

eBOOK EVOLUTION

A new option for authors by Belinda Crosbie

According to Allen & Unwin publisher Elizabeth Weiss, her company receives an average of 30 to 40 unsolicited projects a week. Of approximately 2,000 texts received annually, she says, "We would probably publish something like 2%" — thus dashing the hopes of thousands of would-be authors.

We've all heard the struggling beginnings of well-known writers. *Harry Potter* author JK Rowling received 17 rejections and Stephen King's best-selling novel, *Carrie*, was discarded by over 30 publishers. Writers are now taking advantage of the eBook evolution and are no longer at the mercy of publishers.

Fed up with agent and publisher rejections, new and established authors are creating eBooks and selling them on Amazon.com or hundreds of online eBook distributors. They keep most, if not all, of the profits and enjoy the internet's global reach and sales potential.

eBook stands for electronic book, a downloadable file read or printed off compatible electronic devices such as computers, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and the eagerly anticipated Sony Reader. The Sony Reader is expected to heighten eBook acceptance and readership. What iPod and iTunes did for music and audio, Sony Reader CONNECT software and store will do for readers and writers.

Ms Weiss acknowledges that certain markets favour the eBook format: "We know that readers of English who live in non-English speaking countries value the ease with which they can now access a wide range of books from retail sites like

eBooks.com. We also know that university and college students, and also professional researchers, use the web heavily for their research, and they are already taking advantage of the ability to search the content of books accurately in eBook format. They use eBooks in libraries, and they are also using Google's Book Search facility."

Best-selling eBook authors of *How to Write and Publish Your Own eBook*, Jim Edwards and Joe Vitale, say the three main reasons why people write eBooks are to: share their story

"By the time they find me their enthusiasm is low but they're still hopeful. When I tell them they can convert their book into a secure eBook format and have their own internet site to feature it for a few hundred dollars they start to get excited again."

with others, build an income or gain prestige among customers and peers.

Combined with a simple marketing formula, eBook publishing can be lucrative, as evidenced by Vitale: "I earned over \$45,000 in three months from my marketing eBook". Renowned author Stephen King added to his fortune when he discovered the online world and shook the publishing industry. Within 24 hours of announcing his online short story, which sold for US\$2.50 (A\$3.35), more than 400,000 people bought it. It was reported that King made more than a million dollars within three days.

Bestselling authors such as King help overcome the misconception that eBooks are written because the writer couldn't get a "real deal" with a publisher. eBook authors range from *The Da Vinci*

Code's Dan Brown to Aunt Sarah sharing her quilting expertise.

The new medium offers opportunities for both writers and publishers. Open eBook Forum president Steve Potash says: "eBooks represent the fastest growing segment for the publishing industry".

Traditional publishing houses such as Harlequin Enterprises Ltd, HarperCollins, McGraw-Hill, Random House, Simon & Schuster and Time Warner Book Group are now releasing their bestsellers in electronic format, at reduced



Belinda Crosbie

a new channel. The eBook market is still relatively new and while it is growing steadily, it's not clear yet how large it will become. However, we are conscious that just releasing an eBook online is only part of the publishing job. As with any printed book, an eBook needs to be well edited and marketed. Otherwise it's likely to just drift unnoticed in cyberspace".

Website designer Ivana Katz of www.Web4Business.com.au helps authors publish and market online and believes the eBook evolution offers them hope: "Most people come to me with completed manuscripts after being rejected by agents and publishers. Many have also considered self-publishing but are discouraged by the cost in the thousands [of dollars]. By the time they find me their enthusiasm is low but they're still hopeful. When I tell them they can convert their book into a secure eBook format and have their own internet site to feature it for a few hundred dollars they start to get excited again".

Combined with simple marketing techniques, authors gain the satisfaction of sharing their story while visualising their ascent up the Amazon.com eBook bestseller list.

► page 21