

1. What do you see as the biggest differences between traditional vs independent publishing? (For especially the author, but also the reader if you think of any)

I decided to focus on the rest of the questions, but if you follow this link there's a handy graph near the bottom that will give you really good break down:

<https://publishdrive.com/self-publishing-vs-traditional-publishing.html#:~:text=If%20you're%20self%2Dpublishing,probably%20the%20creative%20direction%2C%20too.>

Looking back on this question, retaining control of my intellectual property is extremely important to me. I need to make the important decisions, like who illustrates my cover and who edits my book. In a time where AI is on the rise, I like being able to work one-on-one with other humans.

2. What was your process to publishing that ultimately led you to going the independent route?

Now, a lot of people don't know about the gauntlet that is the publishing process, and I mean, I didn't until I had to do it myself. The main thing to know is that authors can't approach a publisher. You need an agent first. Do you know what the rough odds of getting an agent are?

About 1 in 1000. (A whopping 0.1 percent chance).

Applying to an agent is like applying for a job. It's an intensive and time-consuming process where you write a query letter, provide summaries, and jump through whatever other hoops the agent may have. In my first round of querying, I applied to thirty agents.

No bites.

Well, bar one, who requested my manuscript on the first day, but didn't respond until 700 days later. I hear that's actually pretty fast in the publishing industry.

After my first round of applications didn't get me anywhere, I felt quite dreadful, but I wasn't ready to give up. I worked with a developmental editor and I rewrote my book—once, twice, thrice—I lost count of revisions.

And then I tried applying to agents again. Seventy more of them, to be exact. It was hours of work—it took years—not days—years. And what did I have to show for it?

One hundred rejections.

No one wanted to work with me. No one wanted my book. Right about then, giving up was pretty tempting. It takes a lot, to put yourself out there every day, and face rejection over and over.

But I knew, in my heart, I'd written something special.

So, I decided to pivot—to find another way, because there is always another way.

And, I kept going.

Because it wasn't going to be an agent getting my story out there, or a publishing agency, it was me. They weren't going to stop me, because I wasn't going to let them. I perfected my story, I begged all my friends to give me feedback, I took editing courses—I realized my own inadequacy—and hired a professional line editor. I worked with a formatter. I found an illustrator (all of which are steps that came with their own setbacks but I'm trying to keep it brief). I did a lot of googling, I did even more crying, I ignored all the people who said independently published books don't sell, and on June 6th, 2024 I published my book myself.

3. What does self publishing involve? What steps does an author have to take once they finish writing their manuscript?

Once I finished my manuscript I foolishly started querying, and when I realized that wasn't going anywhere, I hired a developmental editor. Then I rewrote my book and tried querying again. When it again, didn't go anywhere I decided to fully embrace the independent publishing route. Next, I hired a line editor, an illustrator, and a formatter.

I will say, there are SO many steps that you never consider as a reader. Truly, I never thought about how a book in my hands could become a book in YOUR hands. You need to consider things like sizing. Will it be 6x9? You need to acquire an ISBN. You need to know where you're going to sell your book (I chose Amazon KDP and IngramSpark). You need to learn how to use both of those platforms. You need to learn their requirements for the cover (CMYK or RGB?). You need to pay attention to page count and how it effects your spine width. Etc Etc Etc.

Like I said, if you go the independent route, you're going to become a pro at sifting through YouTube videos and old Reddit threads.

4. How does one go about acquiring editors, formatters, cover artists, etc. for their book?

You can find all of those subcontractors on Reedsy, that's where I found my first two editors. You can also just google them. Finding a cover artist was a difficult venture. I searched them online, and found some on Instagram, but it seemed all of them were booked or only worked with publishing houses. However, I was persistent, and I stumbled across my current illustrator on Instagram. I loved her style and thought we'd make a great team. I messaged her, and against all odds, she responded! We've been working together ever since. With my first novel, I hired a formatter, however I found the process wasn't really for me. I like to have the ability to edit my work right up to the deadline. With my second novel, I purchased editing software to use myself. Atticus, Velum, or Adobe InDesign are all options.

5. How does one know when their novel is ready to be published when doing it on their own?

For some of us, it never feels ready. One day you just get sick of looking at it.

6. Is there any kind of breakdown of finances you could provide? Or at least a ballpark number of what someone should expect to invest in publishing their own novel?

This one is tough because the range is so vast. You could do everything yourself and publish for free, or you could hire the best of the best and spend tens of thousands of dollars. With my first novel, I spent around ten thousand dollars. Keep in mind, my word count was quite high for a debut novel, around 120,000 words.

Some advice. More words = more production costs (editing, etc). And, more words means more paper, which means less royalties for you. I highly recommend keeping those early books below 100,000 words.

7. What ways have you tried to get your book out there? Are there certain methods that you've noticed work better than others?

Personally, I've found success using book groups on Facebook and hiring influencers on Instagram. I haven't had much luck with paid marketing on Amazon and such.

8. Do you have any advice for writers trying to publish their own book?

My most treasured piece of advice is that you keep going. There will be a million reasons to quit, and you need to find a million and one reasons to continue. In retrospect, I don't (often) think of all the agents who rejected me. But I do think about every single reader who's

approached me saying that I've written their favourite book. That wouldn't have happened if I'd stopped, if I'd let all those rejections stall me.

You must keep going.

Do it for all the people who's favourite book, or poem, or anything, might never exist without you. And do it for yourself. As an author, there's no richer feeling than holding your book after you refused to quit.

You can do it.

If you just keep going.