

WHAT CAN THE TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING INDUSTRY LEARN FROM THE
SELF-PUBLISHING INDUSTRY?

by

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Abstract

The traditional publishing industry has been a staple in the book publishing industry for over a century. However, in 2005, Amazon created the self-publishing site, CreateSpace. This website changed the game for the book publishing industry by offering authors through self-publishing what they could not get through traditional publishing. Each industry has its advantages and disadvantages with respect to marketing reach and potential, author's personal time and money, author's creative control, royalties and success rate, workplace politics and business models, and standards and quality of work. As the self-publishing industry improves, it becomes more and more competitive with the traditional publishing industry. What can the traditional publishing industry do? By learning and taking an example from the successes of the self-publishing industry, the traditional publishing industry can learn how to maintain its competitiveness in the book publishing industry.

Introduction

For at least a century, traditional publishing has worked one way: authors wrote their book, sent it to a literary agent, and then hoped that the agent could find a publishing house to accept it. However, this traditional way of publishing has been challenged in the past decade. As printing technologies and the Internet have grown, a new way of book publishing has emerged: self-publishing. For years, self-publishing was looked down upon by professionals in the field. Only those authors who used the traditional route were seen as successful, while those who self-published their books were considered vain. Author and publisher Thomas Woll said that “Throughout most of the twentieth century, authors who self-published were viewed as somewhat inferior to authors accepted for publication by “legitimate” publishers.” (8). However, this stigma has diminished over the past decades in the book-publishing world. According to Clark and Phillips, co-authors of *Inside Book Publishing*, “Self-publishing has left behind any stigma of vanity publishing—it is inexpensive on the web and cheap in print form. It can take place directly by the author or through a specialized company offering a service” (132). Starting at the beginning of the century, self-publishing produced multiple success stories. Self-publishing companies multiplied and grew. What started this chain reaction? A very recognizable company named Amazon.

Amazon and the (New) Threat to Traditional Publishing

In 2005, Amazon bought the companies CustomFlix and BookSurge and merged them to create a company that would make it easy for authors, as well as musicians and filmmakers, to distribute their work and to keep the rights and sales profits. In 2007, this company was named CreateSpace. CreateSpace was the launch pad for the self-publishing industry. Though they also sold print books, their self-publishing services changed the game for the

publishing industry. According to Bowker research, a research organization that connects publishers and authors to readers, in 2013, 186,000 print books were published by authors using CreateSpace, which is twice as many books published as the next two popular self-publishing sites, Lulu and Smashwords (Mance). The website has now grown and has a great many options that authors choose from to write and publish their works. Authors can make choices on anything from the type of paper and binding to distribution lists their books can be included on. They can even choose from professional publishing services offered by the site in editing, design, and marketing, or they can do it themselves with tools offered by the site, including a publishing advisor tool and a Cover Creator tool. CreateSpace also has helplines and community chatrooms and blogs that newcomers to the site can use to get the help they need to publish their books and even showcase their books to other site users (CreateSpace.com). Lulu and Smashwords, which also have similar options and tools, simply do not have the same reach and popularity that Amazon does. Tim Godfray, chief executive of the UK Booksellers Association, said in 2013 that “My contention is that Amazon has got so big, they are not competing, but destroying the competition...” (qtd. in Albanese). Amazon’s success with CreateSpace has proven that the company is a real contender in the publishing industry today.

Yet Amazon is not the first threat that traditional publishers have faced. The first was in the eighties with the emergence of Barnes & Noble publishing its own books, which traditional publishers believed would eliminate smaller independent or “indie” bookstores, therefore cutting down publisher’s business. This threat was unwarranted and though smaller bookstores have diminished over the past three decades, traditional publishers remained in business (Auletta). Then, as technology grew, eBooks emerged and threatened the sales of

printed books. Despite their worries, traditional publishers eventually adapted to the eBook industry, and today, they make more money on eBooks than print: 75 percent versus 40 percent (Reid, “Amazon’s Impact”). Despite traditional publishing’s past successes against their competition, Amazon is different. Traditional publishers can’t always offer authors the same advantages that CreateSpace (or other self-publishing sites) can. Amazon’s business methods and technology are much different and more advanced than those of traditional publishers. Amazon offers services to authors that are easy to use and allowed authors more control over their books while keeping more of the money. CreateSpace started a new phenomenon that has now caught up with traditional publishing in both success and technology.

The Self-Publishing Industry Today

Self-publishing is still a growing industry, though some negativity remains towards the industry as a whole. Professionals complain about the how self-publishing is ruining the overall publishing industry with bad quality writing. Melissa Foster, award winning author, says that

The lesson may be that if indie authors don’t value their work, chances are no one else will either. Readers want, and deserve, quality books, and they’re used to paying for them... Does this mean that self-published authors are killing the publishing industry? Yes, in a sense it does (“Are Self-Pubbed Authors”).

Despite the downfalls that some in the industry see, many editors want to join the self-publishing industry and, with multiple authors having popular successes, more and more people are starting to self-publish their work. Professionals and authors alike are beginning to doubt the necessity of traditional book publishers. Author and professor at Drexel University

M.G. Piety says about the successful figure-skater and self-published author Dick Button that “Button doesn't need to go through a traditional publisher, so why should he? Why should anyone, anymore, who knows what he's talking about and knows how to support his points with evidence and argument?” (22). The advantages of self-publishing are starting to outweigh the disadvantages, as well as be considered worth more than the advantages of traditional publishing. As more authors lean towards self-publishing, traditional publishing companies start to feel the pressure, both professionally and economically. Many authors’ goal is still to be professionally published and gain a contract from a publishing company (Clark and Phillips 45). Despite this, self-publishing is still seen as competition. Mark Coker, founder of one of the largest self-publishing sites, Smashwords, predicted that indie eBook authors would continue to gain market share of the publishing industry at the expense of larger publishers, claiming that indie authors controlled 15 to 20 percent of the market in late 2015 (Coker). As the competition rises, the traditional publishing industry can learn and take examples from the self-publishing industry in order to maintain their position and once again overcome the competition in the book publishing industry.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this thesis, I reference four terms: traditional publishing companies, self-publishing companies, editors, and agents. Each has multiple variations and definitions, but I use specific ones. When I say traditional publishing companies, I refer to publishing companies that buy and own the rights to books from their authors. There are hundreds of traditional publishing companies of all sizes throughout the world today. For my research, I mostly reference companies that are a part of the “Big Five”, or the five biggest book publishers in the world. This includes Penguin Random House, Simon & Schuster,

HarperCollins, Hachette Book Group, and Macmillan, though most of the references I make are to the first two, since they are two of the most popular publishing companies of the Big Five.

Self-publishing companies are companies or services that authors use to publish and distribute their books while still keeping the rights to their work. There is a combination of both online and physical self-publishing companies today, but for this thesis, I only source the online services such as Lulu, Smashwords, and CreateSpace. I also mention online fanfiction sites such as Wattpad, which are, in a sense, also self-publishing sites in which authors post their works for others to read. Fanfiction, in this case, is defined as different stories and scenarios written by fans of certain television shows, movies, and even other popular book series, which include the same original characters and situations, but develops new plots and storylines.

The other two terms are editors and agents. There are multiple types of editors in the book publishing industry, including copyeditor, acquisitions editor, developmental editor, and project editor. I reference editors who work closely with the book itself, which would be copyeditors and, in some cases, developmental editors. I also explain the job of acquisitions editors in reference to the editorial standards of traditional publishing companies. The editors that I use quotes from are all independent and/or freelance editors who used to work for publishing companies. There is no specification on what type of editor they were before they went independent. Also, when I mention employees of traditional publishing companies, I mean editors. “Agents” in reference to the book publishing industry are called literary agents. These are either individuals or companies that act as an intermediary between authors and

traditional publishers. I usually reference agents when I explain the acquisition and editorial standards of traditional publishing companies.

Methodology

For my research, I chose sources that were trustworthy and reputable. The majority of my sources came from the databases to which Appalachian State University's Belk Library subscribes, as well as books from the Belk Library. I also found information on the websites of professional sources, such as *Financial Times* and *Publisher's Weekly*. These are websites and news sources that I have heard of throughout my education and have had experience with before. I also found information on the blogs of individuals who had experience in the publishing field as an author or as an agent or editor. For those sources, I completed additional research on the author to assure that they were credible.

Additionally, I looked for information that generally had to do with the book publishing industry, traditional and self-publishing. As I read through different articles and websites, I narrowed down my choices by making sure that all of the information in the source was supported by the other sources that I found, as well as contained facts that would follow what I was aiming for in my thesis. In addition, I tried to find sources that had differing arguments, especially articles that contained either positive or negative opinions towards either traditional or self-publishing, in order to show both sides of the subject I was discussing. I also made sure that all my sources were from reputable places that I have heard of before. I eliminated some sources that were not from websites or people that I had heard of or could not find information on. If it seemed like the writer of an article or blog had no experience in publishing or the book industry, then I would bypass the information.

As I did my research, I found information about the book publishing industry, such as printing models or industry statistics, which I had never considered including in my thesis, but that helped me formulate evidence for my argument. The argument expanded to cover more of the self-publishing industry and how it is related to disruptions in other industries, like the music industry. It also expanded to cover more details about printing models and how traditional publishers could save money. Overall, the traditional and self-publishing industries provide a wealth of knowledge that could yield years' worth of studies.

Literature Review

My thesis covers a range of topics that have to do with the advantages and disadvantages of the self-publishing and traditional publishing industries. Overall, the evidence I give for my argument is a reflection of the current states of the traditional and self-publishing industries and how they compare to one another. The sources that I found give insight into the state of the industries.

Current State of the Traditional Publishing Industry

This section examines the business models, acquisitions and editorial practices, treatment of authors, and marketing and distribution and production methods of the traditional publishing industry.

Acquisition Practices

Traditional publishers have very high standards for the manuscripts they accept. Books need to be well-written, with perfect grammar, spelling, and easy-to-read prose. Publishers also want unique books that can still be marketed to a desired audience (Legat). If a submitted manuscript is not written in a popular genre at that time, then it may not be accepted (Reid, "PW Select").

Traditional publishers want authors' manuscripts in certain ways, and many larger publishers will not take new authors or manuscripts unless they are from a literary agent (Pimsleur). Literary agents are hired by authors to make their manuscripts ready to be sent to a publisher. They also act as an intermediary between author and publishing company and are the gatekeepers for the publishing industry who make sure that only the best books are selected (Greco et al.). Publishers also hire acquisitions editors whose job is to examine a potential manuscript for writing level and marketability and decide if it is worth publishing or not. Only one percent of books sent into traditional publishers are accepted ("What is Traditional Book Publishing?"). Aspiring authors find it very hard to get into the publishing business, even if they have contacts or work in publishing themselves (Reid, "PW Select").

Editorial Practices

Traditional publishers are known for producing high quality books. When a book has a publisher's name on it, then that book is thought to have undergone a rigorous selection and editorial process (Carolan and Evain). Manuscripts go through multiple rounds of editing, from content edit, to line edit, to copy edit, and then to multiple rounds of proofreading (Gardner, "Do Publishers Edit"). Edits are made before the author sends in a proposal. Agents often look through the manuscript for a content edit, making sure that everything makes sense and nothing needs to be rewritten. If it does, then it is sent back to the author with suggestions. After the publisher has accepted it, the manuscript is reviewed by an in-house or freelance editor hired by the publisher who does another content edit and makes suggestion for rewrites, if needed. Then the book is sent to a copyeditor who checks for correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and consistency. Finally, the manuscript is sent to a proofreader who looks for any mistakes that were missed (Laube). Today, the standards of

the editorial practices in traditional companies have seemed to decline as the multiple steps that used to go into editing a manuscript are slowly disappearing (Heffernan). Traditional publishers are hiring fewer and fewer in-house editors (Baverstock, “Who are the Independent Editors”). Publishers instead turn to freelance editors and only accept manuscripts that essentially need nothing done with them (Baverstock et al, “How the Role of Independent Editors”). Instead of the substantive rounds that a manuscript used to go through, editors are depending on authors to do much of their own editing and then relying on automated editing programs, like spell check, to do the rest (Greenberg). It is so much easier to use automated editing programs for a quick fix, but actual editors are still needed to make sure a manuscript is perfect (Racciah).

Traditional publishing companies have produced books that are riddled with mistakes, inaccuracies, and even been fabricated (Piety). Both the public and the professionals complain about poor editing, but the standards of editing still continue to fall (Greenberg). Traditional publishers are in a difficult financial market, and so budget cuts make some publishers pay less attention to detail (Gardner, “Do Publishers Edit”). The books filled with mistakes are still selling well, however. For example, the popular *The Hunger Games* trilogy is filled with misplaced modifiers, poor sentence structure, and an overabundance of commas (Varden). Despite this, the books are popular internationally and have gained a four-movie deal.

Business Models

Traditional publishers are reluctant to take up the latest technology, printing methods, and business trends, instead choosing to maintain their own ways of doing things (Hughes; Rosenthal). For example, traditional publishers were slow to pick up on the eBooks industry,

afraid that they would lose money on print books sold in bookstores, though they now profit more on eBooks than on print books (Reid, “Amazon’s Impact”). Traditional publishers were also upset by the low prices of eBooks, especially the ones offered by Amazon. In order to raise the cost of eBooks, for years, traditional publishers claimed that eBooks cost the same or more to produce as print books, even though that myth has now been debunked (Howey). In relation to eBooks, traditional companies use a method called “windowing,” where they hold back a newer and cheaper version of a book, in hopes of selling the more expensive version; for example they would hold back the release of the eBook until all their print stock was sold (Auletta; Howey). Windowing is a good idea in theory, as it keeps the more expensive version of a book on the shelves for longer, which in turn will, as the publishers believe, bring in more revenue and help them keep control of the market (Howey). The readers do not agree. They often become frustrated that the book they want to read is too expensive or not in the format that they want. They then move on to other books instead of waiting, which results in publishers losing money in the long run (Auletta). Windowing can also get publishers bad reviews; Amazon readers eventually revolted against the windowing process and hammered the company with one star reviews until the publishers gave in on certain titles (Howey).

Traditional publishers often feel threatened by upcoming trends that could threaten their bottom line (Howey). Not that publishing companies need to save money in general; Penguin Random House reported that it made over 4 billion dollars in profit in 2015 (Milliot, “Penguin Random House”). The traditional companies’ large network and marketing connections has helped them to stay in business, bringing in readers all around the world (Gardner, “Do Publishers Market”). This ability to reach readers and the fact that publishers

handle the production process, along with the publishers established prestige, also keeps bringing in new authors (Reid, “A Book Industry Couple”; Pimsleur). New trends such as eBooks are often more beneficial for the reader in price and accessibility, which has never been what traditional companies have focused on, and so they feel threatened by the idea of lack of control in the marketplace (Howey).

Even when they do try new ways of doing things, traditional publishers tend to rely on habitual practices. Publishers are known for their low royalty rates and for not paying authors often enough or at all. So when Penguin Random House (PRH) opened a self-publishing imprint, it got hit with a lawsuit for not paying its authors on time and for not giving authors the services that they were promised (Mance). Though the lawsuit was dropped, PRH still ended up selling the imprint (Milliot, “Author Solutions”). Traditional publishers can be successful in their new endeavors, however. Simon and Schuster opened a self-publishing imprint, Archway Publishing, in 2012, and it has been running successfully since then (Palmer).

Traditional publishers also have problems within their workplaces. They are known to underappreciate the people they hire, especially editors. Editors are frustrated by workplace politics and the lack of appreciation for their work (Baverstock, et al., “Who are the Independent Editors”). Traditional companies also have a high turnover rate, and as the number of editors at the company leave, more work remains for those who stay (O’Connor; Milliot, “The PW Publishing”). Many editors now do more freelance work, but still do not enjoy working with traditional publishers, because they often end up doing more work for less money (Baverstock, “How the Independent Editors”).

Author Experience

The dream of many authors is to get signed to a contract with a traditional company (Clark and Phillips). Traditional publishers still hold a certain prestige in the publishing industry overall, with the ability to give the author credibility and a platform to start from (Reid, “PW Select”). Authors get some perks when they sign with traditional publishers. They get more time to write when they sign with a traditional publisher, since the publisher is handling most of the work on the production of the book (Mance; Pimsleur). The traditional publisher handles the marketing, the design, and everything else when it comes to books. That way, authors have to do very little and can instead focus on their writing and other things in their life.

On the other hand, when authors sign a contract they often hand over much of the decision making to their publisher. The authors then have little control over the creative processes of the book design and production. Some publishers ask for an author’s opinion, but ultimately the publisher makes the final decision (Irvine). Because the publisher handles the majority of the work, the author gets a very small royalty, only 12-17 percent (Campbell). Authors do, however, often get an advance from traditional publishers, which help them to “undertake the creative process” (Carolan and Evain).

Marketing and Distribution Methods

Traditional publishing companies have a wide reach when it comes to the distribution and marketing of books. Many of the larger companies, especially the Big Five, have been around for decades, and so they have long-standing, professional connections to distributors and bookstores, such as Walmart or Barnes & Noble (Gardner, “Do Publishers Market Books?”). Many publishing companies have their own marketing team and even have people

who deal specifically with rights and what the publishers are allowed to do with the books. While traditional publishers tend to appreciate having an author who can assist with promotion of their book, they still have their own professional marketing teams do most of the work.

In addition, traditional companies have world-wide locations, including London, Sydney, Beijing, and India (*PenguinRandomHouse.com*; *HarperCollinsPublishers.com*). Larger companies also have multiple imprints with even more locations around the United States and the rest of the world. These locations help give traditional publishers an advantage in gaining international rights, as well as making it easier to distribute their work, especially in other languages.

Production Methods

Many traditional publishing companies tend to use older methods and technology in the production of their books. Some publishers still use the “print and pray” method, which means they print a certain number of books and hope that they sell (Hughes). This does not always work out, even if the books are predicted to sell. For example, John Locke sold over one million copies of his self-published Donovan Creed series, but when Simon & Schuster produced the books, the first run only sold 6,000 copies; a very low number compared to how popular the eBooks were (Deahl, “Moving Beyond”).

Many traditional publishing companies also still use offset printing, which has been around since the nineteenth century. Offset printing requires a higher initial amount of cash, but is cheaper in cost-per-unit as print runs increase. Offset printing is also good for special details in books like larger size paper, colored images, or high-quality reproductions (Schiff and Daniel). On the other hand, when traditional publishers use offset printing they can end

up printing more books than they actually need just to meet their budget and end up with stock left on their shelves. This also happens when the publisher overestimates the demand for the book in the market. The leftover stock and unsold inventory often results in a publisher's investment not being compensated (Hughes; Schiff and Daniel).

Current State of the Self-Publishing Industry

This section examines the business models, acquisitions and editorial practices, and the treatment of authors, as well as marketing, distribution, and production methods of the traditional publishing industry.

Acquisition Practices

Self-publishing sites do not have restrictions on what books they accept. Authors can use Createspace.com or Lulu.com to publish their book however they want to. Authors who have been rejected by traditional publishers can go to self-publishing and find success where they have failed (Reid, "PW Select"). Some authors even find self-publishing to be more to their liking. Author Hugh Howey has turned down multiple deals with traditional publishers, preferring to self-publish his books in return for a higher royalty (Deahl, "Self-Made Bestseller"). On the other hand, critics and professionals complain about this open type of publishing, saying that it crowds the literary world with too many books that have passed no quality tests and are not even worth producing (Haugland).

Editorial Practices

The majority of self-published works are known to have low quality writing and many mistakes. Poor editing has given the self-publishing industry a bad name, and the gimmicks that self-published authors use to sell or give away their work is diminishing the publishing industry and devaluing the written word (Foster). Readers are no longer beginning to care if

books are written well, as long as they can get them quickly and cheaply (Carolan and Evain). The very popular *Fifty Shades of Grey* can be used as an example. Though full of bad grammar and horrible writing in general, the trilogy has soared in popularity; the books have become international bestsellers and have been made into two hit movies with a third on the way. The series has changed the game for publishers and the literary world, making companies realize that readers simply want a good story (Ellis-Petersen).

All the same, the self-publishing industry has begun to improve its editorial practices. Sites like CreateSpace have started to provide editorial resources for its authors. Authors can now work with professional editors through the Content Media team, which works as a third-party contact. Authors may choose from single types of editing, such as copyediting or proofreading or multi-round editing packages (CreateSpace.com).

Business Models

Self-publishing offers a new look into the way the publishing industry operates. Self-publishing inserted itself into the market through book production rather than sales. Self-publishing also changed publishing by charging for services. Additionally, authors may cut out gatekeepers, such as literary agents, and keep more money for themselves (Clark and Phillips). This new way of business garnered media coverage and convinced many authors that self-publishing would give them money and success, which enlarged the industry considerably; the number of self-published books published in the USA tripled from 2006 to 2011, a growth of 287 percent. Self-publishing sites also opened their doors to agents and universities, which helped to further expand the industry (Clark and Phillips).

Self-publishing sites and services were quick to adopt technological advances. Sites such as CreateSpace promoted the use eBooks and other new technology, such as Print-on-

Demand, which saved money and time (Gallagher). Sites also provide multiple services from editors, graphic designers, and other professionals to the authors (CreateSpace).

Editors enjoy working with independent and self-publishing authors, finding it a better experience. As editors leave the traditional publishing industry, they find themselves working freelance for authors who are in the process of self-publishing (Baverstock, “How the Role of Independent Editors”). Authors who want to self-publish find themselves meeting with editors who have left the traditional publishing industry, and so gain their help in improving the quality of their books (Joe). Editors especially enjoy working with self-publishing authors, claiming that they are appreciated, get paid well, and have flexible schedules (Baverstock et al., “How the Role of Independent Editors”).

Author Experience

When authors choose to self-publish, all of the choices are in their control. They choose the design, the formatting, and the revisions. They make the ultimate decision for their work and get more money in return (Poynter). Sites like CreateSpace provide services for authors to help them with editing, design, marketing, and more, if they choose to use them. Because the choice is in their hands, self-published authors get higher royalties, 60-80 percent (Campbell). In addition, they get to keep all of the creative rights to their work; they get to make all the decisions when it comes to design and formatting (Irvine).

Unfortunately, self-publishing authors also have to spend their own time and money. They do the majority of the work and generally do not have time to continue writing; instead they are out promoting their book (Marshall). Even if they choose to hire someone to do the editing or design or marketing, they have to pay them individually. If they choose not to hire someone, authors do all the promotion for the book themselves (Marshall).

The success of self-published books can also be misleading for potential authors. There have been quite a few highly publicized successes from authors who have self-published their work. John Locke, Amanda Hocking, and E.L. James each earned millions of dollars from their self-published books and made a deal with a traditional publishing company; James, author of the *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy, even got a multi-movie deal (Deahl, “Moving Beyond”). However, successes like these are very rare, but their publicity makes them incredibly popular, leading authors to believe that anyone can gain the same sort of success. In fact, the average amount made by self-published authors in 2011 was only \$10,000 (Foster).

Marketing and Distribution Methods

Many self-publishing sites claim that they give their authors the ability to sell and distribute their work to bookstores and other markets (CreateSpace.com; Lulu.com). In actuality, these sites only put authors and their books on a list that stores can then choose from. The likelihood of being chosen from this list as a self-published author is highly unlikely. Self-published works do not usually sell well, and bookstores often end up with leftover stock that they cannot return (Underdown).

Though self-publishing sites claim they help with marketing, often authors market and promote their work, taking up time and money for traveling to different places and advertising or promoting their books. Christopher Paolini, author of the bestselling Eragon series, spent most of 2002 and 2003 traveling in order to promote his books; he made over seventy appearances in 2002 alone (Marshall). If authors don’t do their own marketing, then they have to hire someone to do it for them. And if an author does not have marketing ability, his or her books may not do as well (Woll). Popular self-published authors, like Mark

Dawson and Hugh Howey, still have to spend their own money to market and distribute their books or pay someone to do it for them (Mance; Deahl, “Self-Made Bestseller”).

Production Methods

Many self-publishing companies (and some smaller traditional publishers) use a printing method called Print-on-Demand (POD), which is more up to date than most printing methods (Schiff and Daniel). Books printed on demand are a quarter of the cost of producing books the traditional way (Carolan and Evain). However, as print runs increase in size, so do the cost of POD. Also, books with special features, such as color images, irregular paper size, or high quality reproductions cannot be printed as easily with POD (Schiff and Daniel).

However, if a self-publisher wants a simple, run-of-the-mill print of a book—regular paper size, black and white text, etc.—POD is a good choice. By using POD, self-publishing companies are able to print smaller runs at a time, especially with books that are no longer in high demand. This way, POD helps keep titles on the shelves longer and also helps to save time in shipping (Haugland; Gallagher). By printing only what they need at a time, especially after a book has been out for a certain amount of time, companies save money and also spend less money by producing more titles at a time (Hughes).

Conclusions

Over the years, there have been rumors that there is a decline in people reading, which in turn has caused predictions that the publishing industry is dying. A Gallup poll in 2005 says otherwise. In fact, “...in the United States, the number of people who read at least five books per year has more than doubled over the past 50 years and there are no signs of this phenomenon slowing” (Carolan and Evain 298). This rise in reading can be associated with the fact that university attendance doubled in the last half of the twentieth century, which

increased the number of people who read, as well as the number of people who write that want to be published (Carolan and Evain 297). However, many of those who want to publish their books often still face the question of which method of publishing, traditional or self, to use. Traditional publishing companies and self-publishing companies are in a competition to draw more people to them, and each one has its aspects that keep them successful. There are six main advantages that the traditional and self-publishing industries compete on, which is the focus of the next section.

Marketing Reach and Potential

Traditional companies have a great capacity to market and distribute authors' books. Many of the Big Five have been around for decades, and so they have long-standing professional connections to distributors and bookstores, such as Walmart or Barnes & Noble (Gardner, "Do Publishers Market Books?"). Traditional companies, with their main headquarters in New York City, have locations all over the world, including London and Sydney. Penguin Random House and HarperCollins has locations in India; Penguin Random House also has a location in Beijing (PenguinRandomHouse.com; HarperCollins.com). Each company also has dozens of imprints also located all over the world. Many publishing companies have their own marketing team and even have people who deal specifically with rights and what the publishers are allowed to do with the books. While traditional publishers appreciate authors who can assist with promotion of their book, they still have their own professional marketing teams do most of the work.

Self-publishing companies do not have the same marketing abilities and sources as traditional publishers. Many online self-publishing companies, like Lulu, claim that authors will have the opportunity to sell to places like Barnes and Noble (Lulu.com). According to

former children's editor, Harold Underdown, this is not quite true. In actuality, the books that self-publishing companies produce simply go onto a database of books that Barnes and Noble and other sellers have the opportunity to choose and order from. The likelihood of a self-published book chosen is very slim. On his website, Harold Underdown says,

Can authors then persuade bookstores to carry their books? Probably not--stores get so many self-published authors pitching books to them that don't sell and are often non-returnable that they have learned not to stock them and won't order them except for a paying customer ("Self-Publish or Not").

Self-published authors mostly have to do their own marketing or hire someone to do it for them. Mark Dawson, who has sold over 150,000 copies of his self-published books, still uses an intermediary publisher/agency to sell to the German market (Mance). Even self-published author Hugh Howey, who has turned down multiple deals with traditional companies to publish his work, says that he would accept an appropriate deal just so he could reach more readers (Deahl, "Self-Made Bestseller"). Many self-published authors publish their work as eBooks, but not everyone has access to eBooks and not everyone can read a book published in English. Many authors do not have the time or money to fully publicize their book for a wide audience.

Author's Personal Time and Money

Traditional companies allow authors more personal time to write, rather than having to do all the work to publish their book. When authors submit their manuscript to a traditional publisher that ends most of their effort. Besides continued editing and some marketing and book promotions, the author does not have to do much with the more minute details of design and formatting. Instead, the publishing company does the majority of the editorial and design

work for them (Pimsleur). This frees up time for the author to continue doing what they love, which is writing. Publisher Scott Pack, formerly of HarperCollins, says that “If Hilary Mantel chose to self-publish her next book, she would still sell hundreds of thousands... One of the reasons she doesn’t is the time factor. She wants to write” (qtd. in Mance). Traditional companies help authors to pursue writing more books, which in turn helps the company to publish more books.

Self-publishing, on the other hand, can be expensive and time consuming. Authors have to do all the work themselves or pay others to do it for them. This includes the formatting, the editing, the art, the printing, and the marketing. If authors do not have the marketing skills to be able to advertise their work, then their books do not sell well (Woll 22). Many self-publishing sites provide resources for authors to help create their books. However, authors still have to pay to use self-publishing sites and usually have to pay extra for designers, marketers, and editors (CreateSpace.com). Also, even if self-publishing sites have some resources to market their clients’ books, there is still a good chance that authors will have to do most of the marketing on their books themselves. Christopher Paolini, author of the bestselling *Eragon* series, learned this the hard way. He made over seventy appearances in 2002 to promote his book and spent most of 2003 traveling as well. It was only after this that he made a deal with Alfred A. Knopf for a reported \$500,000 (Marshall). Most people who write do not want to spend time working on the minute details of their books or weeks out on the road publicizing their work. When authors self-publish, however, they are often left with no choice.

Author's Creative Control

The creative control authors receive with self-publishing companies makes up for the amount of time that they spend promoting their book. With the help of technology, authors may publish their books with complete control. They do not have to relinquish any creative rights to publishing companies, and they can format and distribute their work to their liking.

Everything from price to cover art to page size is within the author's decisions. Sites like CreateSpace and Lulu have step-by-step processes for authors to create their books. They also provide help forums and hotlines to authors who need it, but still allow them to make their own decisions (Createspace.com; Lulu.com).

With traditional publishers, authors do not get as much control over the creative aspects of their books as authors who decide to self-publish. When authors sign with traditional companies, they sell them most of the rights to their books. While the author does often receive an advance payment for their work, all creative rights and ownership goes to the company. The author has a fraction of control, depending on what is in the contract (Irvine). Authors have to go with whatever options that the company chooses for the books, even if they do not agree. Occasionally, smaller companies let authors have a say in the design of their book, but the overall decision lies with the company,. While this does give the author more time to write, it also takes away control.

Royalties and Success Rate

Along with creative control, authors gain much higher royalties when they choose to self-publish. Dan Poynter, author of over 130 books on the publishing industry, compares authors who self-publish to actors who decided to work for multiple studios in the 1940's. He says,

Why are more and more famous authors choosing alternative publishing paths like self-publishing and POD? For the same reason movie actors began working for multiple studios in the 1940s and 50s. More control, more creativity, more money. Do you think actors today would be making \$20 million a movie if the studios were still in charge? Only when they became free agents did their autonomy soar. Their paychecks followed suit (189).

Since authors who self-publish are doing most of the work on the book themselves, they get more of the return. Traditional companies have some advantage as they often give authors a large advance before distributing their books, which self-publishing companies do not do. These advances also “allow them to undertake the creative process,” which lets them spend more time writing (Carolan and Evain 292). However, traditional companies frequently pay their authors less. For example, Amazon pays their authors on a monthly basis (Woll 146). Traditional publishers also do not pay their authors as much in royalties as self-publishing does. According to Scottish tech guru, Dug Campbell, self-published authors get royalties of 60 to 80 percent of the book profits compared to authors with traditional companies who only get 12 to 17 percent (“10 Trends”). As for eBooks, Amazon pays authors 40 percent in royalties compared to the Big Five publishers who only pay 35 percent on their eBook publications (Mance).

The more that authors sell through self-publishing, the more they make in royalties. Authors have made millions of dollars selling their works as eBooks. For example, John Locke was the first self-published author to sell one million copies of his Kindle eBooks, the *Donovan Creed* series (Deahl, “Moving Beyond”). The *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy by E.L. James was also wildly popular and another self-publishing success. The series started out as

fanfiction of the *Twilight* saga by author Stephenie Meyer. The books were then published by a small Australian outfit, Coffee House Press (Deahl, “Moving Beyond”). Now the first book in the trilogy has been made into two hit movies, with the third on the way. The trilogy was so successful that it is considered one of the milestones in legitimating self-publishing as viable competition to the traditional publishing industry (Greco et al. 188). Paul Bogaards of the Knopf Doubleday Group, says “...lumping James and the craze surrounding *Fifty Shades* into any comparable category is a mistake. It is, he thinks, something wholly unto itself” (qtd. In Deahl, “Moving Beyond”). While the success of *Fifty Shades of Grey* is exceptional, the trilogy was still originally self-published, proving that self-published authors can have great success without the help of traditional companies.

However, despite their fame and influence on the self-publishing industry, successes like those of Locke’s and James’s are rare; they are not nearly as common as people might think. According to a 2012 quote by The Guardian.uk, “the average amount earned by DIY authors last year was just \$10,000 (£6,375) – and half made less than \$500” (qtd. in Foster). Also, books released by Print-On-Demand publishers only sell about 75 copies on average (Carolan and Evain 288). For every self-published success, there are dozens of authors who have still yet to make their money back. Although such huge successes are the exception and not the rule, famous self-publishing successes stories have still been an encouraging factor for aspiring authors.

Workplace Politics and Business Models

Many traditional publishing companies have a bad reputation for the way they run their companies and treat their employees. According to Clark and Phillips,

Commentators disparagingly referred to the incumbent trade houses as ‘legacy publishers’: conjuring an image of corporations locked in their New York glass towers, trapped in their analogue mind-sets, and clinging to past systems and behaviors through which they had once controlled authors and markets (44). Instead of accepting new ideas, traditional publishing companies keep to their old ways. Boris Hughes, author at *BookBusiness.com* says, “Consumers are moving quickly to new technologies and expect information to keep up. The book can and will remain relevant, unless publishers resist this change...” (299). For example, traditional publishers were slow to pick up on the eBooks industry, afraid that they would lose money on print books sold in bookstores; although they now profit more on eBooks than on print books (Reid, “Amazon’s Impact”). Traditional publishers were also upset by the low prices of eBooks, especially the ones offered by Amazon. In order to raise the cost of eBooks, for years traditional publishers claimed that eBooks cost the same or more to produce as print books, even though that myth has now been debunked (Howey). Traditional publishers are afraid to try new things that could threaten their bottom line and take away the models that they are so used to (Howey). This has caused the traditional industry to fall behind as self-publishing took a chance and advanced.

The self-publishing business model offers a new look into the way the publishing industry was run. Self-publishing inserted itself into the market through sheer book production rather than sales. Self-publishing also changed the publishing game by charging authors for their services. Their new way of conducting business convinced many authors that self-publishing would give them money and success. As a result, the industry grew considerably, and the number amount of self-published books published in the USA tripled

from 2006 to 2011. Self-publishing companies also expanded to agents and universities (Clark and Phillips 43). Self-publishing sites adapted quickly to the wants of society, using newer technology and methods (Gallagher 246). Sites are also becoming better at providing services from editors, graphics, and other professionals to the authors. Authors can now work with professionals through the site's Content Media team, which works as a third-party contact. Authors can even choose from single types of editing, such as copyediting or proofreading, or multi-round editing packages (CreateSpace.com).

In addition, employees, especially editors, are leaving the traditional publishing industry because of the outdated way that the companies are run and the way they are treated as employees. A survey of independent editors had people answer why they became an independent editor. "Fed up with internal company politics" or "escape from a large company" were often listed as strong factors for leaving their positions to become independent editors. "Lack of prospects in previous job" was also a common answer (Baverstock et al, "Who are the Independent Editors" 50). The opportunities for editors in a traditional company to be able to get a promotion or a raise are diminishing. There are very few opportunities for employees to rise up in the ranks in traditional publishing unless they jump from company to company (O'Connor). As editors leave or are let go, the workload increases for those left behind. This was the number two complaint made by those at publishing houses in a 2016 survey by *Publishers Weekly*, right after low salary (Milliot, "The PW Publishing"). Many editors now do more freelance work or "work for hire," but still do not enjoy working with traditional publishers. Freelance editors receive contracts from publishers for a fixed fee. Many editors do not appreciate this as they often have to do more work on certain manuscripts over a long period of time, but they still get paid the same

amount as when they work on easier manuscripts (Baverstock, “How the Independent Editors” 128).

On the other hand, many editors who formerly worked with traditional publishing companies say that when they work independently or with self-publishing companies they get much better treatment and appreciation. An editor who was interviewed for a survey on the role of independent editors says, “I’ve left the ‘traditional publishing industry’ behind – they pay badly and treat you badly. Non-publishers pay more and are much more appreciative of what you can do for them” (Baverstock, et al. “How the Role of Independent Editors” 129). Another editor interviewed for the same survey says, “Publishers ... haven’t yet learned that they are competing with self-publishing and unsigned authors for our services – authors who are often willing to pay more for our services and accept more reasonable schedules for the work” (Baverstock et al. “How the Role of Independent Editors” 129). Because of the way that traditional companies are treating their editors, they are losing them to the very industry that they are competing with.

Standards and Quality of Work

Stereotypically, works by self-publishers are not very good quality, containing inaccuracies and bad writing in general. Critics accuse self-publishing companies of “flooding the book field with titles that have gone through no quality check and have no market, written by people whose work is not worthy of publication” (Haugland 13). This low quality writing is combined with the use of “gimmicks” or ways that authors try and sell their books. They include 99 cent or free eBook giveaways, Kindle giveaways, and even nasty reviews of other books to drive down ratings (Foster). Because of the cheap prices and free giveaways, readers are beginning to care less about the work itself and more about the efficiency with

which they can read or gain access to a book. Carolan and Evain, authors of multiple books on the book industry, say that “Value no longer resides primarily in content development. Readers or users are looking for ways to interact with material in a convenient and intelligent manner” (295). Though these methods do sell books, it also crowds the book world with too many bad quality books and not enough good quality books.

Traditional publishers are known to have much higher standards of quality and production than self-publishers, which has helped their advantage over the years. Traditional companies are usually considered much more professional and are known to have better produced works. Carolan and Evain say that, “In many ways, a publisher’s stamp is a gauge of quality, indicating to the reader that the text has undergone a rigorous selection process and thorough editorial process” (292). Traditional publishers have very high standards for what manuscripts they accept. Books need to be well-written, with perfect grammar, spelling, and easy-to-read prose. Publishers also want books that are unique and have new ideas, but that can still be marketable (Legat). Traditional publishers want authors’ manuscripts sent in in very specific formats and through certain channels. Many larger publishers will not take new authors or their manuscripts unless they receive them through a literary agent (Pimsleur). Literary agents are hired by authors to read manuscripts and suggest revisions to ready a manuscript for a publisher. Agents also act as an intermediary between author and publishing company, presenting the manuscript to different publishers and later negotiating contracts (Greco et al. 185). Agents often look through the manuscript for a content edit, making sure that everything makes sense and nothing needs to be rewritten. If it does, then it is sent back to the author with suggestions. Agents are the gatekeepers for the publishing industry and make sure that only the best books make it to the editors’ desk. Literary agents

will only accept new authors “if convinced that the author has something to say and can say it effectively. If not, negotiations end” (Greco et al. 185). Publishers also hire acquisitions editors whose job is to examine a potential manuscript for writing level and marketability and decide if it is worth publishing or not. After being accepted, manuscripts would go through multiple rounds of editing, from content edit, to line edit, to copy edit, to multiple rounds of proofreading (Gardner, “Do Publishers Edit”). The manuscript is reviewed by an editor hired by the publisher (in-house or freelance) who does a content edit and makes suggestions for rewrites if needed. Then the book is sent to a copyeditor who checks for correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and consistency. Finally, the manuscript is sent to a proofreader who looks for any mistakes that were missed (Laube).

Unfortunately, the higher standards and attention to quality has declined over the years. Publishers are no longer taking as much time to edit and check their manuscripts, even after they have been accepted to publish. Traditional publishers used to hire “battalions of full-time copyeditors and proofreaders,” but now they do not (Heffernan). Traditional publishers do not take as much time to do their own editing, and if they do, they hire a freelance editor. Traditional publishers also expect their authors to come to them with “essentially ‘finished’ manuscripts” and projects that can be finished quickly rather than books that are good products (Baverstock et al. “How the Role of Independent Editors” 129). Companies have also published books because they are easily marketable rather than because they are good quality. Piety writes about books that have been published by reputable publishers that are riddled with inaccuracies, including Bill O’Reilly’s *Killing Lincoln*, which sold mostly because of the popularity of the television host. Another book Piety mentions is *A Million Little Pieces*, which was supposedly a memoir by James Frey, in which Frey tells

his life story. Later, the book was exposed as being mostly fabricated, but still sold extremely well. Random House apparently did not find it necessary to check on the facts that Frey posed in his book (Piety 21). While not all books are altered or filled with mistakes, the editing standards of traditionally published books are considered to be lowering as published books, especially academic books, are being found with mistakes. One independent editor says, “Traditional publishers appear to have given up on meticulous copy-editing practices. I am constantly finding academic books published by reputable houses which are full of factual errors and inaccuracies, not to mention straight poor writing” (Baverstock et al, “How the Role of the Independent Editor” 129). It seems like the majority of readers do not seem to care about the writing, as long as the plot is engaging. For example, the *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy is littered with bad grammar and bad writing in general, but has still sold at least 125 million copies worldwide and has been made into two hit movies, with the third on the way, overall making its author, E.L. James, at least 75 million pounds (over 93 million dollars). Publishers made no changes to the originally self-published series and left it the way it was originally written, as fanfiction. The popularity of series in spite of the bad writing has changed the game for publishers and the literary world, making them realize that readers simply want a good story (Ellis-Petersen). The lowered quality of writing in traditionally published books may cause people to wonder why authors should bother to go through a traditional publishing company when they can do their own publishing.

Standards play into publishing in other ways too: traditional publishers do not accept very many books that come to them to be considered. Many traditional publishers have extremely high standards for the books that they accept. They rarely accept books that have not been backed by an agent. Author Julia Pimsleur says that it is “...nearly impossible to get

your manuscript read by an editor without having a literary agent send it in..." ("Traditional Publishing vs. Self-Publishing"). If the genre is not popular, then chances are it will not be accepted either. Even those who work in publishing have had a hard time getting their books published. Adrian Liang, who writes under the pen name Adrienne Wood, is an author of western and contemporary romance novels. Despite being married to the VP of sales and marketing at Diamond Book Distributors, she still could not get a book deal or even an agent. Her husband, Kuo-Yu (Ku) Liang, says, "When we started, I thought, 'I know all the book buyers and editors, this will be easy. I'll just call them up.' But I got an education about publishing... the responses were all the same: "not looking for anything new," and, "western romance is dead, try writing paranormal"' (Reid, "PW Select"). Wood eventually turned to self-publishing with better results; she sold several thousand copies in four days (Reid, "PW Select"). There is no fear of rejection when an author chooses to self-publish. Traditional companies' high standards do not always jibe with the falling standards for their works.

Solutions for Traditional Publishers

Traditional publishers are not going out of business. For example, Penguin Random House and Harper Collins reported that last year (2015) they made hundreds of millions of dollars in annual profits (Mance). In fact, Penguin Random House made 3.7 billion euros (over four billion dollars) in revenue in 2015; an 11.8 percent increase from 2014 (Milliot, "Penguin Random House"). In addition, the traditional publishing companies' large network and marketing connections has helped them to stay in business, bringing in readers all around the world (Gardner, "Do Publishers Market"). This ability to reach readers and the fact that publishers handle the production process, along with the publishers established prestige, also keeps bringing in new authors (Reid, "PW Select"; Pimsleur).

However, as self-publishing grows, the opinion on traditional publishers slowly decreases. Though their prestige is still mostly intact, many professionals from, for example, Amazon, still doubt if traditional publishers are going to be needed in the future (Auletta). Authors have such a hard time getting into traditional publishing houses that they instead go into self-publishing. Infinity Publishing, an online self-publishing service, says that “Each day, agents and book publishers receive a staggering number of inquiries and manuscripts. Ultimately, less than 1 percent of authors seeking to be published traditionally are successful. Thousands of authors and their books are rejected daily” (“What is Traditional Book Publishing?”). Despite the goal of many self-publishers for traditional publishing, some successful self-publishers have no desire to accept the traditional publishing paradigm. Hugh Howey, best-selling author of the sci-fi series *Wool*, has turned down multiple deals with traditional publishers saying, “It’s hard to think about giving up a 70% royalty for an 18% royalty... I’d be giving up existing sales [with a traditional deal]. I’d be giving up the freedom to write what I want. To publish as quickly as I want. But publishers don’t seem to realize this” (qtd. in Deahl, “Self-Made Bestseller”). Professionals are leaving the industry to go to self-publishing, because it is more up to date and they are treated much better.

Traditional companies need to learn from their competition and accept change. Traditional publishers often feel threatened by trends that could potentially threaten their bottom line and the way they have run for years. These new trends, such as eBooks, are often more beneficial for the reader in price and accessibility, which unfortunately, has never been what traditional companies have focused on, and so they feel threatened by the idea of lack of control in the marketplace (Howey). On the other hand, the self-publishing industry has been successfully growing, especially for this reason. It is time that traditional publishers

take an example from the self-publishing industry and improve their business in three ways, which are discussed next.

Use Self-Publishing Models

Traditional publishing companies can not only learn from the rise of the self-publishing industry, but also use the advantages of self-publishing to their own advantage. Some traditional publishers have already started doing this by using self-publishing sites and forums as a way to find new authors (Clark and Phillips 45). Many successful self-published authors have been approached by traditional companies and asked to make a deal to publish their books. For example, John Locke, the very first author to sell one million self-published eBooks, was approached by Simon & Schuster to print and sell his books. The same thing happened to author Amanda Hocking, who signed a two million dollar four-book deal with St. Martin's Press after she sold one million copies of her nine, self-published eBooks (Deahl, "Moving Beyond"). Simon and Schuster Pocket Books approached author Adrienne Wood after her self-published books sold several thousand copies in four days (Reid, "PW Select"). Traditional publishers are starting to offer self-published authors contracts and the opportunity to reach more readers. By purposefully searching out self-published successes, traditional publishers can profit economically from the challenges to their industry.

Traditional companies can also create their own self-publishing imprints. Simon & Schuster started a self-publishing branch, Archway Publishing, in 2012, which has been running successfully since then (Palmer). Penguin Random House (PRH) did something similar by buying Author Solutions, which operates a variety of self-publishing imprints. However, the company ended up facing a lawsuit for failing to pay the authors royalties and for charging excessive amounts for services that did not deliver as promised (Mance). The

lawsuit was dropped in 2015, but PRH still ended up selling the Author Solutions by the end of the year (Milliot, “Author Solutions Sold”). While PRH had the right idea, it did not consider the difference in business strategy between self-publishing and traditional ways of publishing. Traditional companies can still create self-publishing imprints and reap the benefits of having less investment in marketing, publicity, and management, but they need to follow the cultural conventions of the self-publishing industry and keep in place the benefits that self-published authors have come to expect from writing and marketing their own work. Otherwise, traditional publishers might as well not pursue gaining a self-publishing imprint at all.

If traditional companies decide to create these self-publishing imprints, then they can use them as a test market for possible books. Authors that demonstrate success through the self-publishing imprint can then be offered an actual contract with the company, which makes more sense than the current “print and pray” method. Traditional publishers can also use their self-publishing imprints to test for what their readers like. Even CreateSpace offers its services to traditional publishers to use as a test market for new books (CreateSpace.com). Many self-publishing authors today use blogs and fanfiction websites to post their preliminary drafts of their stories or to test theories for new stories. Again, the *Fifty Shades of Grey* trilogy is an example of fanfiction turned bestseller. Some fanfiction authors post small sections of their story at a time. This allows their readers to make comments and criticisms, and the authors use them to better structure the next installment. This method keeps readers coming back and helps demonstrate to the authors what the readers want. If traditional companies know what readers will buy, they can find and make deals with authors who can write what readers want, which makes good financial sense. For an example, author Brittany

Geragotelis published her book *Life's A Witch* one chapter at a time on the fanfiction site Wattpad. In six months, her book attained six million reads, and she eventually published on CreateSpace. Her book was popular enough to spark a multi-house bidding war won by Simon & Schuster, which put her book on the shelves in 2012 (Joe). By utilizing the methods used by self-publishers, traditional publishing houses can produce books that will be more successful, and will, in turn, bring them more profit. In addition, authors, though still going through self-publishing, will continue to see that it is worth it to eventually go through traditional publishing and that it will not be unnecessary in the long run.

Hire More Editors

The decline of editors and editing in traditional publishing companies is leading to the decline of the standards of book quality generally, which makes professionals in the industry question the need of traditional publishers and editors. As self-publishing improves, the gradually lowering quality of traditionally published books is only helping to lessen the desire of authors to go the traditional route. Traditional companies feel the pressure from the self-publishing industry in relation to their economic success. More and more publishers are pressing to push out books quickly and so skip the multiple steps that used to go into the editing of a manuscript (Heffernan). The decline in in-house editing has also caused a debate between professionals that is “influenced by the fact that skilled human intervention is expensive, and the invisibility of editing makes its ‘added value’ very hard to quantify” (Greenberg 13). Basically, employing editors and focusing on editorial work is becoming hard to achieve with the economic pressures of today, especially the pressure coming from the success of the self-publishing industry. Author and literary agent Rachelle Gardner claims that publishers still pay attention to editing, but “many publishers, regardless of where

they started on the “editorial spectrum,” have had to cut their budgets, and so there may be less attention to detail. It’s an unfortunate by-product of the difficult financial structure of publishing” (Gardner, “Do Publishers Edit”). This is not the best situation, as traditional companies are issuing books whose quality is less than satisfactory. For example, Suzanne Collin’s bestseller *The Hunger Games* is full of misplaced modifiers, an overabundance of commas, and poor sentence structure (Varden). Seemingly, as the financial times get worse, traditional publishers focus more on their bottom line and not on the quality of their work.

As traditional publishers produce work that is on the same level as other public and unprofessional sources, professionals start to get the impression that the traditional route will no longer be needed. Alternatively, self-publishing and the Internet are acceptable publishing routes. Many self-publishing advocates believe that general readers are as good as professional editors, citing Wikipedia as an example. However, Wikipedia articles are in constant flux, with some controversial articles having to be locked to prevent constant “edit wars” (Greenberg 12). As the number of in-house editors decline, the public and authors themselves complain about the consequences of poor editing, but publishers are unlikely to do anything as the overall standards for editing slowly fall (Greenberg 13). The lack of editors is contributing to the declining quality of books that traditional companies are producing. As a result of the growing Internet, technology, and “readers-as-editors” many believe that publishers and editors are unnecessary. Greenberg references a quote that states,

Most professions exist because there is a scarce resource that requires ongoing management . . . In these cases professionals become gatekeepers... A profession exists to solve a hard problem, one that requires some sort of specialization’. When technology brings down the costs of reproduction and distribution, and users can do it

for themselves, he adds, there is nothing unique about professional publishing anymore and it becomes a bottleneck, not a service (qtd in Greenberg 14).

Greenberg then asks, "...just because we can do something, or it costs less to do it, does that mean we should? And if we do, should we be mindful of the potential hidden costs?" (14).

As online content grows, it requires more gatekeepers rather than fewer. Editors are needed as interpreters and perhaps curators or fact-checkers of the mass volume of information produced today. As the amount of editors in traditional companies decline, so does the quality of their books and, as a result, so does the opinion that traditional publishing is necessary. Self-published books are known for their lack of editing and bad quality. Editors are needed to maintain the advantage of the idea that traditional publishing is professional and is also necessary to create good quality books.

Technology also cannot replace editors, no matter how advanced the technology. Many traditional publishing companies are requiring authors to edit their work before it comes in, rather than hire in-house editors to do it after the book is accepted (Greenberg 13).

Many self-publishing authors also still tend to use editing technology instead of hiring an editor, assumedly because it is cheaper, and they do not quite understand what an editor does. However, machines and automated systems simply cannot replace actual humans as editors, and both traditional and self-publishers would do well to pay for editorial services. Even authors who are going through traditional publishing are sending in sloppier and sloppier work due to spell-check. Geoff Shandler, [former] editor-in-chief at Little, Brown and Company says that "Use of the word processor has resulted in a substantial decline in author discipline and attention...it is amazing how little review seems to have occurred before the text is sent to the editor" (qtd in Heffernan). There is more to books and writing than correct

grammar and punctuation. Sourcebooks' CEO, Domonique Raccach, writes that "Just as "spell check" won't produce a cleanly written text (in lieu of writers, editors and proofreaders) automation and technology are aids but not an all-encompassing solution for eBook production (at least not at this time). You still need human beings to check it all" ("On eBooks"). Automated systems also cannot interpret the context of the information it is editing. Greenberg writes that "The unmoored nature of online content arguably increases the need for editing, rather than the opposite. Since an online text can be 'found' by the reader in many different ways, its meaning can be lost unless the different possible contexts are anticipated." (14) This also goes for editing books, not just online content. Carolan and Evain say that "Editors play the crucial role of deciphering the meaning that authors wish to convey and rendering it accessible to a wider public in a coherent manner" (292). Author David Emblidge says that

No matter what new technology may offer to the Editor - Author relationship, nothing technological can substitute for imagination, good taste, and an artful use of language and illustrative materials in making a good book. These are not technical skills, nor do they depend on technology, either hardware or software (qtd. in Carolan and Evain 293).

Edited content is what sets traditionally published books apart from self-published books. Technology can only do so much when it comes to interpreting and editing the human language. Computers cannot replace the human mind's creative ability or interpretation. Both traditionally and non-traditionally published books would benefit from more editorial service and guidance, despite economic difficulties and budget cuts.

The decline of editors and editing in traditional publishing companies is also indirectly helping the reputation of the self-publishing industry. Self-publishing's reputation is continually rising as more authors seek the help of independent editors to increase the quality of their work. By driving away their editors, traditional publishers are only feeding the competition as more and more editors are working freelance and with self-publishing sites. Ryan Joe says, "Many publishing pros—particularly editors—went independent. At the same time, self-published authors began to seek out those people. Diane Mancher, a traditional publishing industry professional, says that "The two kind of met up... The smarter authors were availing themselves of help, and suddenly there was help" (qtd. in Joe). The transition of professional editors from traditional companies to self-publishing companies is only helping to improve the opinions of readers and professionals on the overall quality of self-published books. This in turn helps to improve the reputation of the self-publishing industry, which will eventually cause the view of traditional publishing companies to decline. Traditional companies need to return to their high standards of edited work. By hiring in-house editors and returning to the extensive editing process, traditionally published books will have fewer mistakes less often, and authors and professionals may realize that the traditional industry is a necessary part of the book industry.

Use Print-on-Demand Technology

Traditional publishers need to take advantage of newer publishing and business models. According to Miral Sittar, CEO and founder of BiblioCrunch, "[Traditional publishing is] the last industry to go digital" (qtd. In Joe). Their printing technology is outdated and so are their business models. Many publishers use the "print and pray" model of publishing: they print a certain number of books and hope that they all sell (Hughes 296). Traditional companies also

use a method called “windowing,” a process whereby publishers hold back eBooks in hope of selling more the more expensive printed hardback books first (Howey). Windowing is a good idea in theory, as it keeps the more expensive version of a book on the shelves for longer, which in turn will, as the publishers believe, bring in more revenue and help them keep control of the market (Howey). The readers do not agree. They often become frustrated that the book they want to read is too expensive or is not in the format that they want.

Windowing can also get publishers bad reviews; Amazon readers eventually revolted against the windowing process and hammered the company with one star reviews until the publishers gave in on certain titles (Howey). While windowing was at one time an effective strategy to maximize profit of a new release, the process may have outlived its time. Carolan and Evain say that “At a time when information is readily available at people’s fingertips through the click of a mouse, content alone is no longer sufficient to generate revenue” (295). Readers expect content to be fast and convenient. They do not always want to wait to read one certain book and so spend their money somewhere else; money that could have been spent on the book that publishers waited to release. One example of how windowing loses traditional companies money occurred in January 2010, when HarperCollins released a new book, *Game Change*; the eBook not being released until the end of February. The hardcover copies sold out so fast that for three weeks the stores were out of stock. The author and the publishers ended up losing money because readers found other books to read instead of waiting for *Game Change* to come back to stores (Auletta). Traditional publishers’ business models are out of sync with the technology and society’s needs. Their way of distributing books is too slow to keep up with the readers’ desire to get new books quickly and easily.

Traditional companies still use offset printing, a system by which ink is transferred from a metal plate to paper. The paper is then cut and bound into a book. Using offset requires a higher initial amount of cash, but is cheaper in cost-per-unit as print runs increase. In other words, the more books that are printed, the cheaper it becomes. Offset printing is also good for special details in books like larger paper, colored images, or high-quality reproductions (Schiff and Daniel). However, if books do not sell as well, offset printing will often result in unsold inventory and lost money (Schiff and Daniel). For an example, self-published phenomenon, John Locke, made a deal with Simon & Schuster (S&S) for his *Donovan Creed* series. Despite the popularity of the eBooks, the first of the series only sold 6000 print copies, which is a very low number for a company as big as S&S, which has published books that have sold over a million copies. S&S did not reveal how many copies were printed, but was quoted saying that "...the sales numbers were not what it had hoped for, or expected" (Deahl, "Moving Beyond"). The S&S VP of client publisher services, Steve Black, was also quoted saying that the second novel in Locke's series would have a lower first printing than its predecessor (Deahl, "Moving Beyond"). Presumably S&S printed more than 6000 copies of Locke's book. The company probably lost money from overprinting and probably had books left over. Traditional publishers need to take advantage of the changing technological times and learn additional ways to produce their books. They can do this is through looking at how self-publishing printing methods.

Self-publishing companies and smaller traditional publishers use the method of print-on-demand (POD). Beginning in the 1990's, publishers started creating digital files of books and saving them. This then allowed them to sell single copies of a book as it was sold or to print a small run of books to keep in inventory, also known as short run digital printing,

SRDP. By using POD, instead of printing out a large number of books, self-publishers print whatever is needed at the time (Haugland 1). A book can also be printed on demand at a quarter of the cost of a traditional book (Carolan and Evain 294). POD can also be cheaper for printing runs of 500 or more and can deliver orders in days rather than weeks (Rosenthal). Companies mostly look at the cost of manufacturing and unit acquisition when planning book production, instead of looking at what they have left on the shelves. They produce 3,000 copies of a book to meet the cost budgeted, when they only need 1,500. If companies sold 100 percent of their stock then this would be fine, but that is rarely the case. Instead, the stock piles up and this costs the companies more and more money. If a publisher prints only one month's worth of stock at a time, then they could use their capital eleven times over and save money in supply chain costs and inventory stock (Hughes 298). Using POD, companies can invest money in multiple titles at once, but in lower quantities. Hughes says, "Consider these two options: a publisher can invest \$10,000 for a year in one title that sells 100 copies a month or invest \$10,000 in 10 titles that sell 100 copies per month" (297). While the cost-per-unit decreases as larger runs are made with offset printing, POD printing is cheaper with smaller runs of books. Offset printing is also better for additional details in books, but if a self-publisher wants a simple, run-of-the-mill print of a book—regular paper size, black and white text, etc.—POD is a good go-to. (Schiff and Daniel).

Traditional publisher should start implementing POD as a printing method alongside offset. As sales lower on certain books over time, publishers can still keep the titles on the shelves, by doing smaller print runs with POD. Haugland says, "When the existing stock of a slow-selling but still useful title is gone, the publisher is no longer forced to choose between letting the title go out of print or making a risky commitment to produce and warehouse

another several thousand copies” (3). Publishers can also save on both overhead and variable costs by not having to store and ship already printed inventory (Gallagher 245). More traditional publishers could also use POD for their newer books. If it is unknown how a book will sell, it is easier to only print a small amount instead of large amount. While offset printing has its advantages, POD can be used to prevent miscalculations in the future.

Conclusion

The book publishing industry is not going to disappear any time soon. Carolan and Evain say that “Whilst the future of publishing is unclear, there are some certainties; readers will continue to read, writers will continue to write and publishers will continue publishing. What is uncertain is the form that it will take on” (296). Today, the traditional publishing industry and the self-publishing industry are competing to gain more authors and produce more books for their readers. The publishing industry is always facing competition and threats, though. Author and journalist Ken Auletta says that “Publishing exists in a continual state of forecasting its own demise; at one major house, there is a running joke that the second book published on the Gutenberg press was about the death of the publishing business” (“Publish or Perish”). Competition is not a new concept to the book publishing industry, and neither is the outlook that the industry is declining.

However, traditional publishers can overcome the idea that their industry is dying. Traditional publishers need to learn to adopt successful new ideas as they come along. Hughes says, “Today, publishers are closely approaching a point where they can no longer sit back, watch the changes and wait for the effect” (295). If traditional companies do not learn to adapt and continue with past practices, the role in the book industry will only continue to

diminish. By combining their original advantages with those of the self-publishing industry, the traditional publishing industry can remain competitive.

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