

The Publishing Process

There is a standard procedure a manuscript goes through on its journey to become a published book. Although there are set practices in place the process is not always linear, and can vary based on the publishing house. The following is a list of procedures a book goes through in the publishing process:

1. **Editorial**
2. **Production**
3. **Marketing and Promotion**
4. **Sales and distribution**



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Editorial

The editorial process includes the acquisition, development, and copyediting of manuscripts.

Publishing houses acquire manuscripts in a variety of ways. Some accept unsolicited manuscripts, some only accept work presented by an agent, some require a proposal to be submitted (following guidelines particular to their company), while others actively seek writers and/or researchers to write about a particular subject matter.

Generally, there is an editorial process in place that determines whether a manuscript is accepted or rejected. There may be one person in particular who is responsible for this decision, or an editorial committee. When a committee is in place, submissions are discussed and then the decisions are made.

The quality of writing is a very important factor that determines whether a manuscript is accepted or rejected. Although they go through a thorough editing process, the author should present a well-written manuscript to even be considered for publication.

The genre of your manuscript should be directed to a publishing house, which produces books of your subject matter (i.e. regional, poetry, cookbooks, academic, etc.). The publisher also looks at the current market in a particular genre, what else has been published in a particular market, and/or what titles the publisher has forthcoming to determine whether or not to publish a manuscript.

Once the decision is made to publish a manuscript, the project often enters a developmental stage. It is rare that a piece of work is submitted and does not need to go through a substantive developmental and editing process. At this point, the managing editor works with the author to ensure that the manuscript is fully developed and ready to enter the copyediting process. Developing a manuscript can involve, adding chapters, deleting chapters, rearranging chapters, to major rewriting. Sometimes the developmental and copyediting stages are incorporated into one, depending on the publishing house and the manuscript.

The copyeditor may be in-house or a freelancer. This person will thoroughly review the manuscript, focusing on style, consistency, grammar, and readability.

Production

Production includes designing, proofreading, and printing. Cover and text design can either be completed in-house or by a freelance designer. Book designers work with the production manager to ensure that the design is suitable for the genre of book and the current market. Depending on the company, authors can give input or in some cases the production manager has little or no consultation with the author.

Proofreading is another step in the production process. This may be completed in-house, by a freelancer, or by the author, depending on the publishing house and the type of book.

The production manager arranges the printing and delivering of the final product to the warehouse.

Digital Publishing

Converting the edited manuscript to digital book formats is another component to many publishers production process. Publishers then distribute these digital books to various digital book suppliers.

Marketing and Promotion

Marketing includes market analysis and promotion strategy. Marketing begins at the editorial stage, when decisions are being made whether to publish a book or not. It is a books marketability that often determines if a book is published or rejected.

Marketing is also present in the production stage, when decisions are being made on what the book physically has to look like in order to compete in the current market.

Throughout the editorial and production process, marketing and promotions plans are being developed and advance promotional efforts are being made (i.e. coordinating radio, television, and/or print media).

Publishing companies have catalogues, websites, media contacts, and a host of other avenues that they use for book promotion. There are countless materials and strategies that are developed and employed in the marketing and promotion of a book.

Sales and Distribution

Sales and distribution can be handled in a couple different ways. Some publishing companies deal with their own, while others contract out to companies specializing in sales and distribution. Sales representatives contact or visit various booksellers and secure orders. Distributors fulfill orders, invoice and manage collections and returns.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following are frequently asked questions that people in the publishing industry receive on a daily basis. Hopefully they will clarify the role of the publisher and the publishing process.

Q: *How much would you charge to print my book?*

A: Publishing companies are not printing companies.

Q: *Why was my manuscript not published?*

A: Publishing companies do not publish every manuscript they receive. We rely on our experience and expertise to decide which books to publish.

Q: *What is the best way to approach a publisher?*

A: It is very important for writers to research the publishing company they plan on approaching, as the submission procedures and required materials for each publishing house differ. This will ensure you are submitting your work to a publisher who publishes the type of book you have written. Doing your research will save both you and the publisher time.

Q: *Why does it take so long to get a book published?*

A: Publishing companies go through an extensive process from the time they receive a submission proposal to the time the finished product is placed on the shelf. The tasks of developing the manuscript, editing, design and layout, and finally the actual printing; takes time. It is not an overnight process.

Q: *If I self-publish, will the percentage of the profits be greater?*

A: It is important to consider that if an author chooses to self-publish they will have to assume all the costs incurred in the publication process, including production, marketing, sales, and distribution. They will have to take on these tasks without the benefit of experts working in the field. Although there are stories where writers have had success through self-publishing, there are far more cases of unsold boxes of books sitting in garages of self-published writers across Canada.

Q: *How much does it cost to publish a book?*

A: There are many variables that affect the cost of publishing a book (colour, size, degree of editing, design, etc.). When an author publishes their book with a publishing company, they are normally paid a royalty (usually in the vicinity of 10%). Booksellers are typically given a discount of 40% off the retail price, with the exception of Indigo, Costco, and Amazon, who can demand up to 50% off the retail price. Sales and distribution costs range of 25% (of net). For example, if a book is priced to sell at \$10.00, for each copy sold through a bookstore (remember, they receive a 40% discount), the bookstore gets \$4.00, the author gets \$0.60, the sales and distribution costs \$1.50, which leaves approximately \$3.90 per book, to cover the cost of editing, design, printing, promotions, and the overhead of operating the publishing company.

It should be noted, costs incurred for the publication of a book remain the same regardless if the book is printed in paperback or as an e-book. The only cost eliminated would be the printing, which is a small percentage of the overall cost. The majority of publishing houses in Atlantic Canada are small and the print runs are fairly low, resulting in the unit cost being quite high. When all costs are factored in, the profit margin on most books is low or non-existent.

Some publishing companies are subsidized by various government departments, such as the Canada Book Fund, Canada Council for the Arts, and some provincial departments. Many publishing companies are only surviving because of these subsidies.

The costs outlined in the above paragraph are paid by the publisher. They develop legal, contractual agreements with their authors, outlining the income (royalty) they will receive per book, and how they will be compensated.

Q: *Is the author's job done once the book is published?*

A: No. It is important that authors make themselves available, to actively promote their book. Publishing is a difficult market, especially for new and unknown first-time authors. The author must be ready to work hard to promote their book. When working with a publishing company authors have the benefit of working with those experienced in book marketing and promotions.