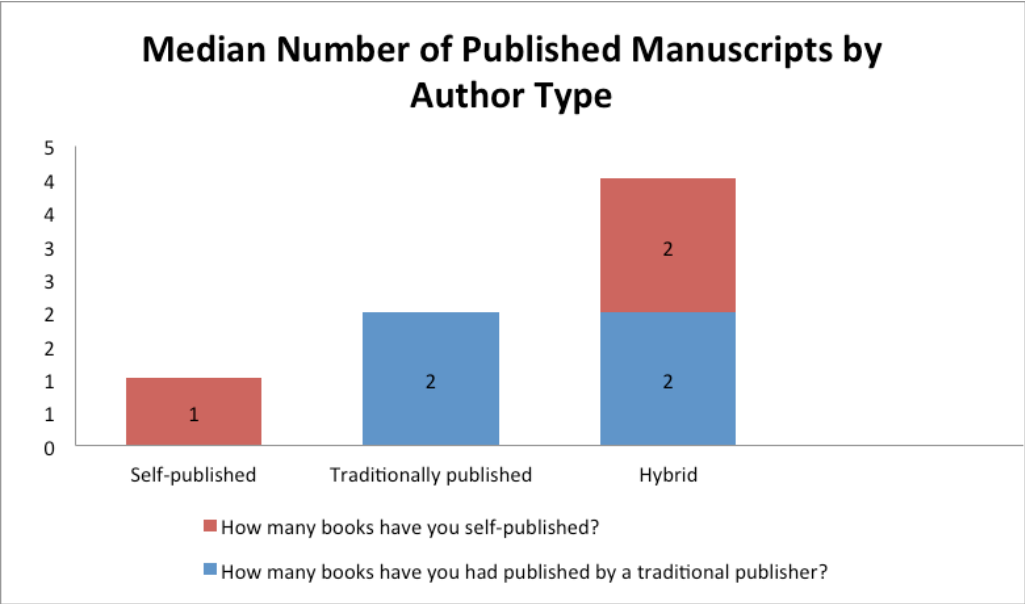
Of the published authors who responded to the survey, there were 774 traditionally published authors and 1,636 self-published authors, as well as 598 hybrid authors. Traditionally published authors were asked about their experience publishing their last traditionally published book, while self-published authors reported on their experiences publishing their last self-published book. Hybrid authors were asked about their most recently published book for each of these types of publishing.

Number of Published Manuscripts

For traditionally published authors, both hybrid and traditional-only, the latest book was typically not their first book, but rather their second or later. For self-published authors, those who had only self-published were likely to

report on their first manuscript, while the latest self-published manuscript for the hybrid authors tended to be their second or later manuscript.

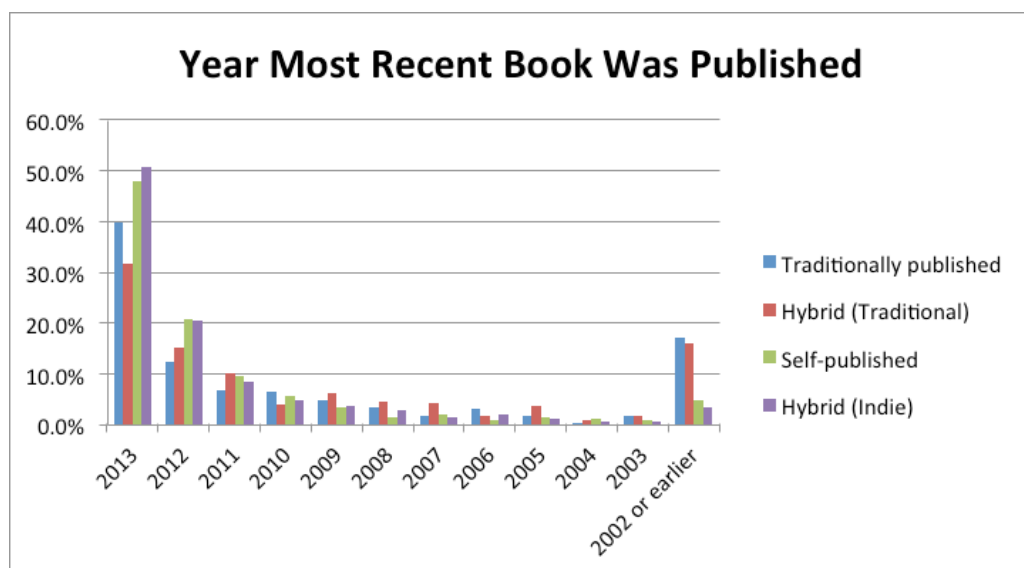
As in the Digital Book World and Writer’s Digest 2013 Author Survey, the findings from the 2014 Author Survey suggest that hybrid authors have the highest average number of published manuscripts and self-published authors the lowest. However, the respondents to this year’s survey reported fewer manuscripts overall on average than the respondents to last year’s survey, likely due to differences in the samples. To the extent that number of books reflects not only productivity but perhaps also the length of a writing career, there may have been more newer authors responding to this year’s survey compared to last year. The survey does not include questions about when authors first began writing or publishing.



Most Recently Published Book

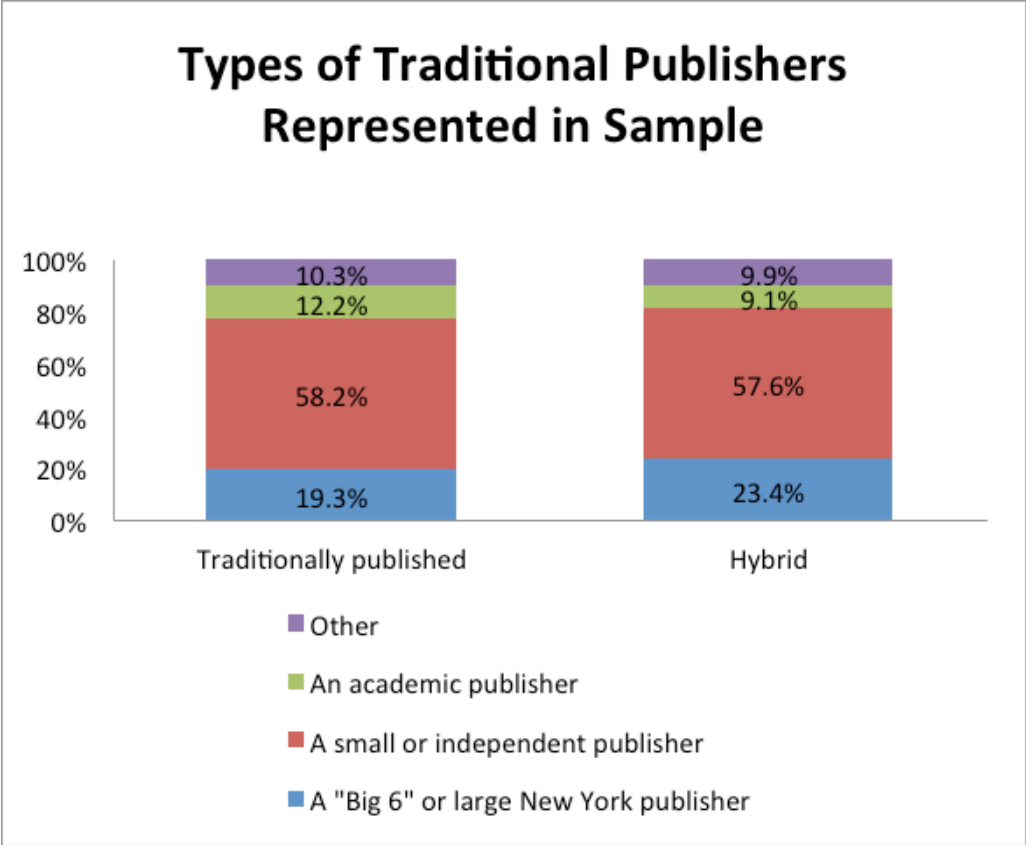
On the survey, the most commonly reported year of latest publication was 2013: 39.8% of latest books by traditional-only authors, 31.8% of latest traditionally published books by hybrid authors, 48% of latest books by self-published only authors, and 50.8% of latest self-published books by hy-

brid authors. The majority of authors responding to the survey published their latest book within the last two years. However, traditional publications were more likely than self-published ones to have been published in earlier years. Close to half of the latest traditionally published books described by respondents were published in 2012 and 2013 with 52.2% for traditionally published authors and 46.9% for hybrid authors. Self-published books had an even greater tendency to be relatively recent; 68.7% of most recent self-published books by indie-only authors and 71.2% by hybrid authors were published in 2012 and 2013.



Types of Traditional Publishers

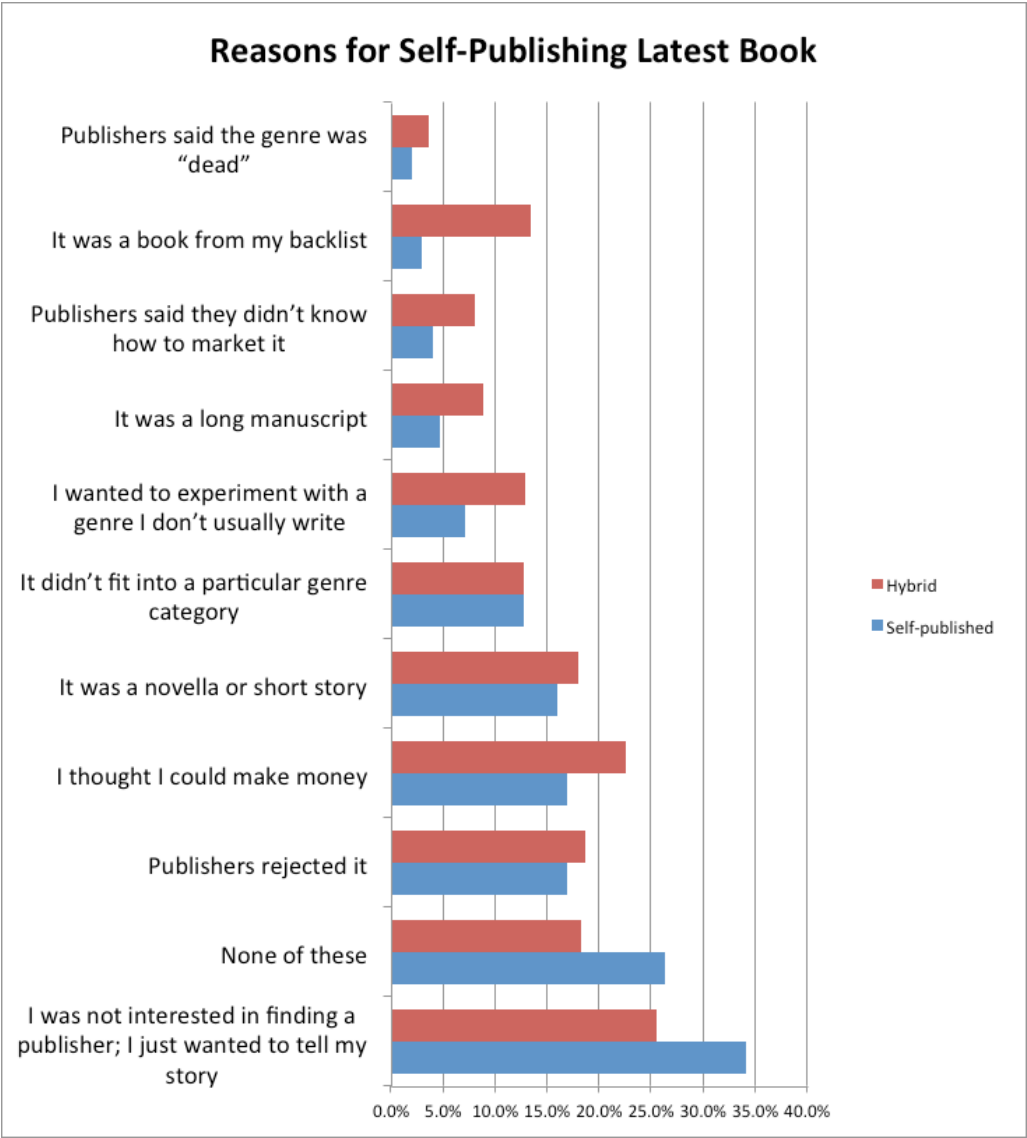
Among the authors who had published with traditional publishers, close to a fifth of traditionally published authors and close to a fourth of hybrid authors reported that their last book was published by a “Big 5” or other large New York publisher. Over half of both types of authors had published with small or independent presses, and the remainder had published with academic publishers or other types of presses.



Reasons for Self-Publishing

Respondents who had self-published reported various reasons for self-publishing rather than traditionally publishing their latest self-published books. Authors most frequently selected “I was not interested in finding a publisher; I just wanted to tell my story” as the reason that weighed most heavily in their decision to self-publish, 34.1% for indie-only authors and 25.6% for hybrid authors. For hybrid authors, the next most popular reason given for self-publishing was that publishers had rejected the book (18.7% hybrid and 17.0% indie-only) while for indie-only authors, the next most popular reason was “none of these,” 26.3% indie-only and 18.0% hybrid. Authors also chose to self-publish when books were novellas or short stories, 16% for indie-only and 18% for hybrid. Among hybrid authors, 13.4% indicated

that publishing a book from their backlist was an important part of the decision to self-publish their most recent self-published book.



Satisfaction with Publishing Experience

The questions on the survey enable a comparison of authors’ experiences in traditional and self-publishing. For each type of publishing, authors were asked the same questions about aspects of their publishing experience re-

lated to their latest publication. A look at the median response provides insight into whether authors tended on the whole to be satisfied, dissatisfied, or neither regarding their experiences. In the chart below, the responses are coded using plus and minus signs to denote whether authors reported being “very satisfied” (++), “satisfied” (+), “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” (-/+), “dissatisfied” (-), or “very dissatisfied” (--). Experiences with which the majority of authors reported being satisfied or very satisfied are highlighted in yellow.

Overall, traditional publishing left authors satisfied with certain parts of their experience and less satisfied with others. In most areas where authors were satisfied with their experiences in traditional publishing, they appeared similar to their peers who had self-published. On the whole, while authors did not tend to be satisfied with a number of aspects of publishing, neither did they tend to be dissatisfied. Their global pattern of responses was thus similar regarding satisfaction with traditional publishing and self-publishing with only a few exceptions.

Satisfaction with Aspects of Latest Publishing Experience Based on Median Response

Aspects of Publishing Experience	Traditional Publishing		Self-Publishing	
	Traditionally published	Hybrid (Traditional)	Self-published	Hybrid (Indie)
Pricing of the book	+	+	+	+
Number of copies sold	-/+	-/+	-	-/+
Royalty rate I received	-/+	-/+	+	+
My total earnings to date on the book	-/+	-	-	-/+
Costs to me, personally	+	-/+	-/+	+
Time required of me, personally, to edit/prepare the book	+	+	+	+

WHAT ADVANTAGES DO TRADITIONAL PUBLISHERS OFFER AUTHORS?

Amount of help/advice I could get from publishing industry professionals	+	-/+	-/+	-/+
Time required of me, personally, to market/promote the book	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+
Overall marketing/promotion of the book	-/+	-/+	-/+	-/+
Amount of creative control I had	+	+	++	++
Cover of the book	+	+	+	+
Quality of the finished product	+	+	+	+
Advance I received	-/+	-/+		
Relationship with my editor(s)	+	+		
Publisher's efforts to market/promote the book	-/+	-/+		
Publisher's commitment to me and my work	+	-/+		
Distribution of the book	+	-/+		

++ Median of 5 "very satisfied;" + Median of 4 "satisfied;" -/+ Median of 3 "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied;" - "Median of 2 "dissatisfied"

There were four areas where traditional publishing appeared to outperform self-publishing in terms of author satisfaction, but only if we ignore the contradictory responses of hybrid authors. Traditional-only authors, but not hybrid authors, were more satisfied with 1) the costs to themselves personally and 2) the amount of help or advice they received from industry professionals. Indie-only authors, but not hybrid authors, were more dissatisfied with 3) the number of copies sold. They were also more dissatisfied than traditional authors with 4) their earnings to date from their self-

published books, while hybrid authors were not. At the same time, hybrid authors were more dissatisfied with their earnings on their latest traditionally published book than were traditional-only authors.

Self-publishing unambiguously outperformed traditional publishing in authors' satisfaction with the royalty rate on ebooks.

Across the board, authors in the sample were satisfied with the pricing of their books, the time required of them personally to edit and prepare the book, the book cover, and the quality of the finished product. The authors also tended to be satisfied with the amount of creative control they had, but self-publishing yielded greater satisfaction related to creative control than did traditional publishing. Whether traditionally published or self-published, authors tended to be neither dissatisfied nor satisfied with the time required of them personally to market and promote the book or the overall marketing and promotion of the book.

Several questions were only asked in relation to traditional publishing. The median responses suggest similarities and differences in the experiences for the authors who have only traditionally published and the hybrid authors. Neither set tended to be satisfied with their advances or the publisher's efforts to promote their books, while both tended to be satisfied with their relationships with their editor or editors. Traditional-only authors tended to be more satisfied with the publisher's efforts to promote their work and the publisher's commitment to them than were hybrid authors.

More nuanced insight into the quality of authors' experiences with different kinds of publishing may be gleaned from examining the proportions of authors who were "very satisfied" with each aspect of the publishing experience described on the questionnaire. From a customer relations perspective, a less than perfect score on a satisfaction question can signal a gap between actual experiences and expectations or desires. Indeed, what the findings from the survey show is that authors in general, whether they self-publish or traditionally publish, find numerous aspects of their experience less than completely satisfactory.

For every question we asked, traditional-only authors were more satisfied with their traditional publishing experience than were hybrid authors. In contrast, hybrid authors were more satisfied than indie-only authors with each aspect of their self-publishing experience. While the small percentage differences between the groups may not be meaningful for certain aspects of the publishing experience, the overall pattern is a powerful one. Overall, hybrid authors seemed to be more satisfied with self-publishing than with traditional publishing. In other words, authors who have tried both traditional publishing and self-publishing report more positive experiences with self-publishing on the same measures.

The greatest gap in high satisfaction between traditional publishing and self-publishing are in pricing of the book, creative control, the cover of the book, and the royalty rate the author receives, with self-publishing outperforming traditional publishing in these areas. The clear advantage of traditional publishing in this comparison is in the (lower) costs to the author and the time required to prepare the book for publication and to a lesser extent in the amount of help and advice from industry professionals. However, none of these advantages of traditional publishing in the best case were very satisfying to even a quarter of traditionally published or hybrid authors.

Looking at the questions that were only asked in relation to traditional publishing, the most satisfying aspect of the experience seems to have been the relationship between author and editor, although this appears less likely to be satisfying for hybrid authors than for authors who have only traditionally published (32.4% vs. 38% very satisfied). A publisher's commitment to the author was also very satisfying to more than a quarter of traditionally published authors (26.2%) but to a smaller fraction of hybrid authors (15.5%).

Percent of Authors Who Were “Very Satisfied” with Their Publishing Experiences

	Traditional Publishing		Self-Publishing	
	Traditionally published	Hybrid	Self-published	Hybrid
Pricing of the book	24.1%	20.5%	32.1%	44.4%
Number of copies sold	8.2%	5.4%	4.6%	9.7%
Royalty rate I received	9.8%	7.9%	23.6%	35.6%
My total earnings to date on the book	4.8%	4.5%	4.5%	10.7%
Costs to me, personally	23.9%	19.0%	15.2%	17.4%
Time required of me, personally, to edit/prepare the book	21.4%	17.6%	11.2%	14.9%
Amount of help/advice I could get from publishing industry professionals	22.8%	14.3%	8.3%	13.1%
Time required of me, personally, to market/promote the book	10.3%	6.0%	6.4%	9.7%
Overall marketing/promotion of the book	10.4%	6.2%	5.0%	7.4%
Amount of creative control I had	23.1%	17.4%	61.8%	63.6%
Cover of the book	37.8%	31.4%	44.7%	49.4%
Quality of the finished product	41.1%	37.4%	38.5%	44.4%
Advance I received	8.3%	6.2%		
Relationship with my editor(s)	38.0%	32.4%		
Publisher’s efforts to market/promote the book	13.9%	7.2%		
Publisher’s commitment to me and my work	26.2%	15.5%		
Distribution of the book	16.0%	9.7%		

Interestingly, about half of authors who self-published (49.6% indie-only and 50.3% hybrid) hired someone or contracted with a company to assist with self-publishing the book (editing, design, distribution, etc.). Authors who purchased services to aid their self-publishing efforts were satisfied overall with these services, and 45.3% were very satisfied. This finding may relate to creative control, as the authors who hired or contracted services also chose those services and likely had final decision power on the finished product; we would thus expect them to be more satisfied with something they had selected or approved themselves.

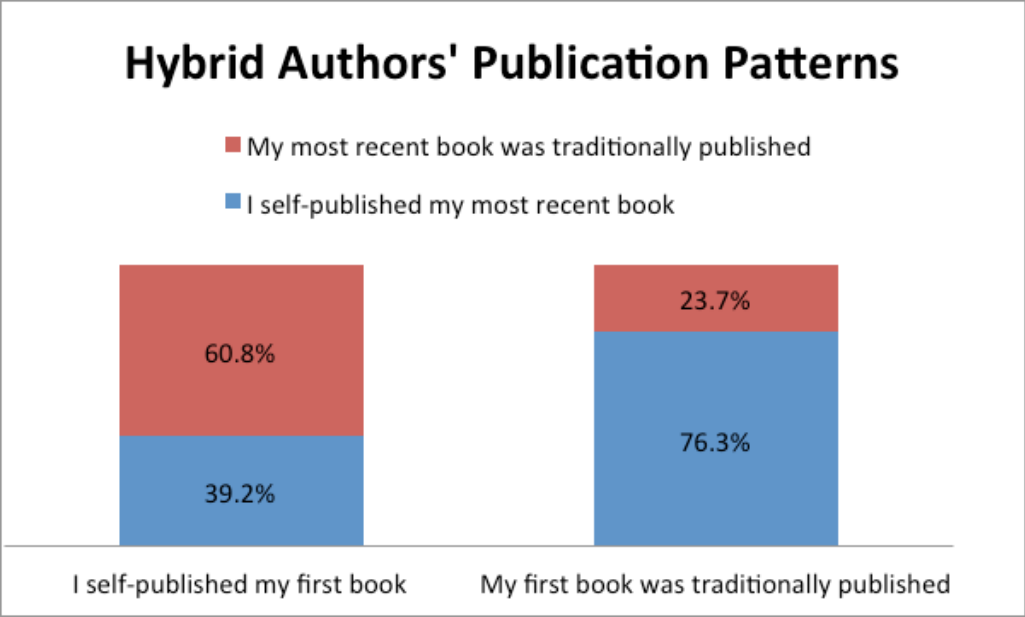
On the whole, hybrid authors have been less satisfied with traditional publishing than other authors, both in the 2014 survey and the 2013 survey.

Movement from One Mode of Publishing to Another

This year we asked authors whether they had started first in self-publishing or in traditional publishing. Almost three quarters of hybrid authors (71.4%) traditionally published their first book, but only about a third traditionally published their most recent book (34.3%). Among authors who moved from traditional publishing into self-publishing, only 23.7% reported that their most recent book was traditionally published.

If we consider the first publishing venture of the hybrid authors in the sample, we can calculate a rate of conversion from each type of publishing to hybrid publishing. Among hybrid authors, 171 started out in self-publishing and later moved into traditional publishing. Putting them together with the pool of indie-only authors in the sample, then 9.6% of self-published authors in the survey have gone on to traditionally publish. In contrast, using the same technique for the 427 traditionally published authors who ventured into self-publishing, we find that more than a third, 35.6%, of authors who started in traditionally publishing have moved into self-publishing

More than half of hybrid authors (53.5%) have books that were both traditionally published and self-published, whether this was self-publishing a backlist or converting a self-published title to a traditionally published one.



Given that the majority of hybrid authors were first traditionally published, we expect that most of these dually-published books were backlist titles.

Summary

The authors in the sample viewed traditional publishing as offering advantages related to marketing, print distribution, and professional services, as well as in terms of advances and lower personal costs that shifted risk from the author to the publisher. However, the survey results suggest a lackluster delivery on the part of traditional publishers in meeting authors’ expectations.

To the extent that marketing, print distribution, print sales, and professional services were viewed by authors as advantages of traditional publishing, authors were less than thrilled with these aspects of their experiences in traditional publishing. They also found traditional publishing offering less creative control, slower speed to market, lower royalty rates, and no guarantee of a higher quality finished product.

Furthermore, the pattern of movement for hybrid authors is predominately from traditional publishing to self-publishing, and there seem to be both

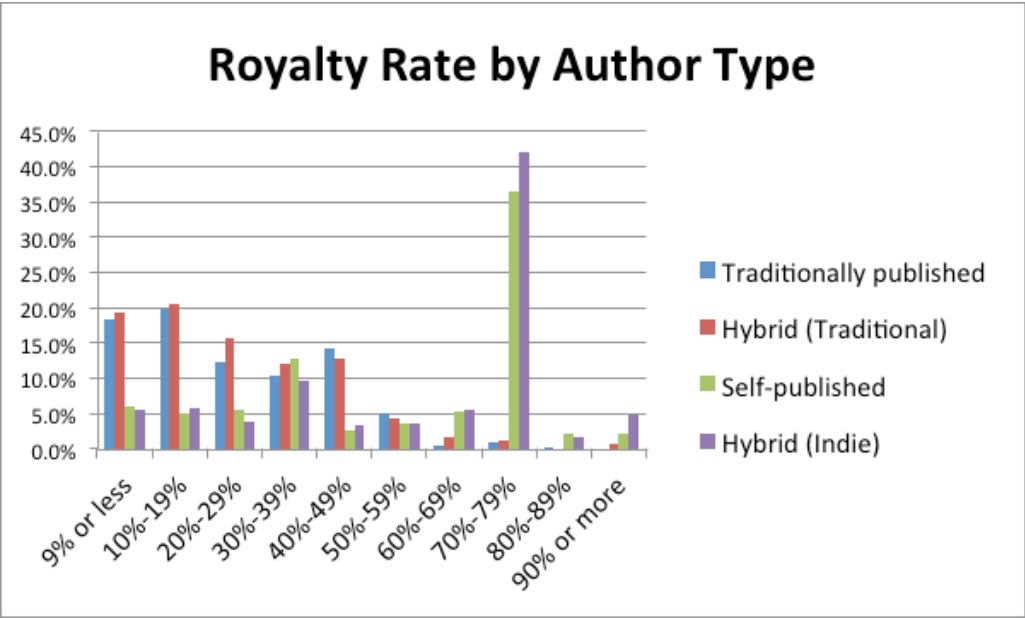
push and pull factors at work. On the push side, these authors tended to be less happy with their treatment by traditional publishers than were the authors who had only traditionally published. On the pull side, they benefited from more satisfying royalty rates, earnings, and a highly satisfying amount of creative control. While a minority of hybrid authors published their last book with a traditional publisher, we do not know from the survey whether they are using self-publishing in tandem with or in place of traditional publishing. However, given the high conversion rate from traditional publishing to hybrid publishing, the higher satisfaction with self-publishing among hybrid authors, and the fact that only 16.1% of hybrid authors reported an intention only to traditionally publish, we anticipate that more authors will elect to become hybrids and that, even if they continue to traditionally publish, traditionally published books may represent a shrinking proportion of their publications—unless traditional publishers provide these authors with advantages they cannot achieve on their own.

For the authors in the sample, traditional publishers are perceived to offer several advantages, yet their performance leaves something to be desired in the author's experience, especially for hybrid authors. The results also show that authors who self-published were not highly satisfied either with their experiences, with the level of satisfaction differing little between the two types of publishing. These results may reflect the difficulty for the majority of authors of making a splash in the book market and a crisis of expectations that may be unrealistic or uneasily met. Alternatively, they might point to areas where traditional publishers could focus on enhancing services to authors in order to make themselves more attractive to authors or reduce attrition.

OUTCOMES FOR AUTHORS: SALES AND INCOME

Royalties

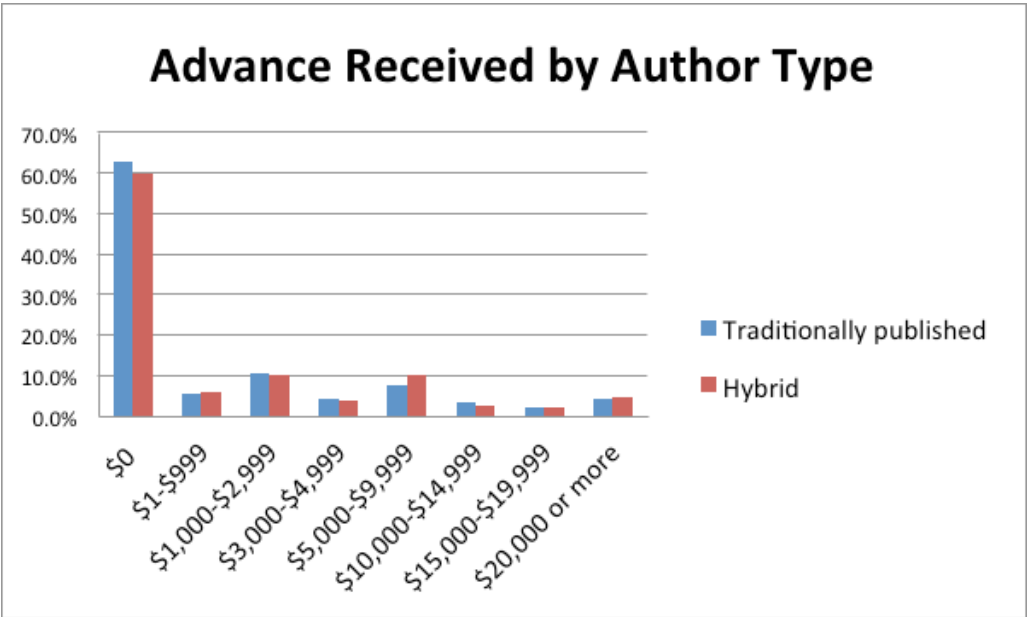
One of the biggest advantages authors cite of self-publishing over traditional publishing is the higher royalty rate. The most frequently reported royalty rate on latest self-published ebooks was 70-79%, reported by 36.65% of self-published authors and 42.0% of hybrid authors. The next most frequently reported ebook royalty range was 30-39%, reported by 12.7% of self-published authors and 9.6% of hybrid authors. In contrast, while authors going the traditional publishing route, like their counterparts in self-publishing, reported royalties across a full range, the most frequently reported ebook royalty rate for traditional publishing was 10-19%, reported by 19.8% of traditional-only authors and 20.7% of hybrid authors, followed by 9% or less royalty on ebooks for 18.3% of traditionally published authors and 19.3% of hybrid authors.



Advances

Advances are often noted as an advantage of traditional publishing over self-publishing, but less than half of the authors in the sample, 40.8% received an advance, representing 40.4% of the traditionally published authors in the survey and 42.2% of the hybrid authors. The most frequently reported advance amount was \$1,000-2,999, reported by 25.3% of traditionally published and 23.4% of hybrid authors who received advances, respectively. The second most frequently cited amount was \$5,000-\$9,999, reported by 17.9% of traditionally published authors and 23.4% of hybrid authors who received advances.

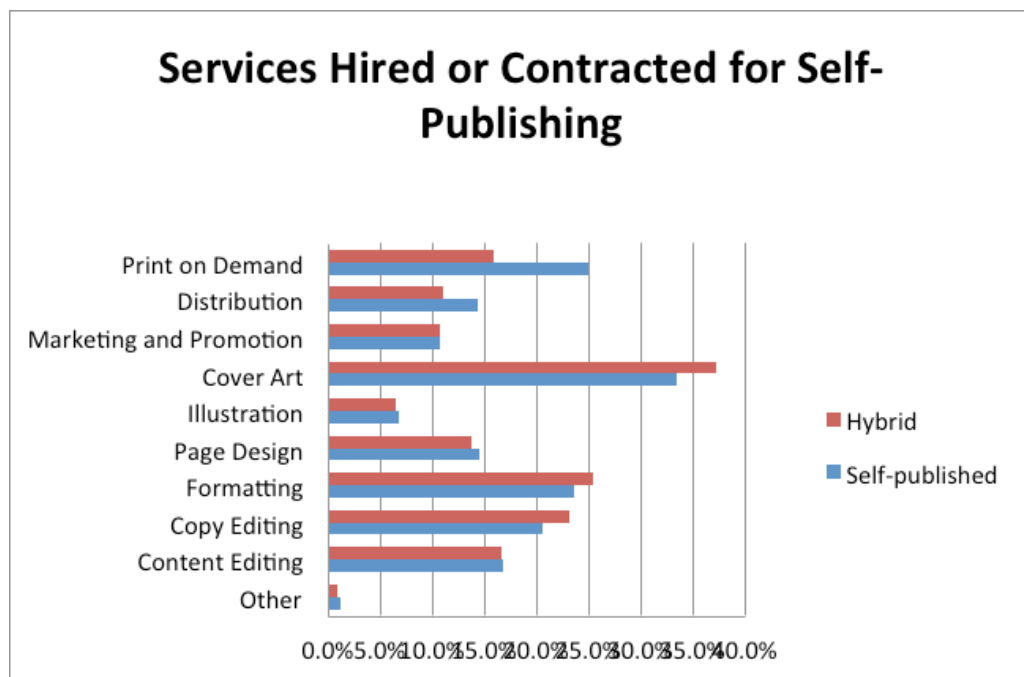
While the median advance amount was \$0, when we exclude the authors who either did not earn an advance or who declined to report their advance amount, the median advance for both traditionally published and hybrid authors who received advances was \$3,000-\$4,999. In contrast, the advance amount these authors deemed appropriate for the book they had written was \$10,000-\$14,999. The authors who had self-published were asked a similar question, this one hypothetical, about what an appropriate advance for their most recently self-published book would have been had it been pub-



lished with a traditional publisher. There too the median answer for both indie-only authors and hybrid authors was \$10,000-14,999.

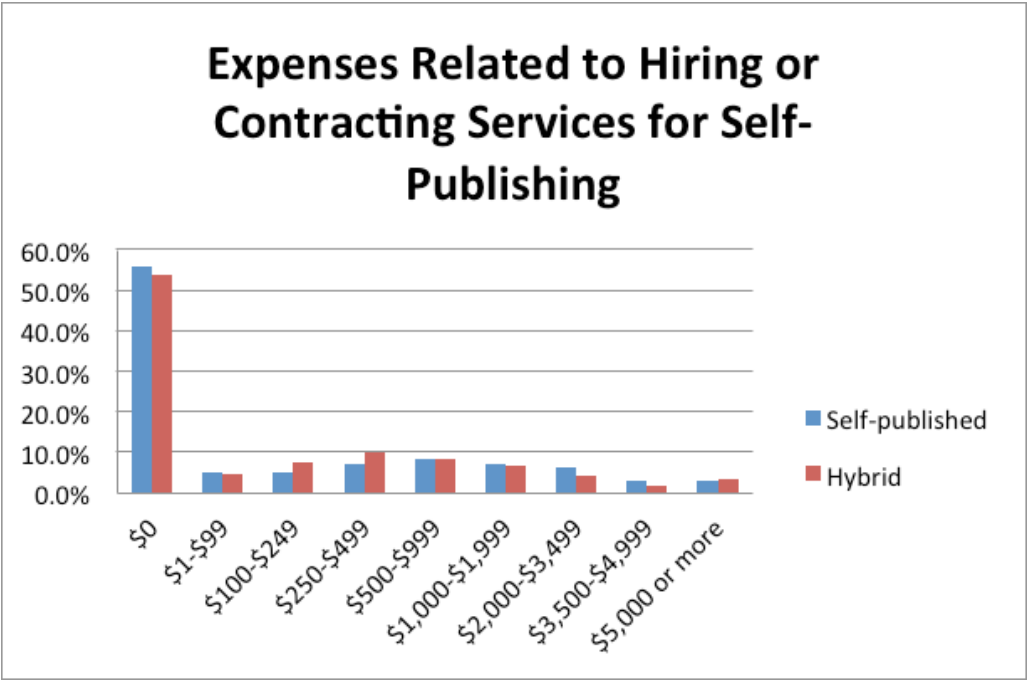
Contracting for Services

Self-published authors do not receive advances, and many of them front money to produce and promote their books. In reporting on their most recent self-published book, about half of the authors (49.6% indie-only and 50.3% hybrid) said that they had contracted someone to assist with self-publishing the book (editing, design, distribution, etc.). The most popular service was cover art, reported by more than a third of authors (33.5% indie-only and 37.3% hybrid).

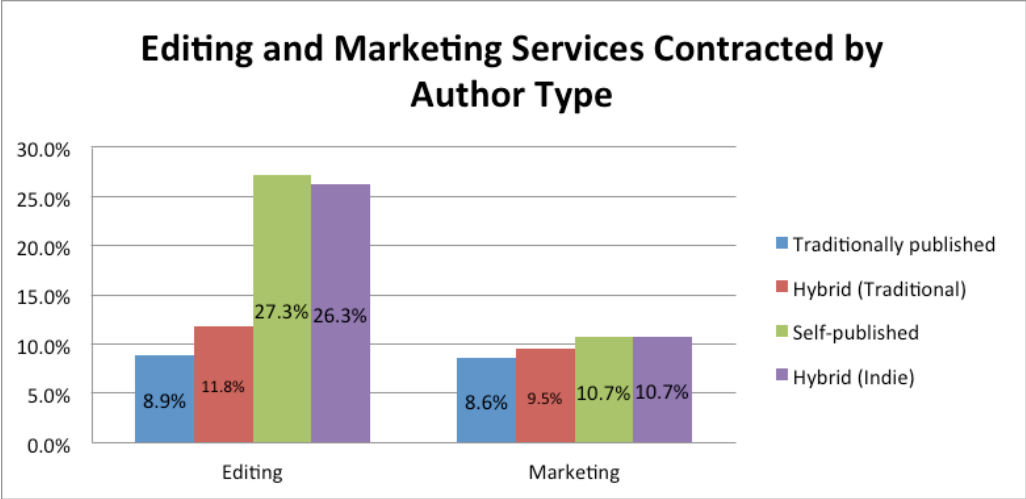


Looking only at authors who hired or contracted services related to self-publishing their most recent book, hybrid authors tended to spend more on these services, a median of \$500-999, compared to indie-only authors, a median of \$250-499. However, across all authors who have self-published

a book, the median outlay up front was \$0 since the majority did not hire anyone to assist with these services.



The survey also asked traditionally published authors about whether they had contracted for manuscript editing and book marketing and promotion, although not the amount spent for these services. In traditionally publishing their last book, 8.9% of traditional-only and 11.8% of hybrid authors contracted for editing while 8.6% and 9.5% respectively contracted for marketing and promotion. More than twice that percent of authors contracted for editing in self-publishing their latest book, but only slightly more contracted for marketing and promotion. For editing their self-published books, about a quarter of self-published authors, (26.0% indie-only and 27.3% hybrid) hired a content and/or copy editor for their book, while only 10.7% of indie-only authors and 10.7% of hybrid authors hired someone to market and promote their books.

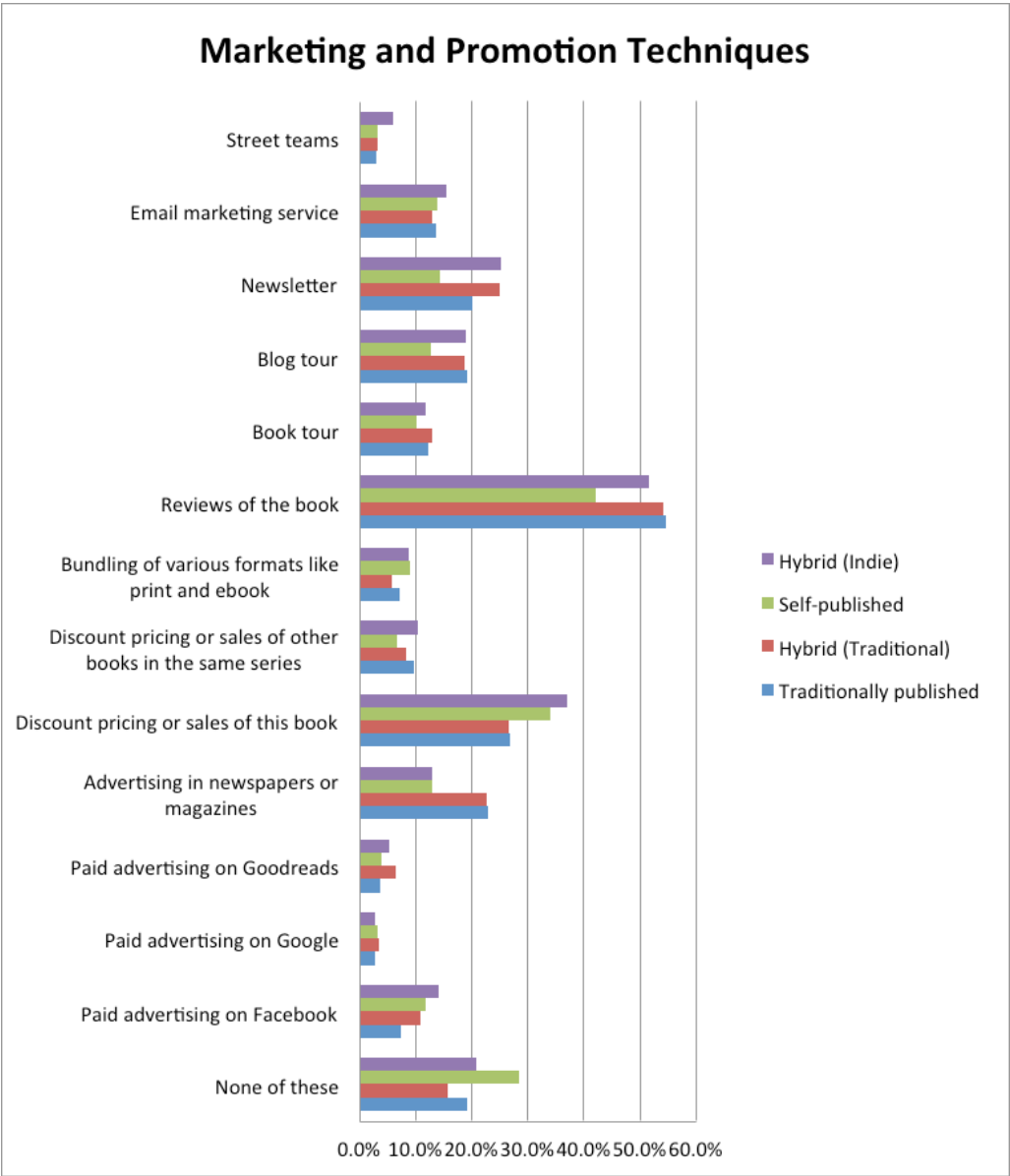


While authors are more likely to spend money on editing if they self-publish than if they traditionally publish, different types of authors appear similar in their decision to hire someone to assist with marketing and promotion.

We asked authors what kinds of things they, or in the case of traditional publishing they and their publishers, did to market and promote their most recent book. For all published authors in the sample, the most commonly used marketing and promotion technique is reviews of the book. In traditional publishing, 54.7% of traditional-only and 54.2% of hybrid authors reported using this technique. In comparison, in self-publishing, 42.1% of indie-only and 51.5% of hybrid authors reported using this technique. Discount sales and pricing of the book was another popular technique across the board, reported for traditional publishing by 26.7% of traditional-only and 26.6% of hybrid authors and for self-publishing by 33.9% of indie-only and 37.1 of hybrid authors. Indie-only authors lagged behind their hybrid counterparts in their marketing and promotion techniques.

More than a quarter (28.7%) of indie-only authors used none of the techniques listed on the survey, which may mean either that they used techniques other than those listed or that they did not use any marketing and promotion techniques. For their part, hybrid authors were generally equally likely to use particular promotion and marketing techniques whether they traditionally published or self-published, with the exception of discount pric-

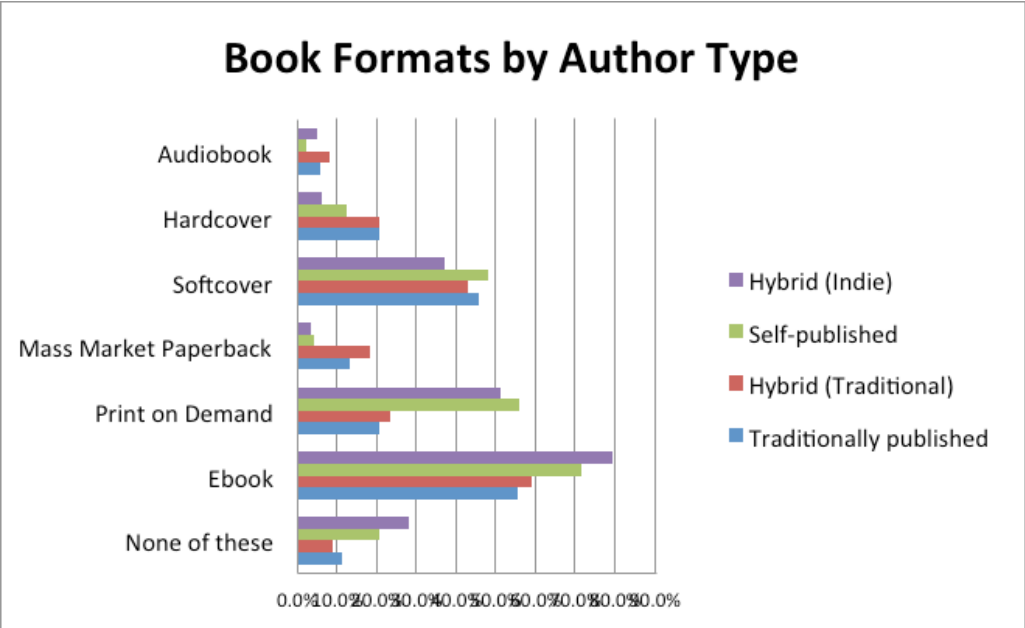
ing which they were much more likely to use with self-published books and advertising in newspaper or magazines which they were much more likely to use for traditionally published books.



To the extent that the differences in marketing and promotion techniques between the different types of authors and mode of publishing are a function of the role of the traditional publisher, there do not seem to be large dif-

ferences in what authors might do for themselves (or hire someone else to do for them) compared to what traditional publishers do. The smaller proportion of indie-only authors engaging these techniques may be a function of upfront costs relative to expected return or of available resources, but is not likely one of access, as hybrid authors are likely to utilize as many techniques if not more in most cases, save advertising in print media, to promote their books when they self-publish as when they traditionally publish. What we do not know from the survey is the relative difference if any in the extent, aggressiveness, quality, and expense of these promotion and marketing efforts between different modes of publishing and different types of authors.

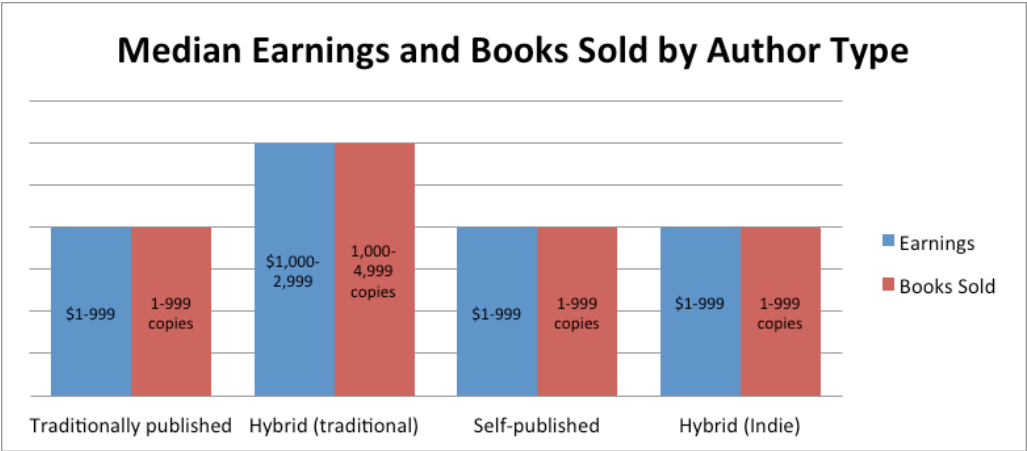
The books the authors described in the survey were published in a variety of formats, whether they were self-published or traditionally published. For the traditionally published authors, over half reported that their latest book had been published in ebook format (55.5% traditional-only and 59.1% hybrid) compared to about three quarters of self-published authors (71.5% indie only and 79.3% hybrid). More than half of the most recent self-published books were published as Print on Demand (POD) (56.1% indie-only and 51.3% hybrid), while 20.8% of traditional-only and 23.6% of hybrid au-



thors reported their latest traditionally published book as being published as POD. Traditionally published books were more likely than self-published books to be printed in hardcover and mass market paperback.

In terms of distribution, more than half of the traditional-only (51.8%) and hybrid authors (56.4%), reported that their most recent traditionally published book had appeared on bookstore shelves, compared to 20% of most recently self-published books whether by indie-only or hybrid authors.

So what does all of this mean for sales and earnings? When comparing the traditional publishing and self-publishing earnings on the most recent book of the authors who answered the survey, the answer turns out to be distinct only for hybrid authors who appear to fare better in terms of sales and income with their most recent traditionally published titles compared to their self-published ones.



Since self-publishing has only come into its own in recent years and since it may take time for a book to realize its full sales potential, we also consider the year that a book has been published. The small number of authors in each cell (author type *publishing mode *year* (sales or earnings)) makes a graph or chart unwieldy. At the same time, a stronger analysis of the relationship between publishing mode and earnings or sales would also take into account, in addition to the type of author and the year a book was pub-

lished, the number of other books an author has published, which might also be a proxy for experience.

Controlling for whether an author is a hybrid author and how many manuscripts the author has published, we find no evidence of a relationship between the year a manuscript was published and author earnings. The partial correlation between year of publication is 0.02 for traditional publishing and 0.03 for self-publishing (using Pearson's rank order correlation). These are both extremely weak correlations, and their similarity suggests that there is no difference in the pattern of earnings based on publication year for self-publishing and traditional publishing. For example, it does not seem that, on average, advances are providing traditionally published authors with an earnings advantage over self-published authors in the earliest years after publication. (This may be because fewer than half received an advance.) Nor does it suggest that the longer a book is available, the higher its earnings will be.

Controlling for whether an author is a hybrid author and the year the most recent book was published, the relationship between number of manuscripts and earnings on the latest book for traditional publishing is 0.288 while for self-publishing it is 0.191 (using Pearson's rank order correlation). The correlations are similar in order of magnitude and neither is very strong, but they suggest that more prolific authors realize higher earnings on their most recent books and that, again, there is no great difference in this effect for traditional publishing and self-publishing.

Summary

While advances were seen as a key advantage of traditional publishing, most of the authors in this sample who traditionally published did not receive them, while the royalty rates were also lower than those of authors who were self-publishing. Self-published authors were more likely to incur additional costs for editing than were traditionally published authors, but

both sets were similarly likely to hire someone to help with marketing and promotion.

Traditional publishers may do more for authors in terms of marketing and promotion techniques, although the gap narrowed and even disappeared, when compared to what hybrid authors did to promote their self-published work, with the exception of advertising in magazines and newspapers. However, it is not clear from the survey questions what was done by the publisher and what by the author. Traditional publishers did have an advantage in terms of distribution to bookstores, but it did not apply to about half of the traditionally published authors in the sample.

Finally, sales and earnings looked about the same for the authors in the sample whether they self-published or traditionally published, despite differences in royalties (higher for self-publishing) and distribution (greater for traditional publishing). Given that so many of the authors in the sample published genre fiction and that so many of the traditionally published authors published with houses that emphasized ebooks, did not provide advances, and offered higher royalty rates, perhaps it is not surprising that the traditionally published and self-published authors in the sample looked so similar. Taking into account the expenses that a substantial, though not the majority, of self-published authors incurred in preparing their books, self-published authors may on average be slightly worse off in terms of net income than their traditionally published counterparts.

CONCLUSIONS AND CAVEATS

This report examined authors' attitudes toward, experiences with, and outcomes from self-publishing and traditional publishing. Authors held favorable views of traditional publishing and expected that traditional publishing would offer several advantages over self-publishing, and most of the authors wanted to publish their next book with a traditional publisher. However, authors' experiences with traditional publishing seemed to fall short of expectation, and authors were not overall highly satisfied with their experiences with traditional publishers. Nor, however, were authors wholly satisfied with their experiences with self-publishing. Neither mode of publishing, it seems, provided authors with what they hoped in terms of sales, earnings, distribution, or marketing in particular. Moreover, little if any difference was seen in terms of sales or earnings from an authors' latest traditionally published and self-published books. Finally, the rate at which traditional authors are embracing self-publishing and the correspondingly low percentage of latest books from this group that were traditionally published suggest that authors may be voting with their feet, despite a continued interest in traditional publishing.

As in last year's Digital Book World and Writer's Digest Author Survey, hybrid authors seemed to fare best in terms of sales and income. The role of traditional publishing in this greater success is unclear. One possibility is that self-publishing augments and boosts sales from traditional publishing. Another is that success in traditional publishing makes hybrid publishing more attractive. A third is that the hybrid authors who are most successful in traditional publishing are the ones who were optioned with lucrative deals by traditional publishers after showing self-publishing success. Yet another possibility is that hybrid authors have been publishing longer, and this fact in itself may account for the higher earnings, either because these authors have proven themselves in the traditional publishing world or because their books were published more years ago on average and have had more time

to accrue earnings (which may then also have been further boosted by exposure from self-publishing). Further research is needed into the reason behind the association between hybrid status and higher earnings in traditional publishing and in writing income overall. To the extent that hybridization leads to more traditional book sales, then traditional publishers may in the end wish to encourage their authors to self-publish some of their work or to partner with them in non-traditional publishing efforts.

Both traditional publishing and self-publishing appear to be segmented markets, with a large pool of relatively unsuccessful authors in terms of sales and income and a long tail of authors with varying and at times high degrees of success. In traditional publishing, we also find that some authors receive advances and print distribution, while others do not, making them appear in many ways more similar than different to self-published authors. These facts may contribute to the segmented success of traditionally published authors. A question for future research is how much this differentiation is a result of the type of traditional publisher, for example, a “big-five” publisher compared to a small independent or ebook-focused publisher. Such an analysis would not be entirely definitive or clear cut with the data at hand, however, as many of the big publishing houses also have ebook-focused lines or imprints.

This report has several limitations. It is based on a voluntary sample which may not be representative of the author population. Caution should be taken in extrapolating from the results here. We encourage an approach that treats these results as suggestive of patterns that might inform further questions and research. By the same token, we encourage readers to consider seriously the results reported here and not dismiss them out of hand because the sample was not scientific. Treated as qualitative data, which in formal research is generally used to describe and understand relationships and to generate theory, the survey data for this report is impressive as it consists of self-administered interviews with over nine thousand authors.

Indeed, this volume of responses dwarfs the source consultation used in even the most conscientious news reporting.

Recommendations

Crediting the findings here that traditional publishing does not seem to differentiate itself from self-publishing in substantive ways for authors, what should publishers do?

Authors in general do not seem overly pleased with their publishing experiences, whether with traditional publishing or self-publishing. This unmet desire or expectation may be more a function of the disappointments related to a crowded consumer market and issues of discoverability than a problem with the services attainable in each mode of publishing. In that case, traditional publishers looking to satisfy their authors might do well to manage expectations.

Alternatively, traditional publishers may consider ways to increase the value they offer their authors. One key area to nurture may be the relationship between author and editor, particularly as this relationship is a potential advantage to traditional publishers when more than a third of their authors found the relationship very satisfying and only a quarter of self-published authors had hired editors to help them with their self-published work.

Managing expectations and enhancing author services could be important avenues for reducing attrition, either of authors to other publishing houses or of authors to self-publishing. However, it is not clear the extent to which either is a problem for traditional publishers, in particular when there are so many authors and the majority would like to publish their books with traditional publishers.

A question for publishers to consider is the rate at which their authors leave them, either for other publishers or to self-publish, and to what extent these departures impact sales and revenue. Another key question to consider is the relationship between hybrid publishing and traditional publishing sales. To the extent that traditional publishers are benefiting from the self-

publishing activities of their authors, they may seek various ways to partner or assist authors in these alternative publishing endeavors.