

Can you earn much from “open published” ebook nonfiction?

“Open publishing” means the houses that will publish your submissions free and make them accessible to the public for purchase, like Kindle, Nook, Smashwords, Blurb, Lulu, Scribd, LSI, and BookBaby. (We call it [ancillary publishing](#).)

Let’s follow, say, the Kindle path. You write the book; get a front cover prepped; put the whole book in final, ready-to-go fashion (including proofing); open up the publishing path at Kindle, enter the needed data about you and the book; send the jpg cover; submit the book (probably in Word); sign the contract, and wait to be bathed in riches (minus deductions).

My book [How to Get Your Book Published Free in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days](#) explains the process for almost all of the publishing houses just mentioned.

The question is how many riches can you expect from ebook nonfiction?

From open publishers? Very little, sadly. The boons by this process that you read about are almost always for fiction, much of it exotic, erotic, romantic, extra-worldly, about detectives, or for kids.

Nonfiction is a tougher road, at least from our experience and that of every other ebook nonfiction writer I’ve spoken with. That road is straight uphill, bumpy, and little-travelled. So we use the occasional monthly nonfiction payments from open publishers (except Blurb, that publishes mostly art books, and Lulu, where we’ve had no luck at all) as tiny sinecures.

How, then, do you profitably sell ebook nonfiction? Through your own sales mechanism and ingenuity.

If there's a paperback version of our book, we simply use the final book copy converted to ebook format, save it in PDF, and sell it (with its own front cover) alongside the bound version on our [order form](#).

Who buys it?

We're mostly a nonfiction niche book house (currently serving K-12 administrators and teachers) so lots of those in our target market buy our books in paperback, usually sold through the authors' presentations, to group school gatherings, or at ed conferences or conventions.

All of our K-12 books are also used as textbooks in graded classes, where we usually send a comp ebook to the instructor, who invariably (until now) has the bookstore order the paperback version. (Savvy students find us, though, through Google and buy the ebook from us.)

Thus at least 90% of our book income is from bound books. Almost all of that other 10% either visit our website or see the ebook alternative on a flyer or order form. They order from our 1ShoppingCart form, and it is downloaded seconds later.

But we also sell general market nonfiction, and there our reports sell as well as our digital books. Buyers mostly come from our blogs, newsletters, other web marketing, and from associates. We also "advertise" them widely on our or others' e-lists. A few items sell better digitally than in paperback. [Treasure and Scavenger Hunts](#) is usually wanted to plan a party a day or two after they hear about the book at Google, so overnight shipping makes no sense (or cents for either of us) when they can get the same words almost instantly, then get going...

Thus, while "open publishing" liberates wanna-be publishers, so far it hasn't generated much income for their digital nonfiction books. They are churning up those ebook sales by

their own persistent, often clever efforts and order forms or shopping carts.

Incidentally, another spurt of income can be found when the book is brand new and the paperback has yet to arrive from the printer. You have ebook copies to fill the buyers' impatience almost from the moment the last word is proofed! (Though we know that time/book gap is pretty much a fiction from the past. You can have P.O.D. paperback copies from LSI in about four days.)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett