
THE PUBLISHING BUSINESS

Publishing is a fascinating business and the process that goes into the making of books and newspapers is an interesting one. These days, with the world of digital information and the internet upon us, the scope of publishing now also includes websites, blogs and the like.

From the business perspective, publishing isn't just printing literature or information but also the development, marketing, distribution and even promotion of the printed works. It is not as simple as it may seem.

The publishing process begins with the written work or the copy. Many aspiring and unpublished writers often submit manuscripts to publishing houses in the hopes of seeing the light of print. These end up in a slush pile which editors sift through, and the great majority of these contributions are often rejected. Usually, book and magazine publishers commission copy from known and established writers, and unsolicited works have a slim chance of getting published. The prudent thing for a writer to do to get published is to first submit a query or a proposal. It also helps if you have a literary agent who has access to major publishers.

Once a publisher accepts a work, then negotiations with the writer or his agent begin on how much to pay the writer for "intellectual property" rights and "royalty rate."

Once commercial and legal issues are settled, the next step is the editorial stage where writers are asked to rewrite or improve their manuscripts before they get to publishing editors who do further editing on the work.

The next stage is called prepress and that's where design and artwork (including photos) are decided. Other processes are typesetting, dust jacket composition, deciding on paper quality, binding method, casing as well as proofreading. Once done, the work can now proceed to printing. It is interesting to note that most major magazine and newspaper publishers have their own printing presses, but book publishers seldom do.

The publisher's work doesn't end with the publication of the book. This is followed by advertising and other marketing tasks, including distribution. There are times when the publishing process up to the printing stage is handled by a separate company or individual before selling the same to the publishing house. This is known as book packaging.