



## MAY 12 MEMBERSHIP MEETING:

### The fine print of self-publishing

If you've ever considered using an author services company to publish your book, you know the choices are bewildering. Should you go with Authorhouse, Booklocker, Createspace, iUniverse, Lulu, Outskirts Press, Trafford, Wordclay, Xlibris or ... ?

Why should you choose one over the other? How are they different? What pitfalls should you be aware of and avoid?



On May 12 the St. Louis Publishers Association presents one of the most qualified people on the planet to answer your questions. **Mark Levine** is the author of *The Fine Print of Self-Publishing: The Contracts & Services of 45 Self-Publishing Companies Ranked, Analyzed & Exposed*.

#### Here's some of what Mark will reveal on May 12:

- The "must-have" qualities of a good self-publishing company
- How these author services companies mark up printing costs—some as much as 300%!
- How these companies determine the "royalty" amount you as an author get
- The pitfalls: What to look out for so you avoid signing a bad contract
- Warnings about the self-publishing companies you should avoid
- The differences between the publishing packages and services sold by these companies

Mark's book has helped thousands of writers choose ethical self-publishing companies and avoid book publishing scam artists. On May 12 he visits St. Louis to educate authors about this important topic. Mark will have copies of his book on hand for purchase and will sign copies. **Be prepared to take lots of notes.** Don't miss this one!

**Come to the May 12 meeting at the Richmond Heights Community Center:** 8001 Dale Avenue, Richmond Heights, MO 63117. Doors open for networking at 6:30 pm; meeting begins at 7:00 pm. The formal meeting concludes around 8:30 pm with networking continuing until 9:00 pm. SLPA members – FREE / Guests – \$10.00 at the door.

## Get Ready, Get Published contest update:

We thank all the authors who submitted an entry in the Get Ready, Get Published contest. Each will receive a compiled scoring sheet which includes helpful comments from the judges. We will provide progress reports as the winning author moves her manuscript through the editing and production process, targeting an October 2010 publication date. Keep watching for updates and education.

### Mandy Langston Manley, our Contest Winner, meets with the Production Team:



Publishing mentors Christine Frank (the editor) and Sue Sylvia (the book designer), had their first meeting with Mandy to begin the planning process for the publication of her book. They discussed the plot of the book, the editing process and visual ideas for the cover and interior. They also brainstormed some interesting ways to generate publicity that the author can

build on while the book is being produced. They developed a basic schedule for the process from editing through printing, to launch. Mandy and her mentors will meet on an as-needed basis to bring her book into print. Stay tuned!

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## Kim Wolterman awarded 2010 IBPA Publishing University scholarship



**Kim Wolterman**, author of *Who's Been Sleeping in My Bed(room)?* and SLPA member will be attending IBPA's Publishing University this year with her tuition paid by an Affiliate Scholarship from IBPA.

The Independent Book Publishers

Association (IBPA) is a trade association of independent publishers with over 4,000 members. Founded in 1983, it serves book, audio, and video publishers located in the United States and around the world. Its mission is to advance the professional interests of independent publishers. To this end, IBPA provides cooperative marketing programs, education and advocacy within the publishing industry. SLPA is one of twenty-four regional affiliates of this group.

Each year, IBPA presents a major educational event called Publishing University, attended by hundreds of publishing professionals, who come together to network and to learn the latest developments in the industry. IBPA offers an annual scholarship to a member of each of their affiliates to attend this premier educational event, in conjunction with Book Expo America (BEA), the largest publishing trade show in the US. To be considered, you must be a member of both SLPA and IBPA and submit an application to SLPA. We announce the application period in December or January each year, when IBPA extends the invitation to us.

IBPA's 26th Publishing University, held in New York City prior to BEA, is the only conference that brings you the "how-to's" of the industry from p-book to e-book and beyond. This year's keynote speakers are Seth Godin and Dominique Raccach of Sourcebooks. Whether you're just starting out or a book business veteran, you won't want to miss the only conference created BY publishers FOR publishers. With an all-new format for 2010, IBPA's Publishing University will provide you with experts' insights into the industry's future as well as practical solutions for managing your own publishing transitions. **This year's university will be held on May 24-25. BEA is May 25-27.** There is still plenty of time to attend both, so check out their sites for more information.

**Be there!** For more information on IBPA, visit: [www.ibpa-online.org](http://www.ibpa-online.org)

For information on Publishing University, visit: [www.thepublishinguniversity.com](http://www.thepublishinguniversity.com)


For information on Book Expo America, visit: [www.bookexpoamerica.com](http://www.bookexpoamerica.com) 

## How Conan and Jay are like publishing

Recently, NBC pulled a switcheroo and moved Jay Leno's show back to the time slot occupied by Conan O'Brien's Tonight Show. For me, the fallout provides an insight into traditional vs. independent publishing.


Jay Leno is like traditional publishing—star of a brand which set the standard in late night entertainment for decades. The brand was built when there were only three broadcast networks, not the hundreds of viewing options now available via cable and satellite programming. He's got the TV equivalent of the publishing deal many authors long for.

Conan O'Brien dreamed of this deal, too, but with NBC's change he'll take his niche humor to a cable channel eager to attract Conan's young fans. Think of this as independent publishing—establishing a brand and succeeding in a non-traditional medium.

We'll see who really won the late-night TV war. Most independent publishers may not achieve the success of a million-selling author, but with today's publishing options, they can find a niche, build a brand, and be successful. 

Contributed by Maria Rodgers O'Rourke, SLPA newsletter editor.


## SLPA meetings move to Brentwood in September 2010

Beginning in September, the SLPA has found a new home for our monthly meetings: **The Brentwood Community Center (Brentwood Recreational Complex). 2505 S. Brentwood Boulevard, Brentwood, MO 63144.** An informal poll of the membership at our April meeting showed a majority of attendees in favor of the move. At the SLPA Board meeting in late April, members officially voted to move the meetings to the Brentwood facility, citing the comfortable meeting space, easy parking, flexible scheduling and lower rates at the Brentwood recreational complex. Until then, we will continue to meet at the Richmond Heights Community Center. 

## We welcome our newest member

**Paul Midden**

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Paul is in clinical practice as a psychologist, has published two novels, and is on the verge of publishing a third. 

## Getting published through a “self-publishing company.”

by Dan Poynter

Writers are confused and it's not their fault. In searching for the best way to break into print, they come across self-described “self-publishing companies.” I get emails asking if I can self-publish for writers. That is impossible—by definition.

The problem is that many POD vanity publishers are calling themselves “self-publishing companies.” They are trading on self-publishing's good name to make their companies appear familiar and legitimate. Self-publishing has early American roots and today there are more than 85,000 self-publishers in the U.S. Naturally, these dot-com, digital publishers want to use the name. *‘Self-publishing’ has been around a long time; it was the only form of publishing for 400 years between Gutenberg and the Victorian era. It is not only honorable, it is historic.*

—Godfrey Harris, International Publishers Alliance

**How to tell the difference.** Some definitions:

- **Publisher:** The person who puts up the money and makes the book happen.
- **Vanity publishers** are organized to sell books (and other services) to the author. They charge the author to publish the book. This is why they are also known as “subsidy publishers.”
- **Conventional publishers** sell books to the public, usually through wholesalers and bookstores. They pay the author an advance and royalties for the right to produce and sell the book.

Would you write a book knowing that you would be the only purchaser?

**Self-publishing garners respect.** Traditionally, when a book publishing CEO wrote a memoir, he or she would seek another publisher to release it so that the book would not appear to be a vanity work. Times have changed. Self-publishing has become so recognized and legitimate that the vanity stigma from publishing your own work has nearly disappeared.

**How to spot scam vanity publishers.** According to Wikipedia, Self-Publishing is the publishing of books and other media by the authors of those works, rather than by established, third-party publishers. The only “self-publishing company” is you—by definition. If you pay a publisher, your book is not SELF-published. Self-publishers, write, publish and promote their own books.

Now that people know what self-publishing is, we find we have to reeducate the public to the fact that we are the real self-publishers and the other DotCom POD digital publishers are really just vanity publishers masquerading as us. They are trading on the good reputation we have built. On the other hand, there are many digital printing companies. Most provide excellent prices, service and quality. They should refer to themselves as “book printers.”

Many of the DotCom vanity publishers help people to produce their books for a few hundred dollars. The low cost of entry attracts literary talent from the bottom of the barrel. With so little to invest, most of these authors don't verify their research and don't invest in editors, typesetters, book designers or cover artists. Both authors and publishers of these poor-quality vanity-published books give all book publishing a bad name. These POD vanity publishers are leaving a trail of unhappy customers.

Anyone who's been in publishing for a while can share a number of stories of people who stumbled and blundered into the book game without getting sufficient information first. These pioneers have made just about every mistake imaginable. Profit from their (temporary) failures: don't repeat their painful lessons. Remember that in any new field, especially book writing and publishing, others have blazed the trail for you. *Buying a few books and attending some seminars are cheaper than a mistake.* —Mindy Bingham, publisher, Academic Innovations, Santa Barbara

The book industry is full of helpful and supportive people. It may be unexpected because this kind of camaraderie does not exist in other industries. The reason that book people are so helpful, friendly and supportive is that every book is unique. There is little to no competition in book publishing. When it comes to marketing books, we are conspirators not competitors.

Let's respect historical and common definitions. We can protect the newcomers to book publishing by helping them to understand the difference between conventional publishers, self-publishers, book printers and the vanity/subsidy publishers. 📖



© 2008 Dan Poynter, author of *The Self-Publishing Manual*, is the “Godfather” to thousands of books. He has written more than 100 books since 1969. Dan is a past vice-president of the Publishers Marketing Association. For more information on book publishing and promoting, see <http://ParaPub.com>.



## The most important word in any author's vocabulary

By Scott Ginsberg

Nope, it isn't "marketing."

Wrong, it ain't "credibility."

And no, it's not "Oprah."

The most important word in any author's vocabulary is:  
PLATFORM.

Here's what that means:

- A platform is what helps sell books
- A platform is the way you reach readers
- A platform is your expertise on your book's topic(s)
- A platform is a network of notoriety and exposure
- A platform is how you communicate with your audience
- A platform is that which gives you access to sales
- A platform is what you stand for in the marketplace
- A platform is where you speak your mind beyond what's already been said in your books
- A platform is where you inform your fans of future books, appearances, projects, news and the like
- A platform is your place in the world
- A platform is your accomplishments

With that in mind, here are the three reasons every author needs a platform.

**1. To sell books.** It's tough to move 10,000 copies from the back of a cave. Too many authors—especially self-published ones—work their butts off writing and producing their books, and then do nothing with them! Sadly, writing and producing the book is the EASY part. The key is, building your platform so you can move those darn boxes out of your garage!

LET ME ASK YA THIS...

What's your 12-month platform plan?

**2. More media interviews.** If media outlets see that you've got a platform, they will gladly book you for their shows. Why? Because they know you've got fans, customers and loyalists who will tune in. They know that viewers, readers and listeners will say, "Oh yeah, I've heard of this guy before!" And that's what makes their producers (and advertisers) super happy.

LET ME ASK YA THIS...

How many interviews did you do this year?

**3. Credibility is king.** Every time you try to make a deal that books you for a speaking engagement, sells copies, secures a TV movie about your life, etc., the potential client is going to ask

the question, "Have people heard about you?" It's EXACTLY like the scene in the recent movie *Little Miss Sunshine*, in which Greg Kinnear's book deal goes kaput because the publisher exclaims, "But nobody's heard of you!"

LET ME ASK YA THIS...

Have people heard of you?

OK. Now that you understand the value of author platforms, let's explore two well-known examples.

First, think about the most obvious example in the world: Oprah. Personally, I'm not a diehard fan of *The Big O*, but you gotta admit, when she writes a book (or promotes someone else's book, for that matter), BAM!! Millions of sales at the drop of a hat.

Now, does that happen because these particular books are "good"? Maybe. But it probably has more to do with the power of her platform: TV show, magazine, radio show, reputation and Harpo Productions.

Another great example is Rachel Ray. How many cookbooks, DVD's, appliances and other ancillary items do you think she sells each year? According to a 2006 article in *Business Week*, about 40 gazillion bajillion. OK, I might have exaggerated that number a bit. (I think it's actually higher.)

But why does she move so much product? Because her platform is strong. Really strong. Like, Schwarzenegger strong. Sure, she might be an annoying little troll, but you've got to admit: she's everywhere. TV shows, product endorsements, even her own magazine!

BUT, HERE'S THE CATCH-22...

In order to build a platform so you can get well known, you sort of have to BE well known already. So, that's your challenge. How will you get better known and known better? Here's a quick list of ways to start building your platform 2-day, 4-free:


- Blog every single day for six months
- Publish an ezine twice a month
- Give one free speech every week
- Publish articles regularly on [www.ezinearticles.com](http://www.ezinearticles.com)
- Walk around conferences and events (filled with attendees who are your target readers) and hand out hundreds of free copies of your book to EVERYONE (This one works. I've done it many times!)

Look. I know you're not Oprah. And I know you're not Rachel Ray. But nobody is! Those two women reside in the 0.01 percentile of authors whose platforms are so impossibly strong that they can sell millions and millions of books in short

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## The Most Important Word ... *Continued*

periods of time. You and me, however, reside in that 99.9% of people who need work our butts creating, expanding and maintaining our platforms on a daily basis.

After all, that's the single most important word in any author's vocabulary. 




© 2006 All Rights Reserved. Scott Ginsberg, aka "The Nametag Guy," is the author of three books and a professional speaker who helps people maximize approachability, become unforgettable and make a name for themselves. To book Scott for your next association meeting, conference or corporate event, contact Front Porch Productions at 314/256-1800 or email [scott@hellomynameisscott.com](mailto:scott@hellomynameisscott.com)

## Publishing tip of the month


By Sue Sylvia

From the very beginning, think about WHO you're writing for. Start making notes on how they live, what they like to do, what they buy and where they buy it. Weave aspects of your audience's life into your story if you can and it will become a marketing tool you can use when you launch the book. Engage friends and fans early by writing about the process as you're creating your book.

## Member News

At the April meeting, **membership cards and guest passes** were distributed to all current SLPA members. If you haven't yet picked up yours, please help us save the postage and check in at the registration table at our next meeting. Thanks! 

## What's ahead?

**June 9 – Building a strong author platform:** When someone buys your book, they're buying YOU and the many ways you reach people. Learn what to do, when to do it (NOW!) and how to connect with your audience without spending a fortune. The speaker is SLPA's very own Scott Ginsberg, aka "The Nametag Guy." For a preview of Scott's wisdom, read his article on page 4 in this newsletter. **Mark your calendar!** 

## Book Learning

Every month, the SLPA invites independent publishing professionals to share their expertise with members and guests. In April, the topic was "How to Use Video to Promote Your Book Online." Here are a few gems our members learned that evening:



"As a new member, I'm excited about the opportunities, and I feel empowered and less scared about putting my face in video on my website. An author's video will help me communicate to my reader all I want them to know about my book and why it will help them."

— Emily Filmore, author of the *With My Child* series




"Video is an avenue of marketing that is synchronized to our society. It combines the author's artistic ability with a new dimension in promoting it."

— Paul Brown (pen name James Joseph), author of *So Long America*



"SLPA is like one big family. Everyone is so accessible and friendly. I learn so much every time."

— Belinda Bond, self-proclaimed "corporate executive turned domestic goddess/entrepreneur" 

You are invited to submit items and articles to *SLPA News and Views*.

**Next deadline: May 20**

**Don't be late – no kidding!**

Get your news and articles in EARLY! Send your information, articles and announcements to **Editor@stlouispublishers.org**.

## Questions about SLPA?

Contact membership chairperson:  
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