Self-Publishing and Collection Development

Holley, Robert P.

Published by Purdue University Press

Holley, Robert P.
Purdue University Press, 2015.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/42556.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/42556

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=1661845

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
“Libraries do a lousy job of collecting self-published works,” wrote Brian Kenney, Publishers Weekly columnist and director of New York’s White Plains Public Library. This confession is one sign among many that libraries now want to do better. One reason for the “lousy job” may be that the job itself is lousy, as White Plains learned when the library’s new policy of “you ask, we buy” yielded a surprising number of requests for self-published books, especially young adult (YA) fiction. “Setting this up,” reported the library’s manager of technical services and collection development, “researching requests, contacting patrons, ordering from vendors outside our usual stream, and processing in-house is time consuming” (Kenney, 2013, p. 19).

Book vendors do several things for libraries. First, and most basically, when a library submits an order, a vendor will try to locate and obtain the book, then bill and ship it to the library. Next, vendors normally offer services to help libraries identify and select books of likely interest by creating lists, generating new title notifications, and operating approval plans and standing order programs. Then, vendors maintain bibliographic databases and online systems to enable searching, ordering, and other functions. Finally, vendors offer cataloging and physical processing services for the books libraries acquire.

While over the past decade the rise first of e-books and then of patron- or demand-driven acquisitions programs have added complexity, these traditional functions remain at the center of what book vendors do. Now
another movement is on the rise, one that has already disrupted other parts of the book trade. How much help, at White Plains or anywhere else where library attitudes have turned, can book vendors provide? How well do traditional library book vendor services lend themselves to self-publishing, or “indie publishing,” as the phenomenon has come to be known?

TRADITIONAL VENDOR SERVICES

Sometimes, reasonably well. From a vendor’s point of view, locating and obtaining a self-published print book can be easier than doing that for many of the more obscure campus- or society-based scholarly books that academic vendors, at least, if not public library vendors used to covering a narrower range of the publishing world, have always provided to libraries. This sort of book resembles self-publishing in any case, publishing so truly mission-driven and independent that the idea of having “customers” who might want orders filled was sometimes a distraction. Literary small press publishing is much the same. Minus anything like the consolidation of today’s self-publishing landscape into a handful of large author-oriented companies (Bowker, 2014), vendor experience with this type of book makes library orders for many self-published books seem like easy work.

Not, however, work entirely without complexities. Most derive from the same consolidation that in other ways has simplified the business. Baker & Taylor (B&T) and Ingram are the two largest North American library book vendors. But it’s far from the case that either one is strictly a library vendor. In Ingram’s case, the print-on-demand (POD) company Lightning Source and self-publishing platform IngramSpark are two components of the larger Ingram Content Group. Ingram Library Services is another component of the group. In the case of Baker & Taylor, the 2013 purchase of Bookmasters by B&T’s parent company, the private equity firm Castle Harlan, gave B&T a sister company with POD and author services capabilities (Schwartz, 2013). Amazon, whose CreateSpace is a leading author services company, is in a number of ways across the retail and library book business a competitor as well as a business partner with both B&T and Ingram. Since these and other author services companies offer their authors a choice of distribution packages and since the author services companies themselves make various POD and distribution arrangements with other companies, the willingness or even the ability of B&T
and Ingram to fill a firm order for a self-published print book originating with a company that might be a direct or indirect competitor can make for an intricate equation.

A vendor’s ability to fill a library’s firm order will largely depend on the scope of its title database. The major North American vendor databases are B&T’s Title Source 3, its academic subsidiary YBP’s GOBI, Ingram’s ipage, and for Ingram’s academic library customers, OASIS. These title databases are all built in different ways through unique combinations of external bibliographic loads from publishers and from agencies such as the Library of Congress or Nielsen as well as from incoming customer orders. Shared internal systems may also contribute, such as those at Ingram hosting IngramSpark titles and also feeding metadata to ipage and OASIS. At B&T, Title Source 3 and GOBI would at least potentially have access to titles from Bookmasters. The chances of a librarian finding a given self-published title in these respective databases would depend in part, again, upon corporate relationships having little to do with the library market.

Since the goal of nearly every self-publishing author is to have his or her books available for sale there, the database of record for self-publishing, however, is without question Amazon. Library sales, if in mind at all, would be a secondary concern for most authors. Even companies competing with CreateSpace for authors have no choice about sending title metadata to Amazon, whose title universe, print books aside, might well be the only place to find a self-published e-book. Even if a vendor title database did include a self-published title, a library seeking to buy the book might not look there, only because they are used to turning to Amazon. For library vendors, there would be little point in attempting to match Amazon in the scope of their database for self-published books.

Despite all this, libraries do place successful firm orders for self-published books with vendors. A 2012 study of a larger sample showed that vendors had attached their holding symbol to 95 of 114 titles found in OCLC, likely indicating orders filled by those vendors. In 18 instances, original records had been contributed by either B&T, by B&T’s subsidiary YBP, or by Ingram (Bradley, Fulton, & Helm, 2012). Vendors charge libraries different rates for different levels of cataloging, and libraries contract for what they judge they need and can afford. When a self-published book requires
original cataloging, rather than manipulation of a record that already exists, the extra work should be covered by the higher price contracting libraries pay for that level of service. Otherwise, for vendors there is nothing beyond normal in cataloging a self-published book obtained on behalf of a library placing an order.

WHOLE FOODS?
The keynote address at a 2013 Charleston Conference preconference about self-publishing was delivered by Mark Sandler, director of the Center for Library Initiatives (CLI), Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), who made an analogy between grocery stores and libraries (SelfPub 2.0, 2013). With traditional chain grocery stores—Kroger was his example—well-known national brands validate the worth of the store, which simply provides shelf space for Campbell’s, for Del Monte, and the rest. At Whole Foods, on the other hand, the store validates the brands and even the products, which may be unfamiliar to many shoppers. In libraries, the “brands” stocked on the shelves usually are books from better known publishers. Why couldn’t libraries be more like Whole Foods and provide validation for quality with the library “brand”?

Of course this would require some kind of evaluation process. As the Whole Foods Market Web site says, “We don’t sell just anything. The products we sell must meet our rigorous standards. . . . We carefully evaluate each and every product we sell” (Whole Foods Market, 2014). How rigorous should a library’s standards be for self-published books? How carefully should a library examine every product added to its shelves? Clearly, some degree of filtering on Bowker’s 450,000+ annual total (Bowker, 2014) would seem to be needed. Could vendors help? The current vendor infrastructure produces ongoing recommendations for all sorts of other books, from romance novels to scientific conferences and beyond. Why not self-published YA novels, or mysteries, or local histories, or anything else?

For vendors, there would be two questions. First, how do they find titles worth recommending? And second, would enough new business be gained to justify the work?

Today, a good deal of vetting has already taken place on any vendor book announcements or recommendations reaching a library. Much of the vetting, however, has been on the part of a publisher, not the vendor,
since publisher acquisitions processes substantially narrow things down at the very outset. In fact, editorial selectivity by publishers is commonly cited in the success stories about self-published authors, which themselves have become almost a genre. “Nobody was willing to take a chance,” said author Darcie Chan to a Wall Street Journal reporter, for example. “It was too much of a publishing risk.” Chan was talking about her debut novel, The Mill River Recluse, a book turned down by a dozen publishers and 100 literary agents before she chose to self-publish, which then reached national best-seller lists with sales of more than 400,000 e-books (Alter, 2011).

Chan took advantage of marketing services available to self-published authors. If she had published traditionally, her publisher would have provided some level of marketing support, which is the next vetting function publishers perform, after title acquisition. Vendor operations are organized to focus on the most basic level of this support, which is the new title metadata publishers routinely push out in a host of ways. ONIX data feeds, printed and online catalogs, Excel files, Advance Book Information sheets, personal presentations—in these and other ways publishers organize and disseminate the bibliographic and pricing information vendors need to populate their databases and run the selection and recommendation services they direct toward libraries. Beyond basic metadata, publishers will orchestrate some measure of publicity for more promising titles; for titles they judge less promising, little or none. Vendors take note, and stock inventories accordingly.

With self-published titles, this entire publisher-to-vendor-to-library marketing infrastructure is missing. Nobody is pushing out structured marketing information to vendors, who, in order to notify libraries about the best self-published titles, would first need to find them. Vendors would need to develop new routines to monitor Web sites and blogs and to constantly find new ones, to follow certain review sources, to keep up with Twitter and Facebook and Pinterest, perhaps to develop relationships with authors and author groups. Many of the titles they might find would lack basic bibliographic detail, not infrequently even an ISBN, let alone the more elaborate metadata a traditional publisher would provide (Bradley et al., 2012). All of this makes self-published titles more difficult to identify, evaluate, and process than books from traditional publishers.
ONE VENDOR’S EXPERIENCE

“More difficult” means, of course, “more expensive.” But it does not mean “impossible.” Since the work wouldn’t be routine, it would be more costly for a vendor to offer self-published books to libraries than to offer other books. What would a vendor’s reward be in attempting to provide traditional services for these nontraditional books?

Ingram Coutts, the academic division of Ingram, has made a modest effort toward doing this. The company has many libraries among its customers in Canada, where self-publishing has been within the vision of academic libraries for years. Book publishing takes place in most parts of the country, even with a population of only 35 million people settled unevenly across a vast geography. Many of these Canadian books would not be published or recognized at all, however, without the support of grants and prizes for publishers and writers offered by federal and provincial governments, who consider the support of Canadian culture a mandate (Book and Periodical Council, 2015). The publishing that results from this combination of population, geography, and patronage is often conducted on a small scale, sometimes by individuals.

Original People, Original Television: The Launching of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network is a good example (David, 2012). This book tells the story of how broadcasters distributing community-based television programming across northern Canada, mostly from Aboriginal and Inuit producers, came together in 1999 to form the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, today a national enterprise based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The author, Jennifer David, a member of the Cree Nation, took part in these early efforts (David, 2015). Her book was the one and only title ever from its “publisher,” Debwe Communications, David’s own Ottawa-based communications consulting company.¹

OCLC’s WorldCat database shows 15 holdings for the book.² Ten are in Canada, including one public library, one provincial legislative library, Library and Archives Canada, and seven universities. Three American universities reported holdings to OCLC as did the Library of Congress. On the other side of the world, in New Zealand, the University of Auckland also reported its holding. Since many library holdings for self-published books never find their way into WorldCat (Dilevko & Dali, 2006), these 15 records underrepresent the record of Original People,
*Original Television.* In fact, Ingram Coutts sold copies to 21 libraries. These sales accounted for most of the WorldCat listings. The other library customers ranged from the London School of Economics and Political Science, to the University of Saskatchewan, to Thompson Rivers University of Kamloops, British Columbia.

Jennifer David had a good topic and by all signs wrote a good book, one that will provide unique value in the collections of libraries acquiring it. For Ingram Coutts, 21 sales was not a bad total. A prepublication record for *Original People, Original Television* was loaded into the company’s database in 2011 through a bibliographic feed staff monitored from Library and Archives Canada (LAC). The author’s book launch was in September 2012. In January 2013, when Ingram Coutts obtained a copy, staff updated the book’s database record. Most of the 21 sales came from bibliographic announcements from a process matching the updated bibliographic record against library subject “profiles” established with Ingram Coutts. These matches produced more than 80 notifications to library selectors, which were displayed on the OASIS customer interface. The last library order to date for the book reached Ingram Coutts in July 2014, one of two orders received that year; all the rest were submitted by July 2013.

How representative of self-published titles was *Original People, Original Television*? A study of Ingram Coutts’ activity for the 12 months from August 2013 to July 2014 shows that it was not typical. During that year, the company offered 380 self-published titles to customers in the same way *Original People, Original Television* had been offered. Most were Canadian titles selected from LAC records and other sources. Thirty-three titles, however, were published in the United States, most of them identified from favorable reviews in the “PW Select” section of *Publishers Weekly*.

Only four titles sold more than 10 copies. All four were Canadian, led by another title on Aboriginal studies, *Balancing Two Worlds: Jean-Baptiste Assiginack and the Odawa Nation, 1768–1866*, published in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, which sold 18 copies. Following that were a study of the Canadian War of 1812 heroine Laura Secord, published in the town where she lived, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, which sold 13 copies; a history of the Allied Bomber Command in World War II, published in Thunder Bay, Ontario, which sold 12; and a biography of a Cree warrior and shaman, published in Calgary, Alberta, which sold 11.
The company’s sales for everything else amounted to fewer than 10 copies per title. Twenty-seven titles sold between five and nine copies, 161 sold between two and four copies, 108 sold one copy, and 80 did not sell at all. The best-selling American title was *Hidden in Plain Sight: The Other People in Norman Rockwell’s America*, a book about “the stories of the Asian, African, and Native Americans who modeled for Norman Rockwell. These people of color, though often hidden in plain sight, are present throughout Rockwell’s more than 4000 illustrations” (Petrick, 2015). Rockwell, the painter whose work was long considered the embodiment of kitsch, is today enjoying a turnaround evident in museum acquisitions and exhibitions, auction sales, a widely reviewed 2013 biography published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, and articles such as one in the *New York Times* that took note of his “major . . . reappraisal” (Stewart, 2014). So like Jennifer David, the author Jane Allen Petrick had a good topic. She also, like David, published the book under the imprint of a consulting company, Informed Decisions Publishing. Unlike David, though, her book does not appear in WorldCat at all; and Ingram Coutts’ academic customers did not show much interest with just three orders. One yardstick for the book’s record is an earlier book written by Petrick (Schiesel, 1973), a biography of Otis Redding, published by Doubleday, with 217 WorldCat holdings.

**ONE TITLE’S EXPERIENCE**

Another self-published title offered to Ingram Coutts’ customers in 2014 was *Quack This Way* by Bryan A. Garner (2013). While the title is peculiar, its subtitle clarifies what the book is about: *David Foster Wallace & Bryan A. Garner Talk Language and Writing*. Wallace, the late novelist “widely considered one of the most brilliant writers of his generation” (Gregoire, 2014), became friends with Garner through a 2001 review Wallace wrote for *Harper’s* of Garner’s *Dictionary of Modern American Usage*. In 2006 Garner interviewed Wallace and in 2013 published the interview in this book, overcoming a “mental block” that had prevented him from doing so after Wallace’s 2008 suicide (Garner, 2013, p. 19). *Quack This Way* is full of opinions elicited by Garner from Wallace in a voice that many devoted readers would recognize and relish. Here Wallace laments that a passion he and Garner shared was not widely shared by others:
And people like you and me, we just don’t have our finger on the pulse anymore. What people are looking for is not the kind of stuff we’re talking about. You’ll want to cut this out. I don’t say that to my students because my line with them is still, “Look, you’re at this elite school, you’re going to end up in the professions…. Right? You need to quack this way.” Forget all this stuff about it being beautiful and having centuries of tradition and being the adventure of a lifetime. But the truth is that between sophisticated advertising and national level politics, I am at a loss as to what people’s use of language is now meant to convey and connote to the receiver. It’s so different from the way I myself am wired that I just don’t get it. (Garner, 2013, pp. 110–111)

*Quack This Way* was noticed in *The New Yorker* (Max, 2013), among other places. Goodreads has 198 ratings and 44 reviews, most very positive. Wallace’s best known novel, *Infinite Jest*, has 1,905 OCLC WorldCat holdings. The first Wallace biography, published by Viking (Max, 2012), shows 1,140 holdings. Garner’s own most recent book, the 2014 10th edition of *Black’s Law Dictionary*, which he has edited since 1999, has 4,488. *Quack This Way*, by contrast, has 32 holding libraries, many of them at law schools. For Ingram Coutts, notifications in July 2014 to 56 academic library selectors have yielded, to date, four orders. Two originated overseas, one from the University of Liverpool, one from the Zentralbibliothek Zürich. American libraries generated the other two orders, one from the University of Virginia, one from the University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, Minnesota.

With his own long record as an author, Garner was not in need of another formally published book (About Bryan A. Garner, 2012). Ingram’s academic library staff learned of the book from IngramSpark, where Garner had chosen to publish it. *Quack This Way* is a small book, 137 pages long, with a nicely designed cover featuring a caricature of Wallace, an index, and a touching 21-page introduction written by Garner to frame the interview. To date, *Quack This Way* has altogether sold about a thousand copies.

Why the disconnect between *Quack This Way* and libraries? At public libraries, surely some of the many readers who enjoyed *Infinite Jest* and other Wallace books would have been delighted to find *Quack This Way* on their local new book shelf; but only nine public libraries show WorldCat
holdings. At colleges and universities, Wallace’s body of work will without a doubt be the focus of seminars, theses, and dissertations for years to come. The book would seem to have a waiting readership, of modest size at least, at both types of libraries.

*Quack This Way* simply fell outside normal selection routines at public libraries. It was not reviewed in *Library Journal*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Kirkus*, or *Booklist*, the places a traditional publisher would have worked toward securing reviews. The *New Yorker* notice was a “Web-only” publication not printed in the magazine. The many other online notices in Goodreads and elsewhere must, for the most part, have been beyond the orbit of public library selectors; Ingram did not place the book on its public library selection lists; and that any other vendor would have is not likely. Many academic librarians, oriented in recent years toward patron-driven acquisitions programs, have become reluctant to select books even from mainstream publishers (Nixon, Freeman, & Ward, 2014; Swords, 2011). In the field of English, where narrow monographs are all but a stock example of books with a good chance of seldom being read and never borrowed, selectors are possibly more defensive than in many other areas.

**WHAT SHOULD VENDORS DO?**

With the 32 WorldCat exceptions, interested readers were left to themselves to find *Quack This Way*. Which, by the evidence, many did. Should vendors see helping connect libraries with self-published books as an opportunity?

The first library to make great numbers of self-published e-books available to patrons in a highly visible way was Colorado’s Douglas County Libraries (DCL) where the vision of director Jamie LaRue was motivated in part by a wish to shrink as much as he could the role of vendors in library e-book acquisitions. “The vendors were screwing us,” as he put it to a reporter in describing the digital warehousing and contracting system built at Douglas County where inexpensive books from self-publishing authors, free of user restrictions, became a centerpiece of the library’s mission. LaRue’s vision caught on to the point of acronym as other library systems around the country are trying their own versions of the “DCL model” (Scott, 2013).

How far LaRue and others will be able to go in shrinking their dependence on commercial e-book vendors is an open question. But most of the “gold rush” (Herther, 2013) in self-publishing that has attracted so much
media attention has occurred with e-books, and this is where most vendor activity has taken place so far. In 2014, OverDrive, the market leader in providing e-books to public libraries, began to offer self-published books from Smashwords, a leading platform for e-book publishing and distribution, matching an earlier move by B&T (Enis, 2014). In another collaboration launched in 2014, BiblioBoard and Library Journal provided authors an option on their SELF-e platform to allow LJ to evaluate books for possible inclusion in curated collections available to participating public libraries (“Cuyahoga County,” 2014), a service combining distribution and evaluation. Mark Coker, who founded Smashwords, described his company’s efforts at vetting titles in order to select a relatively small percentage of them for public library collections as “a lot more complicated for us than we expected” (Hadro, 2013). Smashwords used an algorithm based at least in part on author output and sales, resulting in an evaluation process with a high degree of automation, probably necessary for any process attempting to organize any substantial part of today’s enormous universe of self-published e-books.

Whatever their differences in process, vendor-assembled collections will often be the end result for public libraries. While vendors like Smashwords do enable title-by-title sales, any library wishing to scale up its patron offerings would find this a long, hard road; and a road longer and harder still for those libraries applying a degree of their own vetting process at the title level. Even when reviews happen to be available, “we’re often left in the tough spot of reviewing the review source,” as a librarian at the Free Library of Philadelphia put it, referring to what might be the doubtful authority of author-paid reviews or reader reviews (Hadro, 2013). For vendors, the low price of self-published e-books would be another issue. If for authors the price point of 99¢ is “no longer the path to riches” with the current “pricing sweet spots” for e-books now at $2.99 and $3.99 (Sargent, 2014), library vendors would find thin margins in title-level transactions even in this higher range. Library demands are far greater than the demands of individual readers who go online to buy themselves a novel. For vendors having to meet those demands, prices like these would mean a difficult path to profits.

It’s doubtful libraries would willingly pay a multiple of list price, even for low prices such as these, which is what vendors would require in order to match their margins on traditional books. For vendors, another
consideration would be that sales per copy for most self-published books would likely be lower than for traditional books. This would be a negative equation, since in order to sell the same number of copies, a vendor would require less labor for traditional books, as the number of different titles needing to be processed would be lower. Perhaps, instead of different title-level pricing, an alternative approach might be an annual fee for providing the service of covering self-published books.

Self-published books in print format would be another open question as there is nothing about print that lends itself to collections or other forms of mass acquisition or anything else that would yield economies for vendors or for libraries. Nor is there evidence of mass demand from library patrons. The demand public libraries do more often see comes from authors, sometimes happy to donate a free copy, who would like to see their book in a local library. Of course these free copies are hardly free to the libraries that would need to evaluate, process, and maintain them. “Please do not send a sample of your book,” requests the Toronto Public Library, for example, on its Web site page directed at self-published authors. “If the selector wants to see it, we will buy a copy” (Toronto Public Library, 2015). When libraries do decide to buy a self-published print book, the purchase can be mainstreamed if their vendor’s database is up to the task as already discussed. Otherwise, libraries buying directly from authors or placing one-off orders on Amazon or another site will bear high staff costs for these one-off transactions, costs not likely offset by the generally lower prices of self-published books.

Academic libraries present another open question for the vendors who serve them. Public libraries and their vendors can see evidence of demand for self-published e-books merely by looking at the latest best-seller list. In the academic world, best-sellers are rare and even those books that do sell relatively well would be dwarfed in sales by many self-published books read by general readers. Usually academic authors publish for reasons other than sales; and, while some academic authors have done well publishing on their own, the same “gold rush” pursued by popular authors seems an unlikely prospect in the scholarly world (Bosquet, 2013).

For vendors, the implication would be not to expect strong sales for those self-published books they might offer to academic libraries, a view confirmed by a study of OCLC holdings that found academic libraries “not as receptive to self-publishers as public libraries” (Dilevko & Dali, 2006).
The Ingram Coutts experience with *Quack This Way* seems to support this. Yet the lesson was possibly different for a few other titles, such as *Original People, Original Television*, which saw sales comparable to what books from academic publishers achieve. Why couldn’t academic vendors find more books like that?

It’s not as if academic librarians are completely satisfied with the books they buy from mainstream publishers. Evidence to the contrary isn’t difficult to find, in fact, such as a reference to one publisher’s “business model of charging outrageous prices for embarrassingly bad books,” such as this librarian’s example priced at “$145 for a collection of unrelated and apparently unedited essays,” a book that nonetheless claimed 86 WorldCat holdings at libraries, “including mine” (Geffert, 2011). The librarian did not name the book in his essay; but, as with any new title from an established academic publisher, libraries would have expected their academic vendors to treat it not too differently from how they would treat a Pulitzer Prize winner.

*Quack This Way* and *Original People, Original Television* both received more vetting than that by Ingram Coutts, where there were no customer expectations of such treatment. Instead, staff sought out or noticed these two books and chose to offer them to customers solely on merit. How many more books like this pair are available today? Probably quite a few, although the effort in finding and evaluating them would, once more, not be small. One thing Ingram Coutts didn’t do was to market to customers that certain titles were receiving this level of evaluation. Application of the term “self-published,” from the company’s bibliographic lexicon, was certainly a negative for the books. Hand-selected by staff, the term should have been a seal of quality, not a warning label. Instead, since most library profiles are very restrictive in this category, in line with traditional librarian attitudes, the staff’s vetting efforts were undermined by normal operating procedures.

The trick for vendors will be to prevent normal operating procedures, and traditional attitudes, from getting in the way of good self-published books coming to the attention of their customers. Library vendors having a direct relationship with a self-publishing platform, such as Ingram Coutts has with IngramSpark, should explore how this might be turned to advantage in attracting authors to the platform, in developing more useful metadata, in identifying pertinent books for libraries, academic and public both, and in persuading interested libraries that a different pricing model might be
in order than that for normal services. Attempting to survey the entire self-publishing universe seems a daunting project, but intracompany efforts are a possible way to build the model Whole Foods has perfected for grocery stores.

That same cross-company collaboration might also serve vendors well in addressing a new trend in libraries and self-publishing, that is, “to consider the public’s interest in self-publishing as a service opportunity rather than a collection development concern” (Hadro, 2013). Public libraries are starting programs across the country aimed at helping local authors to write and publish their books (Staley, 2015). Some academic libraries, Indiana University being an example, have also begun programs to support campus authors looking for help in publishing a book (Dunham & Walters, 2014–2015). While these authors are normally young scholars needing to publish their first book with an academic press, many other campus authors have no need to strive for tenure and promotion and simply want to make their book available. In the years ahead, growing interest in the digital humanities, continued spread in awareness of open access, and the rise of library-based publishing, not to mention continued economic pressures on traditional scholarly book publishing, are likely to lead to more nontraditional academic publishing, some of it in the traditional form of the book. Vendors able to go beyond simply selling self-published books, but also offering services to help publish them, would seem to have a niche in this new local publishing ecology.

In today’s self-publishing explosion, the winners so far have been the many thousands of now-published authors who can truly call themselves that; the companies who built the platforms enabling their authorship; and the online sites, led as always by Amazon, that generated sales for some of those authors. Everyone else whose livelihood has to do with books is still trying to figure things out. Even editors at the New York Times Book Review are not unaffected. Rachel Donadio of the NYTBR wrote an amusing essay on the “collective graphomania” leading so many Americans to sound “their barbaric yawps over the roofs of the world, as good old Walt Whitman, himself a self-published author, once put it.” Donadio described a few of the “dozens” of odd self-published books submitted weekly by hopeful writers. “There’s a lot of noise out there, and some of it is music,” she wrote in conclusion, sounding hopeful herself (Donadio, 2008). Library book vendors, in this same new, noisy world, are also among the hopeful.
NOTES
1. According to searches of the Library of Congress catalog, OCLC WorldCat, and Amazon, performed January 1, 2015. The AMICUS catalogue of Library and Archives Canada does not offer a publisher search.
2. As of January 1, 2015.
3. Profiles are structured descriptions of library interests maintained by vendors to operate approval plans, new title notification services, and patron-driven acquisition programs.
4. This data was discussed by the author at the 2014 Charleston Conference in a presentation entitled Self-Published Content and Approval Plans.
5. All of these searches were performed on January 2, 2015.
6. The “ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Full Text” database already has nine entries with “David Foster Wallace” as an identifier/keyword, according to a search on January 3, 2015.
7. Whether or not Garner attempted that is unknown.

REFERENCES


