

## Information for Authors Publishing with MSI Press

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### The nature of a small press

MSI Press is a small-press publisher. Authors who publish with MSI Press enjoy many, but not all, of the advantages of a large publisher and experience significant advantages over vanity publishing (self-publishing). Let's look at each of these kinds of publishing:

#### Large publishers (typically):

- pay an advance;
- pay royalties on books sold (usually 3-10%, paid annually);
- do not require any up-front financial investment from the author;
- publish advance copies in order to get your book reviewed before publication;
- get your book reviewed in newspapers and on talk shows (and expect you to help actively in this kind of marketing, not just show up on command; in fact, you might need to hire your own publicist if you want to make the book known to large numbers of people);
- provide books at discount for authors for any purpose, including for book signings that generally authors are expected to set up for themselves;
- advertise in newspapers, magazines, websites;
- obtain an ISBN number for your book;
- arrange for distribution of your book through Bowker's (Books in Print) and one or more international distributors (Ingrams and Baker & Taylor are the best known);
- get your books into brick-and-mortar and online bookstores;
- copyright the book for you and file the copyright with the Library of Congress;
- get your books onto the shelves of the Library of Congress and an LOC number assigned to them (LOC numbers are usually necessary before public and university libraries will purchase books—they need that number in order to shelve the book);
- generally do a one-time printing unless the book sells well (an increasing number are using print-on-demand); may not keep the book in print once the first small printing (typically 1000-1500) sells out
- copyedit your books as a matter of course but will expect you to proofread your own galleys;
- have final control over the cover design;
- average number of book copies sold, according to the latest research: 1000 [of course, there are always the NYTimes bestsellers that sell hundreds of thousands and even millions of copies, but these are rare]

#### Small publishers (typically):

- cannot afford to pay an advance;
- pay royalties, generally 3-10% paid out annually on copies sold;
- do not require any up-front payment from authors;
- some, but not all, publish advance copies and/or send galleys to pre-publication reviewers although it is less likely that they will be pre-reviewed since the large publishers have a better "in" with *Library Journal* and major newspapers;
- send the book and book reviews to a specified number of newspapers or pertinent journals in the hopes of it being reviewed (for major publicity, you should consider hiring your own publicist; some small publishers will help you make contact);

- provide books to authors at a discount for any purpose, including book signings that authors are expected to set up on their own (sometimes small publishers will help new authors with these);
- advertise but to a lesser extent than the large publishers because of financial limitations;
- obtain an ISBN for your book;
- arrange for distribution of your book through Bowker's (*Books in Print*) and one or more international distributors; make the book available to stores wanting to stock it (generally through one of the distributors)—usually brick-and-mortar stores will not often stock small-press book unless there is a local request to do so but sometimes will take them on consignment (paid for when sold) at local author request; online stores carry them;
- copyright the book for you and file it with the Library of Congress;
- obtain an LOC number for the book, which generally ensures that the book is shelved at the LOC;
- often will keep the book in print even if only small quantities sell;
- copyedit your book but expect you to proofread your own galleys;
- may allow you some control over the book cover design;
- average number of book copies sold: 100-1000 [of course, again, there is the rare runaway bestseller].

#### Vanity publishing & self-publishing through an on-demand printer or distributor:

- no advances;
- no royalties for self-publishing, but you get the whole income; typically, income for vanity publishing is higher per book than for small and large presses because you carry all the costs for marketing and are paying to have the book printed (costs that small and large presses take on);
- charge for typesetting, cover design, and printing;
- if you want advance copies, you have to pay for that—generally, the first printing is the final version of the book—it goes on the street the day it is printed (this means that most newspapers and journals will not review the book); do not advertise or market the book in any way—that is up to the author;
- vanity publishing may provide books at discount prices to authors;
- obtain ISBN;
- usually are connected with a distributor who can get books into online bookstores but not brick-and-mortar (but sometimes authors can get bookstores to take books on consignment or local stores to order);
- author must copyright the book on his/her own and send to the Library of Congress;
- are not usually able to get LOC cataloguing numbers, which means that the book is not listed in the LOC catalogue, not found on LOC shelves, and difficult to sell to libraries (the Library of Congress will only deal with presses that have met its publishing standards);
- will print as many copies as you want whenever you want since you are paying;
- you are responsible for copyediting and proofreading (of course, you can hire an editor);
- average number of book copies sold: 100-200 (depends entirely on the author) [and here, too, there is the rare runaway bestseller].

#### **Royalties**

MSI Press pays 10% on the retail price of all books sold. This is unusual. Most publishers pay on wholesale prices, which can mean that royalties can be a percentage of 50% or less of the cover price.

We always pay 10% of the cover price; if we decide to offer the book on sale for less, we “swallow” the difference.

In cases where more than one author has written the book, the royalty income is split proportionally, per instruction by the writing team.

Royalties of \$25 or more are paid in August of each year. If royalties are less than \$25, we generally roll them into the following year. Royalties are paid in US dollars unless some other arrangement has been made. On royalties over \$600, income tax is taken out for US authors.

### **Timelines**

Generally, it takes us 6-8 months to put out a book, depending upon the amount of copyediting needed and any typesetting difficulties (books with many graphics or photographs can take longer). Most authors receive their galleys for proofreading 2-4 months after we receive the final manuscript and are asked to return them in 1-2 weeks. Depending upon corrections needed, an advance copy of the book is generally ready in 2-3 weeks if an advance copy will be made available (in most cases, we do not do advance copies but professional galleys). The street date will be 3 months after the advance copy because we send advance copies to pre-reviewers to try to gain visibility and reviews for the book. Otherwise, the street date is 2-3 weeks after we receive the final galleys. Printing and shipping author copies to authors generally takes another month.

### **Author copies, author discounts**

All our authors receive a specified number of free books (generally 15), as well as the option to buy as many books as desired at 40% discount. We pay the shipping for the free books. Authors pay the shipping for the discounted books.

### **Printing and shipping**

We print and ship from two locations: USA (Tennessee) and UK (Milton Keynes). The latter location facilitates sales to Europe and the Middle East.

### **Distributors**

We have an agreement with Ingram’s to distribute our books worldwide. Most bookstores will purchase through Ingram’s. We offer a discount to Bowker’s (the publisher of *Books in Print*) for distribution of multiple copies of any of our books. We will explore other relationships where feasible.

We also have recently reached an agreement with Powell’s to distribute some of our authors at its online and brick-and-mortar chain of bookstores. This has been a significant breakthrough for us as a small press. Powell’s makes a decision about each book separately at this point in time in its working with us. We will send the required two copies of your book to Powell’s for examination. We cannot guarantee that Powell’s will add it to its inventory. If you know other regional chains of bookstores that

would be interested in working with us on consignment (or direct purchase at 50% of retail price), we are willing to look into those potential opportunities.

### **How books get to readers**

Book sellers may order through publishers or distributors (unless books are self-published, which creates many do-it-yourself difficulties; many, if not most, booksellers will not order directly from an author).

If a book is ordered from the publisher, in this case, us, we mail out the book from our in-house stock, or, if we have no stock on hand, we order from the printer. Since we do much print-on-demand of our books, the latter is the more typical experience. An order through us takes 2-3 weeks for delivery. We do sell on consignment (payment sent when books are sold) to bookstores, but for financial reasons, we have to limit the number of books that we can sell in this way. We also offer 30-120-day credit accounts to bookstores with an established positive credit profile. We do allow returns from booksellers, which open the doors to more booksellers than otherwise. We accept purchase orders from US educational institutions and educational/public libraries.

If a book is ordered from a distributor, the distributor, who usually has the book in stock (if not, we have to supply it), sends the book to the bookseller. We also allow returns through the distributor.

Individual readers can buy your book at bookstores, both online and brick-and-mortar. If a bookstore does not carry your book, it can order a copy for an interested reader through Ingram's or Bowker's, or through us. Bookstores will know how to do this and are almost always willing to do so; all they need is the ISBN.

Several of our authors have held local book launches, and we have worked personally with them to make the book launches successful. Generally, 50-100 books have been sold by each of the authors in this way.

We make every attempt to support authors in setting up book signings at book stores, organizations/institutions/churches, and special events. Where we hear of possibilities, we inform authors. For the timid author, we will make the initial phone call, but the author must take over from there. We will make sure that books arrive in time for the event, and where an examination copy is requested by the bookstore, organization/institution/church, or event, we will send one.

### **Bookstores**

Our books are carried in just about all the online bookstores. We sell to them wholesale via Ingram's. We attempt to get online reviews for our books as well. It is important that authors understand that we cannot guarantee that any online bookstore will agree to carry your book although, to date, all our books are carried by Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and several other online bookstores in several countries. What authors sometimes do not realize is that it takes some time for sales cycles to settle down. Typically, the process is that the online store lists the book as soon as it comes out in Books in Print or Ingram's catalogue with a street date. Based on that date, it will be listed as "pre-order" or "ships in X#

of weeks.” Once the book is on the street, each online store generally gets two books on consignment (consignment means that they pay when the book is sold) although that practice seems to be changing with the growing number of books published each year (in 2013, about one million new books were released), and the book is listed as “in stock.” If the book does not sell in a reasonable amount of time, the books are returned to the press. Generally, however, they do sell. Once the copies sell, more copies are ordered. In the beginning, it is typical for the bookstore to order a relatively few number of copies. While waiting for the books, the bookstore will list the books as “available in X# weeks.” For that reason, during the first few months of its street life, you will see your book listed variously as “in stock” and “ships in X# of weeks” on various online sites. Sometimes, a book sells more copies than predicted and the orders overwhelm the system. In that case, the book becomes “unavailable” for a while until the supply can catch up with the demand. It generally takes 3-4 months for the online stores to determine how many books they need to stock routinely—and it is still possible, if there is a sudden surge in orders months later, to see the occasional “unavailable” note on your book. That note should not last more than 2-3 weeks. All our books are available to all the online stores, so no book is truly unavailable. (There are books that are truly not available, but that is because their publishers do not use a national distributor; we do.)

We provide the Look Inside feature for Amazon, and we prepare ebooks in the major e-formats, which means that Amazon, B&N (book nook), and iBooks will carry it.

A few brick-and-mortar (Mom-and-Pop type) bookstores carry our book. We are constantly looking for ways to get our books into these stores on a wider scale. While the large-press publishers tend to have this market sewed up, we have opened the door a crack and will continue to seek ways to push that door wide open with others. Authors can help us by hyping their books to bookstores within travel distance of their homes or of places they are visiting. Go for the small stores; the major chains will not take anything that has not been approved by their central headquarters. We are in the process of requesting that the larger chains carry our books and will let our authors know if that happens.

We are also exploring ways to get our books into specialty stores. For example, we have been able to reach a little into the retreat book store market with our religious publications and college bookstores with our educational books, and we hope to see that expand considerably. We are looking into the airport shops, as well, but so far see little promise there. College professors have been good resources for marketing our educational books; a growing number order them for their classes and some college bookstores now routinely order from us. If you know of a niche-type of bookstore that might be willing to carry your book, let us know and we will make the contact (or, if you prefer, we will let you carry the ball and support your efforts). One of our authors, for example, found a good outlet for his book at health-food stores.

## **Libraries**

We sell direct to public and university libraries. Both kinds of libraries carry our books. Generally, for a library to shelve a book, there must be a MARC record at the Library of Congress. We are a LOC

cataloguing-in-progress publisher, which means that we receive a LOC shelving number (LCCN) and a MARC record is available prior to the release of the book.

We also occasionally, as finances permit, send copies of our books to the library association conventions and international book fairs. There are some organizations that will display books (for a fee) submitted by authors, and for our authors who are interested in doing that, we provide the contact information.

### **Catalogues**

We direct market via catalogue. Typically, we send a fall catalogue to university libraries since their ordering & financial cycle tends to run concurrently with the academic year. We send a spring catalogue to public libraries, which is more in keeping with their financial calendar.

We also make our catalogues available at some book shows; we don't go to many, and we don't go every year. We go when we can. We also have friends in the publishing and academic world and make arrangements for them to have our catalogues and sometimes samples of our books available at their booths when they go to conferences.

If you find that you have been able to build rapport with a local bookstore, we would request that, in addition to providing copies of your books and marketing materials, you give them a copy of our catalogue. It just might help another of our authors, and, who knows, another of our authors might help you in the same way.

### **Book Clubs**

We will provide books at deep discount (half-price, plus shipping & a very minimal handling fee for fewer than 20 books and free shipping for more than 20 books) to members of book clubs that will read the book as a "book club selection" and let us add its name to our marketing materials. The best way to succeed with book clubs is to approach your local library or newspaper archives to find out what clubs are in your area and then approach the president of the club with a copy of your book. If the club is associated with a local church, library, or center of some sort, we will provide a free copy of your book to the host organization.

### **Book Sales on Credit**

We accept purchase orders from libraries, universities, major distributing services, government organizations, and other institutions. Terms are 30 days, net, unless otherwise agreed.

We offer books on consignment to bookstores, retreat centers, organizations, and businesses. We reserve the right to restrict the number of books we offer on consignment at one time.

We do not offer credit to individuals, and we do not accept credit card orders. We prefer that individuals order through the online bookstores or local bookstores. All of our books are in stock on line and available for ordering through normal distribution channels to bookstores.

### **Promotions**

We offer free copies of your book for promotions that we determine to be mutually beneficial to MSI Press and the promoter. We will consider your suggestions but cannot acquiesce to every opportunity that comes along. You might provide author copies, however, if you feel strongly about a promotion.

## **Marketing**

We market your book, to the extent that our finances allow in a number of ways. We will send the book and marketing materials to the book review editors of at least ten newspapers with marketing materials, copies of which we will also provide to you for your own marketing use.

We will also send a marketing e-note about the release of the book to radio and television stations. While it is much more effective for authors to follow up on these contacts than publishers, we will act in whatever supportive role is necessary, which is more than the large publishers can do, given their mass approach and limited time.

We will also place an online ad and announce the book in *Foreword Magazine*, which keeps libraries informed of new book releases. We will include your book in our direct mail catalogues, and when possible, we will advertise your book in the larger advertising media; we, for example, do periodically advertise our better selling books and books of our most actively involved authors in the New York Review of Independent Books, which has an immense circulation.

Sometimes we have other opportunities for marketing: book shows, competitions, give-aways, blogs. We cannot promise that our marketing attempts will result in either reviews or purchases, but we want to get both as much as you do.

Like other publishers, we rely on authors to help with marketing their books. There are many ways in which you can do that.

- (1) If you want to be aggressive about marketing your book and are in a position to invest in it, we can provide you with a list of publicists who can help you.
- (2) (2) Definitely, it is in your best interest to arrange for book signings at your local bookstores; these are generally easily arranged since both you and the bookstore benefit. We will give you an additional 10% author's discount (making the cost to you 50% plus shipping) if you will be having a book signing at a bookstore. Typically, you would provide the books to the bookstore on consignment, which means that when they are sold, you will get paid. Generally, bookstores will take 10% of the sales price at their commission, leaving you with a 40% margin, another good reason for you to do book signings. We do not get involved in the finances of sales from bookstore book signings; the terms are between you and the bookstore. However, we will provide advertising materials for the bookstore in the form of pdf files that can be used for newspaper ads or in-store announcements.
- (3) We will provide you with the names of the radio and television stations we have contacted on behalf of your book. Generally, these places are inundated with paper and electrons from publishers trying to market books. However, if authors follow up with a personal phone call, explaining how an interview might be of interest to the station's listeners, they sometimes get receptive ear. Persistence and politeness are the key.
- (4) Authors with websites, and authors who blog, do facebook, or twitter have a leg up on sales. We encourage you to set up your own website where you can blog about your book. We will

provide you a link to our website, and we will provide links from our website to your website, as well as to other websites where your book is mentioned. We do rely on authors to do the research to locate the sites where their books are featured or mentioned.

- (5) We work with an Internet publicist on modest publicity efforts; generally, we can get your book listed on about 10 related websites. We can also connect you directly with this publicist should you want to finance on your own a much larger web presence (including video interviews on Youtube and the like).
- (6) We receive requests from time to time from journalists looking for specialists in various areas. If any of those requests are in your area, we will send you the contact information for the journalist. (Please note that we do ask our authors to be very responsive: most journalists need a same-day contact and even answer/quote.)

We have recently hired a part-time marketer to cover the northern California region. We will expend that effort if it turns out to be successful.

### **Copyright**

Unless you have asked us to do otherwise, we file your copyright papers and send the two required copies of your book to the Library of Congress.

We hold the copyright for you; this is industry standard. However, we can reassign it to you if you like. In that case, you will need to fill out the LOC paperwork, pay the fees, provide the copies, and meet the regulations for copyright filing.

Note: copyright always, by law, belongs to the author. You sell specific rights, as stated in your contract, to us. We do not ask for all rights, and you should never sell all rights. If you do, you will be letting go of your copyright, something you should not do.

### **ISBN**

We obtain the ISBN number and enter the book information into Bowker records for inclusion in *Books in Print*.

### **Library of Congress shelving numbers**

We are a member of the cataloguing-in-process (CIP) program of the Library of Congress. Therefore, you will see a preliminary LOC (i.e. CIP) number printed in your book, identified as "LCCN." (If we re-print the book, we will print the actual LOC number and cataloguing categories although that is not necessary. Libraries can look up that information in the LOC marc records that are online.)

With rare exception, you will also see your book listed in the Library of Congress in advance of its printing. However, it may take months and even 1-2 years, depending upon the cataloging backlog, before the CIP number is turned into an LOC number and your book is physically given a home on the shelf.

I recently had a personal meeting with one of the librarians at the LOC, who told me that people come in from time to time and insist that their self-published book be placed on a shelf; it does not work that



way. The LOC cannot shelve every book ever published and does not try to do that. It does try to shelve all the books that will be of interest to Congress and federal employees. Decisions about shelving are made by the librarians; however, books do not even get to the point of consideration unless a publisher is able to get an LCCN for the book.

As a CIP publisher, MSI Press is fortunate. Our books are identified as shelvable in advance and when received have made it to the shelves. All of our books published prior to 2009 have been shelved; 2009 books are still in the cataloguing storage area.

### **Web Presence**

We maintain a website for information about our books and for book sales for organizations, institutions, centers, and libraries. We generally do not accept orders from individuals but will work with them to find a store from which to purchase.

As soon as we have signed a contract, we will advertise your book as forthcoming on our website. Once your book is ready, we will put up some sample pages, your biography (which we will need you to provide to us), newspaper articles about your book (if there are any), and promotional links to book reviews, purchase sites, your website/blog, video interviews, and whatever else you can provide us.

The bio page on our website is not only helpful in letting potential readers know about who you are and giving current readers access to you, but also sometimes others, who need your expertise, come across our authors there and offer them consults for various projects. (It is not often, but it does happen.)

### **Foreign Languages, Foreign Countries**

We do publish books and journals written in foreign languages. We can handle the following languages: Arabic, Czech, English (of course), French, German, Russian, and Spanish. While we can handle foreign languages, we do not translate books. If you are an author who wants your original foreign-language work to be published in English, or if you want a dual-language edition, you will need to find your own translator and provide us with a manuscript in good English. We can recommend highly experienced and skilled translators but note that high-quality translations are not cheap. We cannot, however, publish poor-quality translations.

We do work with authors based in foreign countries; we have published authors from Canada, Colombia, Germany, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Lithuania, Russia, and Syria. We would note that our countries differ, and we have found that patience is required on both sides to deal with some of the political and economic barriers that can require creative problem-solving to manage your book and its sales.

### **New Authors**

We are amenable to working with previously unpublished authors if they are amenable to being guided in their attempts to become full-fledged authors. If we find that a manuscript is intriguing but needs a lot of work, we may request the author to have the manuscript edited professionally before submitting

(or re-submitting). We do routinely have books copyedited, but we do not have the time or financial resources to do what would amount to a re-write or in-depth edit of the book due to an author's lack of grammatical or stylistic knowledge.

Our greatest challenge in working with new authors is that they do not understand how the book industry works and have unrealistic dreams for their books (most published books even from large publishers sell less than 1000 copies and most self-published books sell less than 200 copies) and for what a publisher can do. Often, they do not understand the difference between traditional publishing (in which they are paid royalties, receive all the traditional benefits listed above, and have limited control over the final product) and self-publishing (in which they pay a company to publish their book, do not receive the traditional benefits and industry recognition, and have considerable control over the final product).

We will work with authors to help them understand the book market and how to orient their book and even what they can do to help increase their sales. There seems to be a misunderstanding that the publisher does all the marketing, and that is just not possible in today's economic climate. Even the biggest publishing houses expect their authors to participate actively in promoting their books. We do, however, provide sample copies where needed in order to help an event coordinator or bookstore decide to work with you on marketing the book.

### **Contract**

We work only by contract. We use a standard contract that reflects publishing industry norms. If you have specific things that you would like to see in your contract, we can discuss them and may be able to make adjustments that are mutually beneficial.

We encourage you to consult with an attorney if there are any aspects of our contract about which you are unsure and need an outside opinion, or if you are in a foreign country where we may not know some of the regulations that differ from US law.

### **Other questions?**

If we have not answered all your questions, please ask us about anything that remains unclear.