

The Author's ADVOCATE

Special Newsletter

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“The Problem with POD” *isn't a Problem*

In the January 16, 2006, issue of *Publishers Weekly*, the **Soapbox** rant, *The Problem with POD*, is by **Rudy Shur**, founder and publisher of **Square One Publishers**. Square One Publishers specializes in adult nonfiction books, including titles on self-help and inspiration, finance, writing, New Age, cooking, history, and more. Ruby bemoans the increasing number of POD books that are beginning to find their way onto bookstore shelves, thusly displacing books published by small and mid-size traditional publishing houses.

He acknowledges that these books have “the look and feel” of professionally produced books, but then he attempts to assert the mistaken fact that these books are not actually *published*!!! He makes the assumption that these books do not receive anywhere near the level of attention that independent presses and major houses give their books, investing much time in editing, designing, marketing, and publicizing their books. Many of our more successful authors have taken the time and effort to hire professionals to make their books the best they can be. However, instead of the content editor working for the publisher – and looking out for the publisher’s investment – the editor is doing work-for-hire editing and working directly with the author. With the current trend of mainstream houses down-sizing and merging into multi-national media corporations, there are suddenly lots of talented publishing professionals available for free-lance assignments from savvy authors on the path of author-originated publishing.

Mr. Shur cites the confusion POD books are causing because the public and some book retailers have begun to confuse them with books published by independent and niche houses. I fail to see that as a problem; the consumer purchases the book that best meets their criteria. I’m less than thrilled with how he casts the stigma of vanity house publishing on this evolving branch publishing that has incorporated print on

demand methodologies with high-speed digital printers to produce quality books. I see no vanity in an author creating and publishing a book that’s just as good as – or better than – other books with the clear intent to make a profit by making their book available for sale!!!

He rants about these evolving publishing houses offering steeply discounted books as incentives for buying their titles. I don’t see how that’s possible when the Lightning Source/Ingram connection controls the pricing of the majority of the POD published books sold through Ingram. There really isn’t much of a profit margin with which to go steep. Infinity Publishing *does* give the incentive of guaranteeing all of our titles with our liberal return policy for booksellers along with our standard 40% off-cover discount. Mr. Shur points out that some independent bookstores and regional chains have already started to stock and feature books in store displays by local authors – regardless of how they were published – which is squeezing books by traditional publishers off the shelf. I’m sure those local authors being available for book signings and in-store events played a big part in the local managers’ decisions to stock their books. Nothing brings out the customers like a home-town author doing a reading from their newly published book in a neighborhood store.

I fail to understand his insinuation that author-originated publishing isn’t a legitimate and acceptable form of book publishing. This is more author-friendly because the publisher is producing and distributing the author’s book with the complete agreement and authorization of the author, and, in exchange for those granted rights, the publisher pays the author monthly royalties on all books sold. The royalty is frequently higher than what’s paid on many traditionally published books secured with an advance. Our titles are released for sale with Infinity Publishing identified as the publisher of record, with Infinity’s ISBN, and listed accordingly in

Books-In-Print. However, the author owns all rights to the book that we are publishing under a non-exclusive publishing agreement. We provide marketing and promotional assistance, but we won't formulate and implement marketing plans for our authors. When we notice an author's efforts are producing steadily increasing sales, then we look to see how we can help in supporting the author's successful efforts. We maintain a micro on-shelf inventory of all our 3,000+ titles and most orders are shipped within 24 hours of the order being received, and our *Just-In-Time* book publishing system is scheduled to replenish inventory as needed.

The January issue of *The Author's Advocate* recounted our efforts of knocking on Barnes & Noble's door. We have consistently encouraged our authors to visit local bookstores as the first step to getting some attention for their books. And according to Rudy's bemoaning, it's working, as more and more of your books appear to be making it onto those relished shelves!!! I regret that there's limited shelf space – that wouldn't be the case if so many independent bookstores hadn't been driven out of business by the deeply discounted books on sale at the big chains. The personal touch of knowing just where the book you're looking for can be found has been replaced by stacks of mass marketed books controlled by the dictates of the bean-counters. Deep discounts might produce a few more sales in a limited window of opportunity, but it greatly devalues the creative efforts of the author who wrote the book.

Thanks to your continuing efforts as Infinity authors, we are creating a positive presence in the marketplace by earning our acceptance through the quality of our books. We will continue to overcome the lingering barriers within the industry as more authors join the ranks of those who know the joys of successful author-originated publishing. The playing-field is leveling.

Coming soon via email...

The Author's Advocate Gazette

We are finalizing the launch of a new monthly e-zine for our authors, associates and interested writers. The first issue of the *Author's Advocate Gazette* will be emailed to you in mid-February. This is not a replacement for the *Author's Advocate Newsletter* we include with your monthly statement. With many publications switching to using only electronically distributed house organs, Infinity is staying the course with our printed newsletter while adding the reach of a new e-zine.

Infinity president, Tom Gregory, wants this to be an easy-read, newsy publication that you'll look forward to each month. The *Gazette* will have regular monthly

columns with news briefs and contributions from our subscribers. One column will be Personal Appearances which will include news about our authors like:

Dennis Aubuchon, Infinity author of *Integrity: Do You Have It?*, will appear on Cincinnati's **WKRC TV**, local channel 12's popular talk show early in February – check your local TV listing for the date and time.

Infinity Author's Advocate **Carol Welsh** will be doing a presentation titled *Publishing in the 21st Century* on February 11th in Eustis, FL. Call Carol at 386-795-2197 or email her at CarolWelsh@StopRed.com if you're interested in attending. She is the author of *Stop When You See Red*.

You may use this column to make a brief announcement about book signing events, scheduled media coverage, and presentations so fellow authors living in your region can attend or tune-in. Email us the "who, what, when and where," along with the title of your Infinity-published book.

A popular session at our annual Authors' Conference each fall is the "Ask the Experts" panel. In this column, we invite you to pose a question about editing, book marketing, publicity, distribution, or whatever to be answered by one of the publishing professionals who have presented at our conferences.

One of the advantages of the e-zine is we aren't limited by the printed page. However, we won't overwhelm you with lots of pages to read on your monitor screen and we'll make the *Gazette* as printer friendly as possible so you'll be able to print out each issue. Several years of the *Author's Advocate Newsletter* are archived on our www.authorsconference.com website, and we'll also have archived issues of the *Gazette* posted there.

Free subscriptions to the *Gazette* will be open to anyone providing us with their email address and a request to receive the e-zine. Please send your current email address to Amanda at amanda@infinitypublishing.com and she'll add you to the subscriber list. It is essential that we receive your current email address. In mid-January, we sent an email about our San Diego Author's Conference to 500+ west coast Infinity authors. Sadly, about 40% of these emails bounced because of invalid email addresses. So please take the time to send Amanda your name and correct email address today. Please be assured that we do not sell or rent our email list to anyone. If you have writer friends who would benefit from a free subscription, please have them email Amanda and she'll be glad to include them too.

Take care and enjoy often...John