Every Man his Own Publisher


The author's interest in parachuting and hang gliding led to his writing a book on the subject, but finding no publisher or banker to support it, he published the work himself. One can only admire his persistence. The volume sold well, and Poynter has now written and published over a dozen volumes, for a total [by his claim] of over 1.5 million copies sold, one title alone having sold over 125,000 copies. So, his success has induced him to tell others in these two works about his methods, his 'secrets of writing, printing and selling' your own book; and these in turn bid fair to becoming best sellers too: The Self-Publishing Manual was first published in 1979, and a 'revised, third edition' is advertised for 1980 publication. The 'editions', says Poynter, are small, allowing for frequent revision.

An increasing number of writers are finding it difficult to get their work accepted by established publishers, because the sharp rise in costs of editing, designing, and printing by traditional methods makes the unit cost of marginal works prohibitive. The rapid multiplication of small publishers in Canada today is one result. New methods of typing, layout, reproduction, and binding make it possible to manufacture small print-runs relatively cheaply. Poynter explains, in these two volumes, how it can be done. The books themselves are exemplars, of course, of his methods, and what one finds is that they are an effective means of distributing information, rather than being the best words in the best form. The price levied against the reader is professional appearance; neither book is ever likely to win a design award. Still, we live in a new age of communications, and 'How to Paste up and Reproduce Books Instantly Using your Copy Shop' (the subtitle of Publishing Short-Run Books) will have a strong appeal to many. I note sadly the loose wording: 'Revised Edition' on the cover of Self-Publishing becomes 'Second Printing Revised' on the verso of the title-page, and page 174 announces the 'revised, third edition'; while the colophon of Short-Run Books states 'second, revised printing' and the title-page verso says only 'First Edition'. A bibliographical nightmare, surely, but perhaps the old terminology cannot apply to books employing such modern tools as the word processor and 'Letraset'. Bibliographers, too, must change their ways! Well, at least these volumes are equipped with such useful appurtenances as glossaries, sources of further information (I won't say bibliographies), and indexes. If you are a frustrated author, then here's all you need to get yourself into print — of sorts.

REVIEW EDITOR

The Fine Arts


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