

WHAT IS
HAPPENING
WITH SELF-
PUBLISHING
IN SCOTLAND
TODAY?

A woman is shown in profile, facing right, standing in a field of tall grasses. She is wearing a grey knit headband, a long-sleeved sweater with a repeating pattern of light and dark grey wavy bands, and dark trousers. The background is a soft, golden sunset over a field, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm, hazy atmosphere. The entire scene is framed by a dark, textured border.

KNIT READ WALK

THE WEST
HIGHLAND
WAY

The logo for Kate Davies Designs, featuring two stylized, interlocking circular motifs that resemble the letter 'D' or 'G' intertwined.

KATE DAVIES DESIGNS

Introduction

SELF-PUBLISHING IS INCREASING. NOT PAYING ATTENTION TO THIS WOULD MEAN NEGLECTING A BROAD RANGE OF CREATIVE PRACTICE AND POTENTIALLY ENTREPRENEURIAL ACTIVITY.

As the Creative Scotland Literature and Publishing Sector Review (2015) suggested, not developing support would mean the body would 'miss out on opportunities to discover new talent' (p.5) with cultural and economic consequences. Academic study steadily appreciates and sets in context the upswing in self-publishing, although most attention can be seen intermittently in trade journals and newspaper articles. This pamphlet examines what is happening in Scottish self-publishing today, what experiences are like for writers and readers and how best to support the industry's creative future.

Background to the report

Following the recommendation of the Scottish Literature and Publishing Sector Review (Nordicity and Creative Scotland, 2015), between January and November 2018 this project investigated the potential to grow self-publishing into micro-enterprises across Scotland. Interviewing those who successfully self-publish in Scotland, and speaking to industry partners and service providers, the project examined the potential for network and skills development, alternative funding models, and cross-arts collaboration with artists and cultural entrepreneurs, in order to boost creativity, dissemination, and the creative economy.

Context

THE WRITER OFTEN HAS AN **INDEPENDENT STREAK** For someone to want to sit down and craft a text requires a measure of individual creativity and independent thought. Now that technology and services have evolved to enable writers to effectively market and publish themselves, there are many who are gaining ‘a degree of autonomy’ in what Susan Kemp calls ‘the age of the authorpreneur’ (Kemp 2016). Digital developments, from the reach of social media to the rise of print-on-demand technology, impact on traditional publishing and self-publishing alike. Ingram, one of the core print facilities for print-on-demand books in the UK, sees monographs from large university presses printed alongside individual copies of self-published titles. In turn, digital marketplaces such as Amazon host and display self-published and traditionally published titles side-by-side. Meanwhile, as the author is able take on more of the duties and roles of the traditional publisher, to appear professional it is also necessary to hide the burden of this work. The risk is that if the author is visibly selling and marketing creative work, the reader thinks less of the work itself. There is the potential to be doubly isolated, downplaying the number of tasks involved in publishing and marketing given the already lone nature of independent creative work. Nevertheless, independent marketing and publishing requires a different kind of labour, Danuta Kean summarises the challenge by suggesting that ‘to be a self-published bestseller demands authors become more hustler than ink slinger’ (Kean 2017).

THE WRITER WHO SELF-PUBLISHES MIGHT BE **KNOWN AS AN INDIE**

The language and terminology used to describe self-publishing has changed as the industry and possibilities for publishing have changed. In a dynamic environment, the seemingly autonomous creativity and labour involved in self-publishing have supported a shift away from the term 'self-published' to the term 'indie' (Croft, 2018). Adopting the logic of indie as it has been used in other creative industries, as a fringe of alternative practices to those of the status quo (in this case traditional publishing), the previous stigma of the vanity press has been overwritten by a more familiar craft narrative of small-scale, plucky self-sufficiency. This pamphlet will largely use the term self-published but indie author will also be used interchangeably given that this is now in common usage.

THE WRITER OFTEN **DOESN'T MAKE MUCH MONEY**

A survey commissioned by the Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS) in 2018, and undertaken by the University of Glasgow's Centre for Copyright and New Business Models in the Creative Economy questioned 5,523 writers and found that those who defined themselves as professional earned on average just under £10,500 a year (ALCS, 2018). Compared to prior surveys this survey indicates a steep downward trend as writers are hard-pressed to sustain a career from writing. Given this outlook, there are clear financial incentives for a writer to pursue self-publishing. The big draw for authors is in the noticeable increase in take-home pay from an individual sale. Traditional publishing deals ensure that authors earn money through a royalty payment against their book sales. However, this is often a small fraction of the sales price for any digital or physical book. Self-publishing ensures a much larger

percentage of the cover price returns to the creator, reflecting the additional labour and risk undertaken to mimic the traditional up-front risks and duties of the publisher. Self-published authors have more earning potential but also have to do more jobs, or find and pay individuals who can do certain jobs for them. There are few surveys of the broader income of self-published writers, although a Taleist study in 2012 gauged that out of 1,007 self-publishing respondents across 40 countries, a majority of whom were located in the USA, just under 10% declared that they could live on the royalties of their work (Cornford and Lewis, 2012). Those who have been traditionally published for certain titles and then self-publish, known as hybrid authors, appear anecdotally in a better economic position. The Taleist survey noted hybrid authors 'earned 2.5 times more when self-publishing than the rejected authors or authors who went straight to self-publishing' (Cornford and Lewis, 2012, p.112/602).

Conventional economic assessments of the industry appear uncertain about the figures. A report on the contribution of the Publishing Industry to the UK economy suggests that self-publishing 'has been a growing area of activity due to the possibilities enabled by digitisation' (Frontier Economics, 2017, p.8), but seems rather less clear on the detail. One footnote in the report describes self-publishing as 'the process by which independent authors-to-be post their ebooks online for a small percentage of the income if they get sold' (p.32). Such statements betray a lack of understanding of the logics and enticements of self-publishing, as well as introducing a slightly curious and sceptical terminology for self-published authors as 'independent authors-to-be'. Self-publishing attracts more attention because there are a few bestselling writers who make a great deal of money, who are allegedly 'Buying houses in cash and selling millions' but who appear to have no public profile (Kean 2017).

THE WRITER'S SUCCESS IS **HARD TO SEE**

Conventional ways of recognising the success of a writer are imperfect. Even these are skewed towards traditional publishing, high street booksellers, broadcast media, and their reliance on awards, festivals and bestseller charts that have themselves been skewed towards traditional publishing.

The Alliance of Independent Authors (ALLi), a group formed to champion those striving to self-publish to professional standards, has campaigned to open up the literary infrastructure to self-published authors.

The American lobbying group *authorearnings* suggest that trade sales figures used by the publishing industry also do not reflect these changes and are woefully inaccurate (*authorearnings.com*, 2018). At the 2018 Digital Book World conference in Nashville, Tennessee, *authorearnings* suggested that 70% of the American ebook market has not been reported in industry data. Whilst some of the missing data relates to large publishers not sharing ebook sales, a large portion of the unreported data relates to 'self-published and very small publishers'. The main firm responsible for reporting American industry data is the same firm which reports British industry standard data, Nielsen BookScan. Issues with Nielsen's ebook data explains an alternative for the UK market, a 'weekly e-book ranking,' produced in the trade magazine *The Bookseller*. This alternative measure is a tally of digital sales shared by the largest UK trade publishers and two smaller independent publishers: PRH UK, Hachette, Harpercollins, Pan Macmillan, Bloomsbury, Simon & Schuster, Bonnier Zaffre and Canongate. Extra price restrictions on this data prevent price promotions or perceived low pricing of titles from influencing the charts. This alternative ranking also misses the significant sales of self-published and small traditionally published ebooks.

One novelist puts it this way:

"THE CHANCE OF A SELF-PUBLISHED NOVELIST GETTING THEIR BOOK REVIEWED IN THE MAINSTREAM PRESS IS THE SAME AS THE CHANCE OF MY DOG NOT EATING A SAUSAGE. THE CHANCE OF AN INDIE AUTHOR BEING BOOKED FOR A MAJOR LITERATURE FESTIVAL? DONALD TRUMP APOLOGISING TO MEXICO."

Barber, 2016

A self-published writer interviewed put it this way:

"THERE'S NO POSSIBILITY OF GETTING REVIEWS IN THE TRADITIONAL SENSE. AND THERE'S NO POSSIBILITY OF GETTING RECOGNITION IN THE TRADITIONAL SENSE."

Horne, 2018

THE WRITER'S ASSOCIATIONS AND SOCIETIES ARE **LESS SUPPORTIVE OF SELF-PUBLISHING**

Traditional writers' associations are not a prominent source of information on the independent publishing pathway. Groups predicated on traditional publishing careers for writers often have inadequate understandings of the careers enjoyed by many self-publishing authors. The Society of Authors (SoA) now admits self-published writers as associate members under the rubric 'emerging writers' if they have yet to make a profit, and full membership is available to those who have 'sold over 300 print copies or 500 ebooks in 12 months' (SoA, 2018a). Whilst eligible for SoA prizes, grants towards works in progress offered to other SoA members cannot be awarded to 'self-published authors as grants cannot be awarded to help towards the costs of publication' (SoA, 2018b). Scottish Book Trust (SBT) has recently evolved guidance from previously not endorsing self-publishing to a more balanced assessment of the pros and cons of pursuing this route to publication. Yet, the traditionally published author is not given advice in the form of pros and cons. For example, the suggestion that 'getting books into brick and mortar bookshops is notoriously difficult – for publishers as well as individuals' (SBT, 2018a) is not provided for consideration in the traditional publishing guidance. Given the implied achievement in the traditional publisher's recognition of the writer, much of the difficulty involved in being a published writer, often itself invisible to the public, only comes to the fore when the pathway of self-publishing is examined. To participate in Scottish Book Trust's Live Literature scheme, self-published authors must submit their work to a specially convened panel.

Not all traditionally published work undergoes this process, despite the variable quality on offer within the industry.

“ONE THIRD OF THE BESTSELLING BOOKS ON AMAZON AND OTHER EBOOK BESTSELLER LISTS ARE SELF-PUBLISHED. ALLI HAS HUNDREDS OF PROFESSIONAL MEMBERS WHO HAVE SOLD MORE THAN 50,000 COPIES OF THEIR BOOKS ... BUT THESE CHANGES HAVE YET TO BE REFLECTED IN THE LITERARY INFRASTRUCTURE OF LIBRARIES, NEWSPAPER AND MAGAZINE REVIEWS, BOOKSTORES, FESTIVALS, AND PRIZES.”
Holloway and Young, 2017, p.2

The panel

“DECIDE IF THE BOOKS SUBMITTED AS EVIDENCE OF SELF-PUBLISHED WORK ARE EQUIVALENT TO INDUSTRY STANDARD. THE PANEL ASSESS SELF-PUBLISHED WORK BASED ON THE FOLLOWING: PRODUCTION VALUES, EDITORIAL VALUES, ILLUSTRATION QUALITY (IF APPLICABLE) AND QUALITY OF CONTENT.”
SBT, 2018b

THE WRITER OF A SELF-PUBLISHED WORK IS **NOT AN ISLAND** If it takes a village to raise a book, then it still takes a village to raise a self-published book. Defining success narrowly as circulation of a book, even the most self-reliant of self-published writers will need to rely on others to ensure a healthy readership. For physical copies, the obligation might appear more visible, where self-publishing will mean working relationships with the printer, with distributors, with booksellers, and very possibly libraries, book groups, festivals, schools and any reader or potential venue for increasing readership. With digital copies, the self-published writer needs to work to produce, distribute and market those texts. Increasingly, the life of a writer is remunerated by a wide variety of tasks outside the immediate revenue stream taken from book sales, and the work of self-publishing is no different. Selling rights for foreign markets, adaptations, or producing audiobooks are all part of the possible income streams open to the self-published author. Alternative support networks are opening up to work with traditional organisations in circulating the best advice and connections possible for those self-publishing today. At the forefront of current support are ALLi, but they are not widely known of outside those who are currently self-publishing.

THE WRITER OF A SELF-PUBLISHED WORK COULD **TAKE MANY PATHS AND FORMS**

ALLi describe three stages to self-publishing's evolution (Ross, 2018). The first boom followed desktop publishing's rise, and was predominantly focused on print. The second was digital and tied to the rise of the ereader and the online ebook marketplace. The third emerging wave is predicted to involve spreading business across platforms and markets, diversifying income streams to include audiobooks, teaching and service provision and pursuing more direct methods of selling to readers. Elements from each of these stages co-exist in the world of the self-publishing writer today.

The self-publishing field might also be subdivided between three different pathways. In one path the individual author could take on all duties and tasks, similar to a player-manager who happens to be a utility player or a one-man band. A second pathway would involve unstrapping the drum from your back and outsourcing some tasks to freelance creative labour, employing a publicist, a designer, an editor or a typesetter and essentially becoming a project-manager. A third option could be to hand most of the instruments over, and outsource a much greater amount of work to a publishing service who, for a fee, would publish the work to your collaborative design. The third path might carry some risk, haunted as it is by the notion of the vanity publisher. Depending on the arrangement with the publishing service, received wisdom has been that a publisher with a less vested interest in book sales will be more content deriving income from the author and not the reader, jeopardising the marketability, and the worth, of the book. However, the same issues of trust exist in any relationship and arguably haunt all three pathways. Neither are the pathways always this clear-cut

or discrete. Many contemporary publishing services have developed with expertise in marketing and distribution too, and so as technology has enabled individuals to take on multiple specialist tasks, a small ecosystem of print, design and marketing services have sprung up between the second and third pathways. In truth, the first pathway still involves a platform, and digital services, and cannot be seen outside of the developments that enable any of these pathways.

The most successful books to emerge from either pathway often mimic traditional publications or have very good reasons for deciding to depart from usual protocols. Many self-published books will indicate a created imprint to provide the theatre which separates author from publisher, and use standard formats, layouts and design ideas to appeal to the reader familiar with these symbols and signals from their constant reinforcement in the cultural authority of traditional publishing. As such, a bookseller or one intimately familiar with the look of books may only be aware of a book's self-published provenance by looking at the paper trail of its supply chain.

HIGHLAND JOURNAL

1. THE MAKING OF A HILLWALKER



JACK P. HARLAND

Method

The Scottish
writer might
be found
anywhere (and
might not be
found)

Geography is a complicated factor in writing life, and more so in the world of self-publishing. Writers may write locally, but can publish digitally and physically on a global scale. Digital service provision means that Scottish authors may well make a sales point of their nationality but their work may also display no outward signs of their location. As discussed already, successful self-published writers may appear invisible. The Society of Authors also admits that recognising this success can be hard.

“THERE ARE WRITERS
IN THIS SECTOR WHOSE
NAMES ARE LIKELY TO
BE UNKNOWN OUTSIDE
THEIR IMMEDIATE
FANBASE BUT WHO ARE
MAKING SIGNIFICANT
MONEY.”

SoA, 2018c

So how do you hunt the invisible, how do you find the fanbase when you aren't the fan? Following the threads of digital publicity from social media, podcasts and writers' associations gave me connections to many Scottish self-published authors but I also pursued a parallel strategy. Assuming that booksellers across Scotland would know of local successes within their area, I contacted bookshops to identify case studies across Scotland. Whilst responses from booksellers were mixed, with some shops outlining their concerns about the quality of self-published work, several shops were also able to identify self-published authors whose books they deemed successful. Very often these books are seen to work because they tell a story that resonates with the local area, whether that be a history of local transport, local council leaders, fiction set in the neighbourhood of the shop or local wildlife, the broad category could be seen as a counterbalance to the narratives available from larger traditional publishers. There was significant overlap here with the subjects tackled by very successful titles from small, independent, traditional publishers. Nevertheless, this enabled me to build a list of authors, with geographical spread across Scotland, who are active in digital and physical publishing. I then conducted semi-structured interviews with many of those self-published authors to gain a sense of their practice and labour, considering:

HOW THEY CAME TO BE SELF-PUBLISHED

THEIR THOUGHTS ON THE PROCESS E.G. CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS

HOW THEY DESCRIBE THEIR WORK TO OTHERS

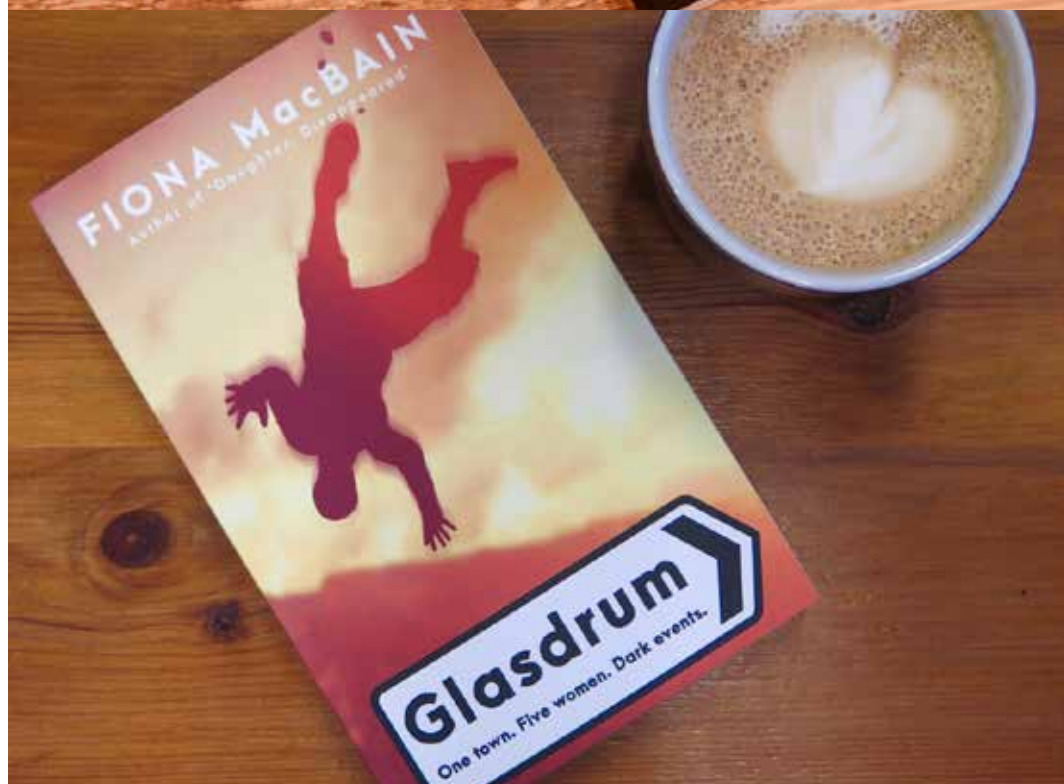
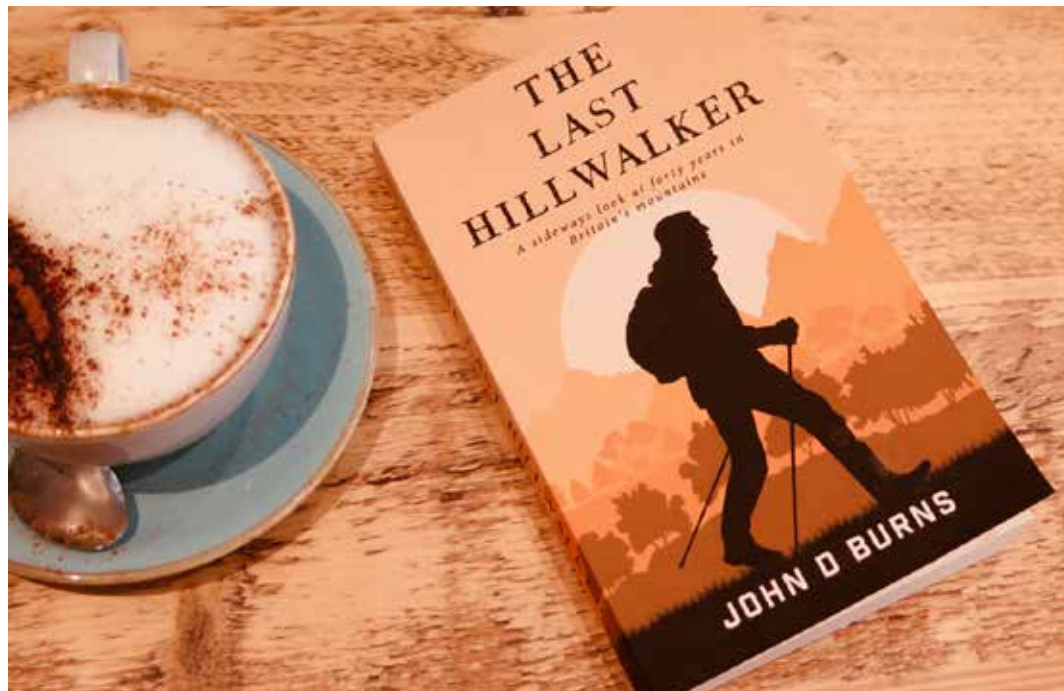
ANY SERVICES THEY USED IN COMING TO PUBLICATION

GROUPS WHICH HAVE BEEN SUPPORTIVE OF THEIR WORK

THEIR EXPERIENCE OF READERS OF THEIR WORK

WHAT THEIR GOALS WERE, AND WHAT THESE MIGHT BE NOW

WHAT USEFUL SUPPORT MIGHT BE OFFERED TO THOSE LOOKING TO SELF-PUBLISH



Findings

Pathways to publication

The pathways to publication evident from the interviews were multiple. No one account can sum up the work of a self-published author in Scotland. Of the purely self-published, some writers approached their work with a print-centred model, focusing on using a local (or international) printer and taking on distribution of copies themselves. Others pursued a digital strategy in parallel, selling ebooks. Some writers were hybrid authors, being traditionally published for some titles and self-published for others. In this case, the hybrid model seemed to lend status and audience to the author's ongoing work, building confidence in the potential to marketing new self-published titles in tandem with other traditionally published works.

Many authors demonstrated that commercial online self-publishing platforms such as Amazon's Createspace (now folded into Kindle Direct Publishing) or IngramSpark had been helpful to income streams. Some had stories of supplying bookshops and libraries having sourced physical copies through both platforms. Those who avoided dealing with Amazon gave accounts of protecting the value of their work, and their ability to derive the most earnings possible from their books' production by using alternative physical and digital marketplaces.

Geography and creative networks

It became clear that whilst some networks existed, not every self-published author had even met another self-published author. For those who had spoken to

others there was a sense that shared accounts of practice had proven beneficial given what can be stressful, expensive and daunting processes. Whilst Amazon released two charts in 2017 and 2018 highlighting the physical locations in Scotland where there were the most self-published writers per capita (see figure 1), in my interviews there was no sense that these physical geographies constituted firm networks. Amazon's data release illustrates that self-publishing is a geographically fragmented practice and has great potential for take-up outside of the Central Belt. Much of the new wave of self-publishing is contingent on a reliable connection to the internet, but beyond this, most useful tools and resources being developed are often virtual. With this in mind it's perhaps ironic that the data was used to draw interest to two Amazon Academy events located within the largest hubs of the Central Belt, in Edinburgh in 2017 and Glasgow in 2018. The 2018 Amazon Academy at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre in Glasgow illustrated the potential of KDP and provided a platform for four successful self-published and hybrid authors: Linda Gillard, Steven McKay, LJ Ross and Barry Hutchison. The branding meant little was said about alternative service providers but, attending and asking questions about experiences with physical bookshops, there was clear acknowledgement from the writers that traditional publishing would be preferable if you desired your book to be stocked on the high street (Rooney, 2018).

2017

- 1 FALKIRK
- 2 AYR
- 3 EDINBURGH
- 4 MOTHERWELL
- 5 GLASGOW
- 6 DUNFERMLINE
- 7 KIRKCALDY
- 8 KILMARNOCK
- 9 ABERDEEN
- 10 DUNDEE

2018

- 1 GLASGOW
- 2 EDINBURGH
- 3 ABERDEEN
- 4 DUNDEE
- 5 LIVINGSTON
- 6 STIRLING
- 7 INVERNESS
- 8 DUNFERMLINE
- 9 AYR
- 10 KILMARNOCK

Figure 1: Amazon statistics reported in Ayr Advertiser and The National for top 10 places to be an indie author in Scotland (Hunter, 2017; TheNational.Scot, 2018)

Genre and form

Self-published authors work in an array of genres.

Writers interviewed for this project produced knitting guides, law textbooks, walking memoirs, crime fiction, short stories, cookery books, thrillers, literary fiction and cross-genre fiction. In some cases, the kind of book being produced had a huge bearing on the physical or digital focus. Christopher Trotter, a hybrid author, related to me how important cookery books are as printed objects, to take in the kitchen and to involve in everyday life.

For writer, researcher and knitter, Kate Davies, the craft community enables an embrace of both digital and print.

Support as Signposting

Jules Horne, a self-published writer and traditionally published dramatist, noted that most conventional associations had struggled to point self-published writers in the right direction. Considering the potential for support Horne wondered ‘if you are aspiring to professional standards is there a kind of mechanism for getting people with that kind of ambition brought on?’ (Horne, 2018). Horne was careful to point out that many of these needs are catered for in different places and, given the spectrum of where self-publishers are in their careers, ‘it’s more a case of signposting’ (Horne, 2018).

Commissioning Services

Both John D. Burns and Fiona MacBain highlighted the process of commissioning editorial and design service in their work. Burns emphasised the cost of The Last Hillwalker but balanced this with the product being prepared.

“ALL MY COOKBOOKS ARE EITHER RIPPED UP, OR PAGES ARE COMING OUT, OR THEY’RE COVERED IN CHOCOLATE OR WHATEVER IT IS. THAT’S PART OF THE LOVE OF A COOKBOOK.”

Trotter, 2018

“IT’S TOTALLY RELIANT ON DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MARKETING AND REPRODUCTION / PORTABILITY (KNITTERS LIKE TO DOWNLOAD PATTERNS ON THEIR PHONES AND IPADS FOR EASY WORKING WHEN COMMUTING ETC) AND YET THIS IS A COMMUNITY / MARKET TOTALLY COMMITTED TO THE ‘ANALOG’; WHO LOVES THE BOOK AS OBJECT, AND WHO (THANKFULLY) DON’T HESITATE TO BUY PRINT PRODUCTS.”

Davies, 2018

“I PROBABLY SPENT ABOUT £2,000 IN PRODUCING THE BOOK. I DID TAKE THE ATTITUDE THAT YOU WANT TO HIRE PROFESSIONALS. IF YOU LOOK AT SOME SELF-PUBLISHED BOOKS YOU CAN VERY CLEARLY SEE IT HAS NOT BEEN DESIGNED BY A PROFESSIONAL. YOU’RE GOING TO SIT THERE STARING AT THE

MacBain also drew out the complexity of hiring professionals and managing the project yourself. Like Burns, MacBain used an online marketplace called Reedsy for hiring editorial and graphic design workers.

Jack P. Harland followed a fuller service route to publication, paying Leicester-based Troubador publishing to fulfil the design and production of his manuscript. Having found publishers large and small unresponsive to his proposal, Harland came across Troubador in the Writers and Artists' Yearbook. An industry guide since 1906, the annual has increasingly expanded guidance on self-publishing. Harland believes the services provided by Troubador were good value for money, appreciating their working relationship on the book and their notes of caution to temper expectations. However, Harland found the investment in the work concerning for what it implied about accessible publishing.

The earlier attempt to narrow the self-publishing field into three pathways, would map this as a full service pathway. However Harland's agreement allocates a percentage of book sale income to the publishing firm, perhaps explaining why in his experience he believes the fees paid might not cover their labour. Presumably here the underlying risk is borne out by the publisher as in a traditional publishing agreement. During the course of the project Harland's book was actively marketed by a UK-wide wholesaler as part of a list of 'self-published titles from Scottish authors' which were all books produced in partnership with Troubador. This makes visible the numbers pursuing the full service option and the marketing service that looks to be part of the offer.

COVER OF THAT BOOK FOR MANY YEARS AND YOU'RE GOING TO WANT TO MAKE SURE IT'S THE COVER OF THE BOOK THAT MAKES PEOPLE PICK IT UP?"
Burns, 2018

"I GOT IT IN MY HEAD IT WOULD BE NICE TO GET SCENES FROM THE BOOK PAINTED FOR THE COVER... THEN I WENT TO A LOCAL GRAPHIC DESIGN PLACE TO ASK THEM IF THEY COULD PUT SOME FONTS ON IT... THEY DID AN OKAY JOB BUT SOMETHING WASN'T RIGHT. IT GOT VERY STRESSFUL BECAUSE I FELT LIKE I WAS OUT OF MY DEPTH AND I REALISED IT DIDN'T LOOK LIKE A PROPER BOOK. AT THAT STAGE THE COST OF A PROFESSIONAL BOOK COVER DESIGNER WAS DAUNTING. £500, I THINK. SO... I WENT TO REEDSY AGAIN, AND IT WAS A BIT OF A DISASTER BECAUSE I FOUND A BOOK COVER DESIGNER AND SHE TOOK THE PAINTINGS AND DIDN'T DO ANY BETTER JOB THAN THE GRAPHIC DESIGNER AND I WAS QUITE DESPONDENT AT THAT POINT AND I CANCELLED THE JOB.

For those who knew of ALLi, their provision of member discounts and access to a directory of approved service providers was appealing. Yet, there were those who did not know of ALLi or had found comparable marketplaces from which to hire skilled workers. Nevertheless, knowing there is an advocacy group championing self-publishing seemed to reassure those taking part in these interviews. Many were hopeful that their accounts of self-publishing demonstrated the successes and the pitfalls involved in the creative labour of the industry, and believed that support to share such accounts would be essential for continued professional development.

RICARDO [FAYET, CO-FOUNDER OF REEDSY] GOT IN TOUCH WITH ME, BECAUSE THEY'RE ALWAYS WORRIED THAT PEOPLE MIGHT HAVE GONE OFFLINE WITH THE CONTRACT. THEN, HE FOUND ME SOMEBODY ELSE WHO DID A FANTASTIC COVER FOR DAUGHTER, DISAPPEARED AND SO THEN HE DID THE COVER FOR GLASDRUM AS WELL WHICH WAS VIA REEDSY AS WELL."

MacBain, 2018

"IT WORRIES ME THAT I HAD SAVINGS BEHIND ME AND I WAS ABLE TO PUT THE MONEY IN, [BUT] THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO ARE REALLY DOING GREAT STUFF AND THEY CAN'T GO DOWN THE LINE I'VE GONE DOWN."

Harland, 2018

Growth

The sector as a whole is oriented towards the individual. The fundamental area for growth is in the development of skilled service provision to take on aspects of the publishing process. However, a few of those interviewed did express interest in, or indicate plans to, expand into publishing others and so could be regarded as evolving into micro presses with some characteristics of traditional publishers. Other developments hinted at by the project interviews suggest the increasing viability of selling rights, and conceiving of new ways to monetise creative content although no mentions were made of crowdfunding.

Alongside new wave solutions and innovations, it is surprising how well an older model of self-publishing functions. Often influenced by digital technology, particularly print-on-demand, self-publishing oriented towards the physical book still has a presence in creative life which should not be dismissed. The commonality between successful self-published print and digital titles is in the creative voices finding readers through self-publishing. This leads to the conclusion that part of the growth exhibited within the industry is tied to catering for those needs not currently met by traditional publishing.

Recommendations

No one solution could help all those writing and intending to write and self-publish. However, a broad range of steps could be taken to develop the industry in Scotland as a whole.

1. RECOGNITION

There is a need to shift the recognition amongst sectoral bodies and national agencies towards a more visible and welcoming stance to those who self-publish. The geographic distribution of this part of the industry is a strength and broader recognition of self-publishing could potentially foster greater inclusivity.

2. FACILITATION

Self-publishing writers benefit from gathering in virtual and physical meet ups to share self-publishing practices and processes. Writers need to consider whether there are opportunities for self-organising these communities through genre or place in the same way as the tech community interacts. They can provide plural accounts and the sharing of a fuller explanation of potential publishing pathways. I would recommend that these groups avoid framing the subject through a single commercial sponsor or solution.

3. NETWORKS

As much self-publishing is deeply immersed in genre or subject area, writers should consider how the creation of self-published work in certain genres or subject areas could bring differing cultural groups together. Self-published work is just as likely to be produced in niche areas as much as established ideas of genre. Where the former is the case, it is doing valuable bridging work that could be built upon by active engagement from sectoral bodies and national agencies.

4. COST

All writers need access to services such as design, editorial and ISBN provision. At present these essential and highly effective creative contributions constitute a significant financial risk to the individual and in many cases would be beyond the budget of a practitioner, stifling creative growth. Currently these services can benefit from grant support given directly to publishers, but not to those following the self-publishing route. This seems iniquitous given the growth and significance of self-publishing.

NUTS & BOLTS of SELF-PUBLISHING

How to Self-Publish
Ebooks and Paperbacks



CHRIS LONGMUIR

Further reading

One of the largest selling, and most crowded genres in self-publishing is the 'how to self-publish' guide. Nevertheless, many of these texts can be extremely helpful to beginners and more seasoned self-publishers alike. Successful Scottish indie author Chris Longmuir provides one such helpful guide reflecting on her career to date and the alternative pathways open to the self-publisher (Longmuir, 2017).

Stuart Bache, *The Author's Guide to Cover Design*. Books Covered, 2018.

Alison Baverstock, *The Naked Author - A Guide to Self-publishing*. London: Bloomsbury, 2011.

Adam Croft, *The Indie Author Mindset*. Amazon, 2018.

Kate Davies, *Handywoman*. KDD, 2018.

Chris Mackenzie Jones, *Behind the Book: Eleven Authors on Their Path to Publication*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Timothy Laquintano, *Mass Authorship and the Rise of Self-Publishing*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2016.

Chris Longmuir, *The Nuts and Bolts of Self-Publishing*. Montrose: Barker & Jansen, 2017.

Joanna Penn, *Successful Self-Publishing*. Curl Up Press, 2017.

Writers' and Artists' Yearbook 2019: The Essential Guide to the Media and Publishing Industries. 112th ed. London: Bloomsbury 2018.

Podcasts for Further Listening

In a dynamic and fast-changing industry, self-publishing podcasts (often with helpful show notes) are an increasingly helpful way to keep pace with updates and evolutions in service provision and thinking. Many of these host global interviews with self-publishers, giving vital access to personal accounts.

Orna Ross, *AskAlli: Self-Publishing Advice Podcast* <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/ask-alli-podcast/>

Joanna Penn, *The Creative Penn Podcast* <https://www.thecreativepenn.com/podcasts/>

Paul Teague, *Self-Publishing Journeys* <https://self-publishing-journeys.com>

Mark Dawson, *Mark Dawson's Self Publishing Formula* <https://selfpublishingformula.com>

References

- ALCS. 2018. 'Authors' Earnings: A Survey of UK Writers' https://literaturealliancescotland.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ALCS_Authors_Earnings_Report_2018.pdf.
- authorearnings.com. 2018. '2018 Digital Book World Keynote Presentation.' <http://authorearnings.com/dbw2018/>.
- Barber, Ros. 2016. 'For me, traditional publishing means poverty. But self-publish? No way' *Guardian*. 21 Mar. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2016/mar/21/for-me-traditional-publishing-means-poverty-but-self-publish-no-way>.
- Burns, John D. 2018. Research interview.
- Cornford, Dave and Lewis, Steven. 2012. 'Not a Gold Rush: The Taleist Self-Publishing Survey.' Sydney: Taleist.
- Croft, Adam. 2018. *The Indie Author Mindset: How changing your way of thinking can transform your writing career*. Great Britain: Amazon.
- Davies, Kate. 2018. Personal communication.
- Frontier Economics. 2017. 'The Contribution of the Publishing Industry to the UK Economy: a report for the Publishers Association'. 4 Dec. <https://www.publishers.org.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allid=25590>.
- Harland, Jack P. 2018. Research interview.
- Holloway, Dan and Young, Debbie. 2017. *Opening Up To Indie Authors: How to Get Self-Published Books into Libraries, Literary Festivals, and Wherever Readers Are Found*. ALLi. London: Font Publications.
- Horne, Jules. 2018. Research interview.
- Hunter, Linda. 2017. 'Ayr is a Good Read' *The Ayr Advertiser*. 31 May http://www.ayradvertiser.com/news/15317332.Ayr_is_a_good_read/.
- Kean, Danuta. 2017. 'Buying houses in cash and selling millions: meet self-publishing's 'hidden' authors.' *Guardian*. 8 Jun. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/jun/08/buying-houses-in-cash-and-selling-millions-meet-self-publishings-hidden-authors>.
- Kemp, Susan. 2016. *Age of the Authorpreneur*. Edinburgh: Scottish Centre for the Book, Edinburgh Napier University.
- Longmuir, Chris, 2017. *Nuts and Bolts of Self-Publishing: How to Self-Publish Ebooks and Paperbacks*. Montrose: Barker & Jansen.
- MacBain, Fiona. 2018. Research interview.
- Nordicity and Creative Scotland. 2015. 'Literature and Publishing Sector Review.'
- Rooney, Claire. 2018. 'Amazon Author Academy Glasgow 2018' <https://www.contentcrafting.co.uk/2018/04/20/amazon-author-academy-glasgow-2018/>.
- Ross, Orna. 2018. 'ALLi Campaign: Self-Publishing 3.0: How and Why Indie Authors Should Sell Direct to Readers – and What ALLi is Doing to Help' June 4. <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/self-publishing-3-0-indie-authors-selling-direct/>.
- SBT. 2018a. 'Self-publishing for writers'. <http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/writing/writers-and-the-digital-age/self-publishing>.
- SBT. 2018b. 'Criteria for Joining the Live Literature Database'. <http://scottishbooktrust.com/writing/opportunities-for-writers/how-to-register-for-the-live-literature-database>.
- SoA. 2018a. 'Are you eligible?' <https://www.societyofauthors.org/Join/Eligibility>.
- SoA. 2018b. 'Grants for works in progress'. <https://www.societyofauthors.org/Grants/Grants-for-works-in-progress>.
- SoA. 2018c. 'A guide to self-publishing v.5'. London: SoA.
- TheNational.Scot. 2018. 'Scotland's top cities for 'indie publishers' revealed'. 10 April. <http://www.thenational.scot/news/16149504.scotlands-top-cities-for-indie-publishers-revealed/>.
- Trotter, Christopher. 2018. Research interview.

This work was supported by the Scottish Graduate School of the Arts and Humanities and the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, funding award reference number AH/R013357/1.

It is part of 'Creativity without Clusters: Overcoming Fragmentation in the Scottish Creative Economy', conducted in partnership with Creative Scotland.

Creative Economy Engagement Fellowships are an initiative funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and developed by the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities (SGSAH) Creative Economies Hub, in a unique partnership with Creative Scotland and nine industry-sector partners. The first three Fellowships are based at the Universities of Dundee, Stirling and The Glasgow School of Art, focusing research in design, publishing, and crafts to address the challenges of fragmentation across the Scottish creative economy.



Dr. Will Smith is a Creative Economy Engagement Postdoctoral Fellow in the Stirling Centre for International Publishing and Communication at the University of Stirling. His research focuses on the contemporary literary marketplace and literary prizes. His publications include articles on Canadian literature and he is a member of council for the British Association for Canadian Studies.

<http://www.publishing.stir.ac.uk/>

THANK YOU

Many thanks to all who gave their time to be interviewed for this project and to CAMEo Research Institute for Cultural and Media Economies at the University of Leicester for providing an excellent forum for discussion of ideas presented in this pamphlet.

ACADEMIC ADVISOR
Professor Claire Squires,
University of Stirling.

DESIGN
Julie Barclay Design, Dundee



ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL



WHAT IS
HAPPENING
WITH SELF-
PUBLISHING
IN SCOTLAND
TODAY?