

# MAKING YOUR BOOK MARK

**YOUR RESEARCH IS DONE. YOUR MANUSCRIPT IS COMPLETE, BUT** you lack the time to find an agent and publisher. Now, developments in online publishing alternatives help novice authors take publishing into their own hands.

Web sites like BookLocker ([booklocker.com](http://booklocker.com)), IstBooks Library ([1stbooks.com](http://1stbooks.com)), and Xlibris ([xlibris.com](http://xlibris.com)) offer subsidy-publishing services that are making waves with aspiring writers. These publishers help authors distribute their books on a print-on-demand (POD) basis in exchange for 10% to 40% of royalties and up-front fees of between \$199 and \$500. These fees generally cover the book's design, interior layout, printing, shipping, and distribution to buyers like Amazon.com and Barnes & Noble.

These services have several advantages for authors. They get the books into readers' hands within six months—much quicker than traditional publishing methods—and they are not as selective, so there is less competition. On the other hand, the fees for subsidy services do not cover expenses for editing or marketing, which are extremely important factors in publishing success.

"With subsidy publishing, authors market their own books, and success is usually gauged by how much effort that author puts in," says Joseph Keslar, director of marketing for Xlibris.

M.J. Rose, coauthor of *How to Publish and Promote Online*, self-published her novel, *Lip Service*, in 1998. She admits that only a handful of self- or subsidy-published fiction books gain success. "Non-fiction sells better than fiction when published this way because it is easier for the author to find the niche market for the book," she says.

Rose suggests authors use the following strategies:

- Have your book professionally edited and spend your resources on the cover design. These elements are costly but worth the extra expense because of their marketing value.
- Spend at least four hours a week on publicity. Find a niche for your book. Give review copies to all the Web sites and online magazines that pertain to your target market. Write to the Webmasters and editors to introduce yourself. Offer them free copies of your book and encourage them to run contests with the book as the prize.
- Make your book available online as much as possible. If your book is a POD book, publish an e-book as well. Make sure your book is Palm Pilot-compatible ([www.peanutpress.com/faq.cgi#48](http://www.peanutpress.com/faq.cgi#48)). "More and more people are reading books on their Palm Pilots, especially businesspeople," Rose says.
- No matter how you decide to publish your book, do your research first. Identify your goals. How much money do you want to spend and how much time can you devote to touting your work?

After all, publishing is a business.—KRISTEN CHANLEY 

