

The Author's ADVOCATE

Special Newsletter

February 2004

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

What's in a Name???

The ever changing face of publishing

When I published *Enjoy Often!!!*, a collection of my work, in mid-March of 1999, I almost didn't publish with **Infinity Publishing** because, at the time, the name was **Buy Books On The Web.com**. That sounded more like an online bookseller and not at all like a publisher. However, when I was looking for a POD publisher, I called **BBOTW.com** because they were only about 20 minutes from my home.

I was pleasantly surprised when I called the toll-free number, **877-BUY-BOOK**. It was after 6 PM on a Friday and a real live person in the form of **Mark Gregory** answered. I had expected an answering machine to pick up and I was going to leave my address so they could send me information. So I was amazed that a real live person actually answered and was asking how he could help me!!!

I quickly asked what he was doing there so late on a Friday after normal business hours. He replied that he had promised an author proof copies of her book for Monday, but he didn't get it finished so he was staying late to finish her proofs. He was going to mail them on his way home so the author would have her proof books as he had promised. Then he asked, "Who is this???" I promptly replied, "Someone who is about to become your newest author!!!"

Yes, I'd called three of the major POD publishing services—a fourth I was about to publish with, but I discovered they had lied to me about what they do and how they do it. I was also very put off when they were reluctant for me to visit their offices in New Jersey. They explained they really weren't set up to receive visitors. *Visitor my ass!!!* I was within a commuter train ride of publishing with them and

they were referring to me as a *visitor!!!* Thus the reason for my renewed quest to find a POD publisher I could work with. I found it impossible to work with a company that needs to blatantly lie to attract authors to publish with them.

A few decades ago when I was represented by an agent and working with traditional publishers, I'd get invitations all the time to attend meetings and social gathering at their New York offices. I was impressed when as soon as Mark heard I was interested in publishing with them he invited me to visit their offices and see their production department that produces all their books in-house on their Print-On-Demand equipment.

Soon thereafter, **Tom Gregory**, the president of **Infinity Publishing**, offered me a position with the company to help develop our Author's Advocate program. Naturally one of the first things I talked with Tom about was thinking about changing the company name. I'm an author looking for a publisher that distributes books to booksellers—not an online bookstore!!! Tom said he'd consider a name change. He had previously agreed to "**BBOTW Publishing**" for the title page of "*Enjoy Often!!!*" because there was no way I'd ever publish with a publisher going by a name that was indicative of only being a bookstore. But I wanted a publisher with "Publisher" as part of their company name.

During the opening night banquet at our first annual writers/authors conference held at the Sheraton in Valley Forge, Tom made the official announcement of the name change to **Infinity Publishing** with our new internet presence being **infinitypublishing.com** with **BuyBooksOnTheWeb.com** continuing on as our online bookstore—which would be expanded to include book covers and reviews and lots of index-

ing and cross-selling potential. **BBOTW** enjoys a strong internet presence for readers searching for **Infinity** titles. More and more customers are ordering directly from our online bookstore and they are receiving their book order sooner, plus our authors earn a higher royalty from direct sales. Overall, the number of folks ordering goods and services through the internet is steadily increasing every month.

Also, **Infinity Publishing** is functioning in many of the positive ways of the traditional mainstream publishers without requiring the author to sell off the rights to their books. The income from selling books is how we earn our profit—not from the sale of the various book rights. As Tom Gregory likes to explain, “We have a vested interest to help our authors promote and market their books. We are constantly looking for cost-effective ways to help our authors sell more books because we all benefit from those ongoing efforts and investments.”

Remember, whenever you have an opportunity to talk about your book, identify **Infinity Publishing** as your publisher and let people know that your book is available directly from our 24/7 online bookstore at: www.buybooksontheweb.com.

The First Successful Commercial Publishers Were Book Vendors

Here’s a wee bit of publishing history. Once upon a time during the colonial days in America, stationary stores and book vendors would pay for the printing of an author’s manuscript under the house name of the bookseller with the books being sold in their stores. Back then, books traveled along with the official mail and size definitely mattered. So authors were the source of books for established vendors to sell, and the vendors had the money to pay the book printers, and the booksellers extended the reach of their income flow by sending copies of their commissioned work to bookstores throughout the colonies. We have to thank **Ben Franklin**, the British colonies first Postmaster General, for putting into place the special media postage rate we enjoy today.

Of my forefathers, the smartest one of all was—without question—**Ben Franklin**. Talk about a driving desire to publish his work!!! In his early teens, Ben worked as an apprentice in his brother’s print shop but his brother refused to publish Ben’s youthful writing in the weekly newspaper. So Ben

rewrote one of his early essays as a letter from a subscriber, signed it with his pen name, “Silence Dogood,” and added it to the pile of letters from readers. His unknowing brother published the Dogood letter which was received with popular acclaim by the readers. Ben wrote as and for the middle class—the common folks—and his authored words rang true with them.

Ben wisely grew to discover that he could control the commerce of his writing, because he owned the printing press and he enjoyed an established distribution network based on the fair exchange of goods and services that were mutually beneficial all the way around. But of course as Postmaster General, Ben’s books and newspapers traveled for free under what was know as the “Franklin Privilege” which continues to apply to the U.S. government today as “Franking,” along with the popular “media rate.” He believed it was a virtue to provide public service while earning a reasonable profit. Ben was also the first postmaster to be fired from the position because he got into a serious place of disagreement with the King of England about taxation without representation—most revolting to pay and have no say!!!

Bookseller Barnes & Noble Becomes a Publisher

That was then and this is now, and now commercial delivery service offers speedy delivery at cost-effective rates. Also, in the now of today, we have booksellers becoming publishers with **Barnes & Noble** publishing their own selected titles of top sellers under their **B&N** house imprint.

I recently heard from a fellow author about how he had ordered a book from **Amazon.com** by 3 noted scientists. After an unusual delay in waiting for the book, he was informed that the book had been re-published by **Barnes & Noble** and was now only available from **bn.com**. Seems like they are using their retail market place as a grass roots source to focus on the top known sellers in expanding niche markets, and then publishing to meet those acknowledged needs. They are using the income measured demand of books sold by subject and topic to determine what will be published as a **Barnes & Noble** title. With their distribution chain of national retail stores and their effective online presence, they are positioning themselves to control the content of the more profitable books they produce and sell. They

are also cutting publishers and other booksellers out of their game plan to increase their market shares.

Methinks with the bookseller/publisher-of-what-sells transition happening, you are seeing another branch of publishing evolving with market motivated demands determining the popular profitable content, cost-effective book production and national distribution through house owned and operated chains. That controls content and production costs and guarantees distribution for books akin to their top sellers. Sounds like corporate controlled print-on-demand publishing based on the demand for books in the market place that's owned by the publisher that controls the demand—so to speak.

Barnes & Noble has some form of partnership in place with **iUniverse**. However, it doesn't seem to provide direct benefits to authors who have published with **iUniverse** and it seems unlikely that any of their titles will be published under the **Barnes & Noble** publishing imprint or added to the on-the-shelf store inventory.

Booksellers and Publishers Make for Strange Bedfellows

Borders is also doing bookseller/publishing with their “personal publishing” program made in conjunction with **Xlibris**. They'll publish, through the **Xlibris** publishing service, any book written by a customer and they'll guarantee to put 10 copies of the book on the shelf in that specific **Borders** bookstore for 60 days. It's my understanding that these **Borders** arranged-for-publishing books are printed without an ISBN and there's no listing in Books-In-Print nor a bar code. The **Borders/Xlibris** connection appears to be focused on books that would have a very minute niche market.

Xlibris has a partnership agreement in place with one of the Random House venture groups providing financing. Once again, this arrangement doesn't seem to be producing any benefits to their authors.

1st Book Links Return Policy with Ingram at pricy cost to their authors!!!

1st Book recently announced to their authors that an arrangement has been made with **Ingram**—the world's largest book distributor—to handle returns from bookstores. In order for an author to have their

book covered by the return policy, the author must pay a fee of \$699 for the first year and then pay an annual \$349 fee for each year their book is in the return program. **Lightning Source** is involved because they print all the POD books distributed through **Ingram**. However, at the present time only **Lightning Source** books with return privileges paid for by **1st Book** authors will be sold as returnable. No mention was made if **Ingram's** additional charge for restocking books will apply. As a **1st Book** author, you'd have to ask yourself how many books you'd have to sell to earn how much in royalties to cover the cost to have your books sold as returnable to bookstores. When you do the math, you'll discover you have to sell lots and lots of books to earn back the return charges. **Ingram** will surely have a bit of a logistical problem keeping track of which books are currently in the program and which books aren't accepted as returns.

Infinity Publishing Doing Publishing Differently to Benefit Our Authors

Infinity commissioned **Austin S. Camacho**, one of our top selling novelists, to write a book about his experiences with *Successfully Marketing Print-On-Demand Fiction* (read all about it by doing a “search-by-author” at our newly redesigned online bookstore **buybooksontheweb.com**). Yes, just like **Barnes & Noble**, we are supporting the publishing of books with a proven market potential and we don't restrict the sale of this book to our online bookstore. Austin's book provides real world marketing suggestions to help authors successfully master the unique challenge of selling POD novels.

Infinity Publishing solved the question of which books to make returnable by having a guaranteed return policy for bookstores that covers all books published since the start of business in 1997. When an order is received for the author's book today, that book is returnable for a full refund for up to one year from the purchase date. There's no grossly overpriced fee to implement this service nor is there an annual service fee—the tallying up of debits are adjusted with future monthly royalties. We believe future sales of your book will happen, and your book will always be available for printing through our outstanding in-house production department.

All **Infinity** titles have always been available through **Amazon.com** since our first published book. We were one of the first publishers to deal directly with the early online bookseller. It is in our mutual interest to have newly released **Infinity** titles posted on all available bookseller websites as soon as possible. Towards that end, we provide notification to all online booksellers in a very timely fashion. However, all these various websites have many different time requirements for adding new books to their indexed listings. If you discover an error about your book on our website, send an email to Michelle Shane at info@buybooksontheweb.com. If the problem is with your book's listing on a bookseller's site please contact their webmaster directly as the author of the book.

You can now add reviews of your book to our online bookstore. Log on, check out your listing and add a few reviews readers have shared with you. I know it's a popular belief that to get reviews you have to send out galleys to reviewers 4 months before the release date. With this evolving branch of POD publishing it's becoming more important to have the book available for sale today than to delay the release while waiting for reviews.

Gary Roen is a reviewer for the **Midwest Book Review** in addition to other national and regional publications. He is interested in all types of books—except for religious books—and he has been doing reviews for 22 years. **Infinity** authors can send their books to: **Gary Roen, Syndicated Book-reviewer, 1600 Hull Circle, Orlando, FL 32806**. Please be patient because this is a slow process and there's additional delay from when a completed review is submitted to when it actually appears in print.

Please mark the last weekend in October 2004, on your calendar so you can plan on attending our **5th Annual Express Yourself...Authors Conference** at Valley Forge, PA. This is your opportunity to learn from marketing and publishing professionals about what works. There will be plenty of time to meet with and exchange ideas with other authors. Networking helps everyone. We are considering including a book fair on Sunday afternoon as part of our conference if there's solid interest.

Virginia area authors, please be sure to check out the **Virginia Festival of the Book** at: www.vabook.org. Saturday, March 27, is Publisher's Day and **Infinity** will have a display table and a hospitality room.

Email me via john@infinitypublishing.com if you'll be attending this Charlottesville, VA, festival.

Vendor Pro has been emailing spam solicitations to **Infinity** authors offering to sell your book to thousands of stores after you pay a \$340 membership fee. Beware of promotions that sound too good to be true!!! **Infinity** endorsements are always included as part of the information and we will have checked them out to be sure they are true to their promises.

Traditional publishers are constantly riding a balancing act between what's being considered politically correct and what latest deviations are driving the current trends that can yield a profit before fading away. **Infinity** has always provided authors with a rather free and open press, willing to publish books on a wide variety of topics with deviations that are a matter of personal interests. Freedom of expression is essential for the creative author to share their storytelling effectively. That's why the **Infinity** author controls the content and owns all rights; **Infinity Publishing** establishes a suggested retail price and owns the POD publishing system that produces the book. The author and publisher are both involved in varying amounts the promotional and marketing efforts to sell the book and share in the proceeds. There has never been a place in time when freedom of expression was more available and affordable to the inspired masses for their individual expressions.

Hopefully, this provides some understanding of the happenings taking place in our evolving branch of publishing and brings you some insight as to why **Barnes & Noble** stores might be difficult to deal with, and thusly why we stress working with and supporting independent bookstores. So just when you thought the good "old boy's" system of traditional publishing was ruling the day and imposing their tattered ways, well, you might be right—for now...but as for tomorrow...and tomorrows...

We are living and writing in very exciting times! And you, my friend, by being an **Infinity** author, are in the midst of it all. Welcome to the new frontier in publishing. The publishing revolution starts here and the time is now. We can revisit history and we can certainly learn from it, but come along with us now as we, together, make it happen. And your inspired creativity and continued involvement makes it happen again and again and again!!!

Take care and enjoy often...John