

# World's biggest book fair explores self-publishing trend

October 10 2013, by Benoit Toussaint

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Authors are increasingly opting to self-publish as a way to reach readers and sidestep potentially thorny relations with a publisher, industry players at the world's biggest book fair said Thursday.

"People have always wanted to tell their story. A lot of barriers have fallen thanks to the explosion of social networks and new technologies," said Florian Geuppert of French company Books on Demand.

With an annual print-run of three million [books](#) and 17,000 digital versions, his company is one of top players in the world of self-publishing, a key theme at this year's Frankfurt Book Fair in western Germany.

Self-publishing, which allows an author to publish a manuscript for a traditional paper book or e-book without going through a publishing company, accounted for just three percent of France's book market last year.

In the United States however it now boasts a 17-percent share of the market after significant growth in recent years.

Some writers choose to go it alone because they have been turned down by a publisher, but most simply do it because they want to stay in total control, according to Geuppert.

"The main reason for self-publishing is still the same, to do what they

want, how they want it," he said.

However self-publishing authors are not all cut from the same cloth.

"There's the little girl who wants to publish her grandmother's recipes or the person who launches themselves with a first manuscript, but also professional authors disappointed by the marketing by traditional publishers," said Marguerite Joly, marketing director of Epubli.

The German self-publishing platform has brought out 15,000 publications.

As well as more freedom, self-publishing can offer greater financial rewards too.

Depending on the form it takes, writers can hope to pocket anything from 15 to 80 percent from the sales of a self-published book, compared to up to six percent via a traditional publisher.

"As soon as the book is published, it is available on the big distribution platforms like Amazon, Google Play, the Apple store," Joly said.

Although e-books have been gaining ground, fears they would sound the death knell for their traditional paper-and-glue counterparts appear to have been laid to rest.

However, at Books on Demand, digital books still only represent 10 percent of the sales of self-published writers, who continue to prefer their works to be printed and bound.

"I'm very satisfied with self-publishing," said Gordon Mueller-Eschenbach, a coaching expert who has written several books.

He said a publishing company generally planned the release of a book one year ahead of time. "But depending on the subjects, you sometimes can't wait.

"Thanks to self-publishing, my book can be available on Amazon one month after I've finished it," he said.

Self-publishing is also useful in countries where dictatorships do not allow free publication, he added.

"In a country where publishing is under the control of a dictatorship, self-publishing enables critical works to enter the market very quickly, available for purchase with a simple click," he enthused.

However the process is not without potential problems.

Without the back-up and financing of a publishing company, [writers](#) have to deal with formatting the book themselves as well as dealing with promotion and relations with distributors.

Matthieu de Montchalin, president of the French bookshops' trade union, said there were often happy endings in self-publishing but "also many disappointments".

"Not everyone is a writer and there are also financial intermediaries who take advantage of the naivety of some novelists, which can cost them dearly," he said.

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