

The Author's ADVOCATE

Special Newsletter

November 2003

Published exclusively for the authors and associates of
Infinity Publishing and Buy Books on the web.com

The Return of Print-on-Demand Books

Industry Leader Makes Print-on-Demand Books Returnable

PENNSYLVANIA - Infinity Publishing, the leading Print-On-Demand (POD) Publisher since 1997, announced today that it will begin accepting returns on *all* their titles. This move dramatically changes the Print-on-Demand publishing industry, which, until now, has maintained a policy of "no bookstore returns."

Says Tom Gregory, President and CEO of Infinity Publishing: "It's very discouraging for authors to have a book that bookstores won't order due to its inability to be returned to the publisher. When 30,000 bookstores nationwide won't stock their books because of the no-return policy, authors face a major obstacle in book promotion and distribution."

This groundbreaking announcement levels the playing field, and gives Infinity Publishing and their authors the ability to have their books sold in bookstores nationwide. Never again will Infinity authors hear from bookstore managers, "We can't stock your books because they're non-returnable."

"What we're doing is giving our authors another opportunity for success," says Gregory. "All Infinity Publishing titles ordered directly from Infinity by any bookstore will be fully returnable for up to one year from the date of purchase without any restocking charge." This is unheard of in Print-on-demand publishing, and even bests the return policies of many traditional publishers. "Authors deserve a fair shot and we hope this move will help them attain the success they deserve," notes Gregory.

Infinity Publishing has always set the standard in the Print-On-Demand book publishing business with their own in-house design, formatting, printing, laminating, and binding process for books. Same day shipments, monthly royalty payments to authors, and their annual writers conferences are just a few of this company's innovations.

ABOUT INFINITY PUBLISHING - Led by publishing visionary Tom Gregory, Infinity has been publishing authors since 1997. Offering a comprehensive publishing method, a team of people dedicated to their author's success, and the latest advances in print-on-demand technology, they afford authors an opportunity to be published without giving up literary rights or creative license. Infinity currently publishes approximately 2,000 titles. They can be reached toll-free at 1-877-BUY-BOOK (1-877-289-2665).

Behind the News...

The Benefits for our Authors

The above news release was sent to the media on Monday, October 20, 2003. Since our start of business in 1997, Infinity Publishing has earned its profit from selling books, and this change in establishing a return policy for bookstores underscores our com-

mitment to Infinity authors to expand distribution channels to sell more books. We believe this strategic move will greatly benefit our authors by helping remove the *non-returnable barrier* that has prevented our books from having the opportunity to be sold off-the-shelf in many bookstores. This opens the door for our authors to participate in more in-store events with their Infinity books already part of

the store's inventory when the event is held. Hosting bookstores will then be able to continue to sell the author's books for months after the event is over. This clearly demonstrates that we at Infinity Publishing stand behind our authors' books. Our return policy for all Infinity titles—now approximately 2,000 titles—guarantees that we will accept returned books for a full year for a complete refund of the purchase price. You took a chance by publishing your book; now we are betting with the bookstores that your book will sell off their shelf.

The Bookstore Turn-about

One of the reasons we've discouraged our authors from trying to schedule author events in bookstores has been because of the non-returnable problem. The national bookstore chains have a firm corporate policy that prohibits them from ordering and stocking non-returnable books. However, many independent bookstore managers have warmly welcomed our authors to participate at their in-store events and have worked out arrangements to order and stock their books.

Every day, we receive orders from booksellers. Some orders are from online booksellers (such as Amazon.com and bn.com) and independent bookstores replenishing their on-shelf inventory. Other orders are from national chains special-ordering our books for their customers to pick up in the store. One of the basic principles of marketing is, when something is working to sell your product, look at what's working to make those sales, learn why it's working, and then figure out how to tweak and tune what's working so you can sell more product. It's a little bit more involved than that, but that's the concept that led Tom Gregory to develop our new return policy. We wanted to do everything possible as a POD publisher to fine-tune our business model to facilitate selling more Infinity books through booksellers—especially independent bookstores.

This doesn't mean that bookstore buyers will automatically order and stock your book. They have to learn about your book and why it would be of interest to their customers. This means that you, our authors, need to go to the bookstore manager to tell them about the benefits of your book. You, the author, continues to be the very best person to promote your book. We have opened the doors, but our efforts need to be reinforced by local authors doing

their part by visiting local bookstores with their book in hand—which is very different than standing there begging with hat in hand.

Expanding Media Coverage

One of the problems with getting magazine and newspaper book reviews for POD books has been the availability of those books through local bookstores. After the reviews would appear in print, the newspapers would get the calls from their readers asking where reviewed books are available for purchase. Instead of informing their readers about the merits of a new book, they were frustrating their subscribers by writing about books that weren't readily available locally. Now, those local bookstore managers will be able to order and have an inventory of books on the shelf in the bookstore when the review appears in the local media.

Likewise, when an Infinity author is doing a local talk-radio show, they can mention that their book is for sale at local bookstores. Infinity's ability to rapidly produce and ship orders to bookstores nationwide guarantees the arrival of your books before the scheduled interview. Increased regional media coverage helps both the author and the bookstores who are wise enough to have several copies of the author's book on their shelves.

Ingram in the middle and B&N

Making our books completely returnable from bookstores will also cause us to review our current distribution arrangements. Our new policy provides us with an opportunity to approach Barnes & Noble and Ingram to handle our titles just like they do with other publishers selling fully returnable books. Most wholesalers and distributors have stipulations for promotional and marketing efforts to be made by the publisher / authors as part of the criteria for being listed in their data bases. So your individual efforts to promote your book continue to be vital in demonstrating ongoing promotional activity.

However, instead of randomly pitching a book that we believe will be a top seller, we can identify by rankings from actual sales figures (with the permission of the author). We can determine which Infinity titles are actually ranked as "top sellers," (which are good sellers above the average) in addition to titles that are steady sellers month-after-month. Our POD

publishing technology, linked with a superior accounting program, makes it possible for Infinity to provide booksellers with recommended titles based on sales performance in the marketplace.

Windows and Royalties

Titles released by mainstream houses have a limited window of opportunity in national bookstore chains. The on-shelf time is usually only 4 to 8 weeks. With our liberal year long return policy, we are positioning our titles for longer spans of exposure in all bookstores. Royalties are usually paid by mainstream houses only after all returns have been accounted for. Infinity will continue to pay monthly royalties on all books sold—including books sold to bookstores that are subject to be returned (when the amount of the royalty check is \$20 or more).

In a recent interview with a Chicago newspaper reporter, Tom Gregory said, “Our authors need to be paid royalties on all Infinity books as they are sold. Now that our titles can be returned by bookstores doesn’t change the fact that authors need to be paid promptly. Any adjustments for returned books can be debited from authors’ accounts after the books are back in house.”

The return book game has been an imposed curse on the book publishing industry for far too long. We can appreciate the need of the bookstore manager to return books that aren’t selling to their customers. However, the traditionally published author frequently pays the price with reduced and delayed royalty payments. Of course, when 75% of all traditionally published books—secured with an advance to the author—never earn back their advance, there isn’t much concern about accounting for each of the returns, except to balance the bookkeeping.

The Fate of Infinity Returns

Books being returned to Infinity in perfect condition by bookstores will be put into the micro inventory we maintain on many of our popular titles. Books returned in damaged condition—but with all their pages and still readable—will be donated to various literacy groups in the United States. We believe it is important to play an active part in supporting programs teaching folks to learn the joys of reading.

A Work-In-Progress

We’re not presenting our new return policy as a program that’s all complete with everything figured out and all the questions answered. Large parts of the program have been worked out and many of the hard questions answered with the right answers. Most importantly, we are ready to start accepting orders for returnable books from bookstores. However, we want to carefully evolve our new return program to be cost-effective and to provide positive benefits for bookstores and our authors. We are delighted that we are able to implement this program without causing our authors to incur an additional expense to participate. It’s sad that so many of the POD publishing services using Lightning Source as their printer have additional charges for just providing basic services. We continue to be dedicated to providing more services for our authors and to continue earning our profits by selling more books through expanding Infinity’s channels of book distribution.

What you can do to help promote our new return program is to make a visit to your local independent bookstores. Tell them that you’re a local author published by Infinity and let them know they can order your completely returnable book directly from Infinity Publishing.

Amazon’s Buy Back Offer

Sure it’s impressive to tell folks they can order your book from Amazon.com, but just remember, you’ll be earning a lower royalty than if the customer had ordered your book directly from Infinity. Also, a few weeks after your book arrives from Amazon, they are likely to send a letter or email to the customer offering to now buy the book back so they can resell the book as a used book through Amazon’s used book program. This is important for you because in addition to receiving a lower royalty, when Amazon resells your used book, there’s no royalty paid to the author—there’s just additional profit for Amazon.com. Plus, if a customer is buying your used book from Amazon, there’s one less customer who might have ordered a new copy of your book. There’s nothing we can do about this situation except to continue to encourage our authors to urge folks interested in ordering your books to order directly from Infinity. We have no control over how quickly Amazon will post a new book to their website or which edition is being sold.

Authors Wanted for Interviews

WRITER'S LIFE, a new online magazine that will feature interviews, book reviews, original essays and literary news, is looking for authors who would like to promote their books. All interested authors should send a short Bio and book summary to WRITER'S LIFE editor Cindy Butler at WritersLife@aol.com

Cindy's first issue is scheduled for release online on December 1, 2003, and there's no charge to the author if you're fortunate enough to be selected.

Here's What You Missed!!!

If you missed attending our 4th annual Writers/ Authors' Conference you missed another exceptional gathering that really brought down the roof and launched lots of great ideas for promoting books. We also demonstrated that, when faced with adversities, we do our best to turn them into opportunities.

For the first time in 4 years, our lead-off keynote speaker for the Thursday evening banquet was a no-show. John Kremer's connecting flight from Chicago to Philadelphia was cancelled and he had to take a later flight that caused him to miss the banquet. Fortunately, Dan Poynter was ready and able to fill in for John.

On Friday evening during the remarks portion of the program, Dave Giorgio, Infinity's creative Webmaster, gave an amazing Power Point presentation of Infinity's new and improved online bookstore at: buybooksontheweb.com. If you haven't had a chance to check out all the newly added features, check it out now—you'll be totally amazed!!! Also amazing was our Friday evening keynote speaker, Pat Lorenz, who dazzled everyone with her 10-step plan of simple ways to make your writing sizzle.

The highlight of the conference was the Saturday afternoon *Ask the Experts* panel. Melanie Rigney, former editor of *Writer's Digest Magazine*, did a superior job as moderator as she kept the questions and responses from the experts aligned in time. This was the only panel where both Dan Poynter, successful self-publishing guru, and John Kremer, most masterful book marketing king, participated as panelists. You missed their playful banter and snappy answers to a wide variety of questions and you also missed an opportunity for an individual consultation—all of our presenters scheduled extra sessions.

By far the most questions during this session were directed to Jean Sifleet, Esq., CPA. Melanie imposed time-out from more legal questions directed to the attorney to allow other panelists to have questions to answer. We greatly appreciated Jean's gracious participation in helping to make this panel presentation a sensational success.

Brian Jud was another popular panelist responding to questions about target marketing and selling books beyond the bookstores.

At Saturday night's banquet, John Kremer was in rare form as he skillfully captured everyone's attention and drafted them into Kremer's army of book promoters. He provided a direct course of positive action that every author could follow to more effectively market their books.

Saturday night it rained. Sunday morning was sunny and bright as we gathered for a nice and easy wrap-up breakfast buffet. The first indication of a major problem were the drops of water falling from various parts of the ceiling. Installing new air conditioning units at the Sheraton that weekend had caused a serious leak in the roof. Then, suddenly, tiles from those parts of the ceiling came falling down. No one was hurt or hit by the falling tiles. However, breakfast was seriously disrupted and we had to move to another room to conclude our wrap-up session.

We have already started planning for our 5th annual Author's Conference that will be held October 29 – 31, 2004, at the Sheraton Park Ridge in Valley Forge, PA. Mark the date on your calendar and visit AuthorsConference.com for more details as they become available. Take care and enjoy often...John

Special interest to folks in the Arlington, VA area:

“Everything About Print-On-Demand” Seminar:

What every writer needs to know about this evolving branch of publishing!!!

Presented by **Jane M. Martin** and **John F. Harnish**
Sheraton National Hotel - Arlington, VA 22204
1 - 5pm, Sunday, November 16, 2003

Advanced Registration \$30, at the door \$40
Call Michelle at **1-877-289-2665** to register.

Visit www.everythingaboutpod.com for more info.