

What do I do special as a writing coach?

I just woke up to a question/discussion on LinkedIn's Promocave:

Carrie Golden, Citizen Journalist/Poetry Consultant to filmmakers at Motionpoems, Inc., asked:

Writing coach...

Not sure if this group [Promocave] is the right place to post this question but...what exactly does a writing coach do to help writers?

I wear two hats (on one head): (1) **"court-of-last-resort" editor**, providing a last-chance no-nonsense review of what the writer is about to submit (the final final draft) for book publication and (2) a **first-step writing coach** (before much writing). So here was my contribution to the discussion that defines my view of what different do I offer as a writing coach—and why.

[As a writing coach] I think of myself as a nonfiction "what" coach. I prod the souls [rather deeply] through six or so what's (?), then the "how's" make sense (and cents). I'm there if they need me later, more as an action guide and (sometimes) a silent co-planner of their future empire.

Here's a longer explanation of (2), if you are interested and it helps you (*sans me*) do your own early nonfiction book planning, writing, and publishing.

There's not much mystery about the steps a nonfiction writer can and usually takes to prep and submit a book for

publication. See a hundred books in libraries worldwide that address that, and I have two books that address it too: [How to Get Your Book Published in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days](#) and [How to Pick the Right Kind of Publisher](#).

What distresses me most is the number of smart, organized, diligent would-be book writers who wander about, with perfectly good words and spelling, looking for something to say and, mostly, a reason to say it. Bewildered souls with hundreds of pages (at least it reads that way) of “what’s that?” copy that has no clear (or any) purpose (or buyers) presented in sweet-reading, grammatically correct prose. Their command of English is strong. (It’s worse if it’s not.) What’s missing is their grasp of elementary common sense about what a book must do to become a book...

The saddest thing is how easily that could have been prevented if they hadn’t been in such a damn hurry to see themselves and their brilliance in print (everywhere), with assumedly a fat advance almost in hand and many years of fatter royalties following assuredly behind.

About six questions will create the structure and map, plus point the writer to the most likely reader, why they would read it, what they would do with it, and how they just saved themselves about 75% in misdirected (or undirected) research, “what’s that?” writing, and the one thing they can’t get back, wasted time. Of course each question leads to deeper, related sub-questions which, in turn, lead to a dozen related books written (or waiting for you to write) that, combined with speaking, consulting, focus book series, perhaps audiobooks, and so on, can rather quickly create an empire based on their acquired expertise (which began with book one and is further proven and strengthened in subsequent products.)

So I guess that really makes me a **pre-writing and empire-building coach** (if being an emperor or empress is your thing).

That's the longer overview of what my kind of writing coach does. (Most of the others start when the writing itself appears. Bless them.)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Leading your idea in print down its most profitable path...

So you've got an **article** or **book idea** that you want to turn into both **big money** and widely-seen **expertise presence**. That's the way to think! I'd also add that the copy needn't be completely rewritten again and again, so also think **reprint, rewrite, reprint of rewrites, and more...**

Let's say you want to write about the 2016 Chicago Cubs and their playing in the coming National League baseball playoffs—and perhaps for the pennant, of all things! But, if you can't tell, or wouldn't want to tell, a baseball from a ball of wax, your idea and copy to sell again and again could be about the Trump-Clinton presidential election, kumquat delicacies from the kitchen, or driverless autos driving nonetheless on the streets!

Alas, I've been a baseball fan from/in Chicago almost since the Great Fire and the hapless Cubs haven't won a pennant for 107 years. You know us by the fetching blue, red, and white

“C” hats that we have had to hide in our cupboard for generations. Alas, this is our year, so we dusted them off and wear them on our heads for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and almost all the hours between—until October when we will know if the hex of the billy goat is true. **So I’m picking the Cubs for this empire-building article writ long...** (But if you’re reading this in the Philippines, on the Pyrenes, or in Peru, kumquat delicacies might be easier to understand...)

Let’s start with an **article** about the “plight of the Cubs” (or any fetching topic) for an American magazine. You do the usual things: some basic research to find the most interesting angles or slants, pick the best approach, and subject that idea to a two-pronged **feasibility study**—is it feasible to write and is it feasible to sell? (Go to the search box in the upper top right corner and type in **feasibility study** to see how the magazine approach works. The blog copy comes from either [How to Sell 75% of Your Freelance Writing](#) or [The Travel Writer’s Guide](#). To read those books, used and sold for a pittance, check the [Amazon catalog](#).) The feasibility study tells how to test magazines vs newspapers, who are the most likely readers, the querying process, and (for magazines), should you get a “go-ahead,” how you best present the copy for sale. (If it fits newspaper freelance buying fields too, submit the written article in final form, without a query and sent in ready-to-go fashion.) If the idea is a “go” as feasible to write and sell, send your articles to the best markets in both categories.

If the **magazine** buys your submission, you can use much of the article’s contents again (at least slightly rewritten) two ways: as a **reprint** or a **rewrite**. Then if a rewrite is bought, you can send that off to a still-virgin magazine as a reprint. With cunning, you can have several of each of these three partially-completed masterpieces filled in (completed) and in print, all paying you! (Again, go to the Search box above and write in reprints or rewrites to see step-by-step blogs with

more details.)

With **newspapers**, there are two paths: (1) you can literally sell the first copy to as many newspapers as will buy it as long as they aren't "national" newspapers (like the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, or the *Wall Street Journal*—sell them one at a time, and, after it is sold, thoroughly rewrite the piece before selling it to another "national") and (2) don't simultaneously sell it two or more regional newspapers within 100 miles of each other ("distribution ranges"). Otherwise, you can sell the very same newspaper article(s) to any other newspaper (except the "nationals") as long as they don't overlap. Just tell the newspaper editor yours is a simultaneous submission and you are selling it outside of their 100-mile circulation orb.

What more can you do with reams of unused copy parts shouting to be read? Throw all the used copy into a cauldron, add the unused gems, mix them up again, and "**topic spoke**" them to find as many of the other potential eager buyers as will shriek and pay, delightfully, to use your genius and make you rich. Check the blog search for items about "topic spoking" in the 400+ blogs waiting to be used!

How many **books** can you pluck from that cauldron (adding in other sources still untouched)? You could write/publish a book for all kinds of Cubs' *aficionados*: one for kids/young adults, one for the regular folk, another for seniors (some praying for the Cubs to win, others incredulous that they are anywhere near the top), another for the Cubs fans focusing on this year and the past two, another putting all 107 years in perspective, and so on.

And because each book requires a mound of research, interviews, anecdotes, photos, and more, you can turn this into new wealth of found and reworked copy and pluck out more **articles**, and thus more **rewrites**, **reprints**, and **reprints of rewrites**. You can also sell related **photos** where you sell copy

(check photos in Search), often the same photo repeatedly since they are almost always sold on one-time rights.

Lost in this pile of print are the **directly related spin-offs**, like **audiobooks** of any or all of those books just mentioned; **focus books** about specific elements of baseball for the truly absorbed, of the past year or two or of all time, like the pitching, the records set and broken, ERAs, a projection of future years and records of new(er) players emerging in the 2016 excitement; even **videos** and **movies**, all being in print before being converted to other media. Then using the most visible of the platform builders, authors speaking about their (new) specialty from the platform: see **rallies**, **speeches**, **how-to workshops**, **seminars**, **talks**, and so on...

Every time your champion copy has your by-line attached to your super writing in a newspaper, magazine, or book, you are solidifying yourself as an **expert** in that field, building a following, and making yourself more wanted by **information and product producers**. They want to get more good items from you, a recognized “valuable and prolific source” of, in this case, baseball, Cubs, and sports ideas, information, and articulation.

The point here is that **almost any word or idea has lots of legs (and ears) and can be multiplied very profitably many times by many means**. The trick is to create interesting copy about ideas that others want to know more about that is spelled properly and has the facts, quotes, and anecdotes artfully blended into more good ideas. Most exceptional writers don't stray too far from what others want to know, and they churn a fair amount of interesting text into many articles, then books, rather than just making one sale or two before wandering off to find unrelated subjects for articles that are also sold a few times. **It's wiser and fills your coffers faster by turning your related ideas and copy over and over.**

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

[More how-to writing, publishing, and speaking stuff
at www.gordonburgett.com/order3.htm.]

Writers: how to find more people to interview...

Sometimes you're writing an article or story and try as you may you can't think of or find another person to interview, other than your kids or some shlunk on the street corner. So what do you do?

Let's start with an expectation that few new writers know about or think they might be able to tiptoe around: that **almost every paying editor expects you to interview at least several (think three or four) people for your article**—and what the interviewee is asked or says is directly related to what the article is about.

After I say that in my seminar about interviewing a rather bizarre question usually pops up: **"Must the interviewee be living?"** I imagine they are really asking if they can use quotes from someone who has passed or, perhaps, can they include interviews with aliens or ghosts or the like? In the second case, no. But quotes from the defunct, yes. Still, the quotes must come from a source that did once live—and the words must have been "captured intact" at that time, preserved, and passed down. Also, they can't be "helped" to directly pertain to the subject at hand.

An example where this worked. I sold several articles about Dom Pedro II and his visit to the U.S. to open the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. All of the quotes came from a detailed diary that the King of Brazil kept during the visit that was published a few years after his death. I sent the editor a copy of the relevant phrases from the diary that I had translated from Portuguese. No problem.

Thus historical comments from the living or dead might provide background information and, sometimes, direct quotes that apply as said.

The best way not to get caught without interviewees is to read many other articles or accounts about the topic and note all vital information you can about their speakers or authors. The challenge is finding those publications. Your librarian will show you the "trace" books, if needed. "Google" will too, as will the company or college they work for.

Another way, if the topic is being actively discussed in the media, is to find all of the related interplay in print: who is taking part, their position, the group or association they represent, anything else that gives a clue. And if you only have one side of the topic, ask the speaker defending that viewpoint the names of the three most frequent (or best) speakers on each side of the issue—plus for phone or mail contacts.

Or delve more deeply into the topic. Specifically: a cure for Parkinson's disease, how to get ahead (and stay ahead) of road deterioration, one-world currency, age-based income equity? Focus as much on the best brains and problem-solvers in each field. Mine their expertise. Ask who you should contact to get a solid exchange.

Said another way, **ask the best informed expert(s) on the topic** if they could (or would) identify the top minds in their field, the top three or so best informed people who would

identify the most important questions that must be asked, then offer their thoughts about possible answers or solutions to each. Sometimes that works. Sometimes they laugh uncontrollably, step back, and stare at you like you've just overdosed on your own brew!

Another way is to simply ask the chosen person after you finish interviewing them, "Would you point me to another expert as well informed as you that I can interview so my editor will have two points of view for his/her pages?"

Or just ask the shlunk on the street corner and take your chances. I did just that in a piece about the huge Schloss in Heidelberg. Seems there was a giant crack in a wall large enough to march an army through. So I asked a fellow just standing next to me if he knew anything about that crack and why the wall didn't just collapse or slide down? He smiled, then gave me an eloquent, point-by-point response! When finished, I applauded his knowledge (and clarity of expression). He smiled even more, then told me that he was a professor of architecture at the University of Heidelberg!

If in this somewhat rambling blog there is guidance that helps you, great.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. You can't just interview yourself, sadly. Such wit and erudite articulation untouchable! But if you have solid quotable comments in an article, book, or publication about the topic, you can say something like: "...in my 2016 book about ... I mentioned that ..." A bit awkward, alas, but better than just saying, "Somebody once said ..."

I will be writing a book about interviewing soon. If that interests you, please stay tuned.

Author of Self-Publishing Manual, Dan Poynter, has died...

The author of the best-selling **Self-Publishing Manual**, Dan Poynter, has died. We were “in the trenches” writing friends and I already miss him, in part because it was Dan’s turn to buy lunch. So will thousands more whose lives he touched and changed. He had been quite ill for a while, seemed to be improving, but, instead, Dan passed away a few days back.

Poynter wrote almost 100 books but he was best known for his **Self-Publishing Manual**, now in its 14th edition. Many of us exploring the hinterlands of “doing-it-ourselves” publishing, with our starter books (rarely sought, even more rarely bought), pounding away on clunky typewriters and wading in rubber cement, wandering through the last days of the past century, when up popped his how-to gift. The **SPM** was a light from heaven. It answered questions we didn’t even know we should ask. As Dan learned more, the book kept getting better and bigger. In short order his grateful fans, hat in hand, too often bruised by the titans from Gotham and other bookstore bulk buyers, turned his manual into a huge seller..

Dan was a close friend of mine for lots of decades. We’re a few weeks apart in age (he would never admit it), I lived about 20 miles away, and we seemed to wander into the same ersatz gatherings and adventures, befriending many of the same odd people, and we quietly joined the Independent Book Publishers Association (IBPA)—Dan helped birth it—and the

National Speakers Association (NSA).

He was a tall, quiet fellow who gave freely of his knowledge. Many know that he was President of the Parachutists Assn as well. He joked that he married the thrill of descent (he was a life-long bachelor), and was faithful to the end.

In fact, rather than using his law training Dan set up and ran a loft in Oakland. His publishing career (and life) started when he couldn't find a book about parachute knotting that his clientele needed, to get licensed. "I knew as much about publishing as some poor soul tapping rubber trees for a living," he told me. So he contacted every company however involved with knotting and made copies of the diagrams and instructions they sent back, pulled them into a \$40 three-ring instruction manual, wrote the conjunctive copy, then bought a dandy house near Goleta (Santa Barbara) from the profits. It overlooked the Pacific Ocean east of the UC Santa Barbara. From his front porch you could see the only American mainland target attacked by the Axis in World War II, an oil tank sighted by the misdirected Japanese Navy.

I first met him at a free lunch where Xerox was showing their brand new copiers to a bevy of hungry writers (becoming publishers). We passed on the street a couple of times but we didn't really meet again until he tried to kill himself (inadvertently, he claims) by falling 100+ feet straight down and almost impaling himself on a volleyball net pole on East Beach. He had written (or was writing) a book about Parasailing (or was it Paragliding? He also wrote a pile of other weird books). There was a slack in the tow rope and he found himself stalled in midair! Alas, the pause was miraculously timed—a gaggle of bone doctors taking a break from a convention happened to be playing volleyball when he dropped in on them! He was nearly killed. A few days later, in the weakest voice hearable, he called and asked if I'd take his newest book to the ABA in Los Angeles the next week. I did (when I found out what the ABA was), and that started a long

string of lunches, Gold Coast meetings (a sort-of branch of NSA), and so on...

Dan had a sense of humor, much of it hoarded internally. He didn't have time (or much patience) for editing would-be books sent for his help by adoring fans. He threatened to farm them all off to me, and rarely he couldn't help himself: I would get a DOA bundle (with a spine) in the mail with a note daring me to make sense and save the soul of the hapless scribe of the offending manuscript. The note usually mentioned that I was the only person who could get the author in print since the bundle was so much like my own books!

A final story. Dan gave weekend gatherings for book creators at his palace. The couple of times I spoke there he would hold up one of my early books and tell the attendees that it was certainly not how to design your own cover—and that he had bought a couple of copies of the book so he wouldn't run out of such a pitiful display. I told him I was hunting for some hole in one of his books, the table of contents lost in the index, upside-down chapters, or something equally egregious for revenge. But I never found anything out of place—and now he's left before me and the fun is gone.

Dan Poynter was a smart fellow and already is a much missed friend.

Gordon Burgett

The most important / most

profitable reason to self-publish

I enjoy and learn a lot from Bob Bly's frequent missives. (See www.bly.com). We sort of walk and work the same side of the street regarding professional writing and publishing, and we both agree on the importance of strategizing first, then following up with processes that work.

So the other day when Bob offered five reasons or situations where self-publishing should seriously be considered, I found myself nodding and uttered an aging "yep" at every point.

Alas, I had an extra "yep" unuttered, so I thought it fair in this blog to add number six to the list. We agree that self-publishing (1) can be a means of getting your words in print, (2) it will let you can control your tome's contents and design, (3) if you can market well, by self-publishing you can sidestep the big-house foot-dragging, (4) when your book is complementary to your greater purpose of displaying your expertise (as, for example, using your book to secure related speaking engagements), or (5) when self-publishing is the best (and perhaps only) way to get your words and ideas past the older, established houses so potential readers and buyers have a chance to see and decide about the merits of your independent offering.

The missing reason—the unuttered "yep"—for me trumps the other five. I think that **self-publishing** and **niche publishing** are potentially the two halves of a **golden egg**.

In fact, they have walked hand in hand long before "open" publishing made it possible for any writer to ignore the major houses and see their work in print. Many did profitably self-publish long ago, like Dickens, Twain, and General Roberts (of *Roberts' Rules of Order*). But when the focus swung from books

for general markets (risky indeed) to tightly targeted or niche markets, and pre-testing (usually through direct mail testing) allowed the publisher to define the specific buyer demand, then self-publishing let the niche publisher create publications with finely honed titles tailored to pin-point targets. It became a potentially risk-free investment since the publisher would then be able to print the number of books needed to satisfy that predetermined need.

We're not in disagreement here since Bob sells solid products about niche publishing and my [Niche Publishing–Publish Profitably Every Time](#) also extols (and explains) the “how’s” of niching and pre-testing. I simply wanted to remind my readers that niche publishing continues to be a lucrative path (I think *the* most lucrative) in the grove of self-publishing.

Incidentally, blogs being structured as they are, I probably have 40 or 50 related blogs about “niche publishing” hiding right behind these words for further perusal, if interested. Just type “niche” or “niche publishing” (no quote marks) in the SEARCH box above and Word Press will kindly stack them up for you to read. (Since in my mind niche publishing and **empire building** can be almost synonymous, you are invited to check “empire building” too!)

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

[**How can I make my self-**](#)

published memoir a big seller?

It's doable but very hard. It takes a combination of good things, some not much in your control.

A starting definition is required: what is a "big seller"? Almost everybody will agree that if your book has "many, many thousands of sales; royalties in six-plus figures; a book-based movie, and spin-offs of book fame like Charlie Rose, the morning shows, and widespread name recognition, that's a big seller.

All of that can happen, despite the self-publishing (which too often is linked to poor production and artwork, weak marketing, little or no selling pre-prep, and reluctance by book distributors to keep the book in stock and sight).

Your book is most likely to break out big if you are well known or you say things that lots of book buyers want to read—and repeat to their friends. Those sales can be quickly magnified if the timing is right—the topic excites readers eager to know more about what you are saying. (I'm presuming your prose is tight, true, and flawlessly professional.)

I think I heard you say, "Fat chance! No way my message will hit the headlines—and what would Charlie Rose, or even Tokyo Rose, ask me even if they could find me?"

Yet there are self-publishers who define being a "big seller" differently, though they'd be happy to be "found" if the world started spinning in reverse. They have already sold a few thousand copies, pushed through Kindle and CreateSpace. One suspects they are about as happy as they'd be if they'd won a Noble and Pulitzer Prize and Miss Spenser, the senior literature class teacher, had given them a posthumous "A." Their books are well written, to the point, and spotlessly

proofed. But the covers aren't bookstore stuff: free artwork, Arial type, more cartoonish than befitting a true big-house tome.

They all did pretty much the same thing. They told stories, about themselves, their families, some friends. One book was sad. It was a true story. It was patched together with such gentleness and determination that it was hard to put down. A book you gave your spouse or your aunt even though none of you know the author. Or like your friend who told you to buy it—"you've got to read this."

The other two popped with humor. Both worked because the dialog sounded true—and was funny; it was how men, the key protagonists, talk—one book, three brothers and an older sister in a tense, disintegrating family all sliding apart on strings of love; the other, a loose tale of a not-so-good magician working the subway, the bus station, and a bewildering corporate bachelor party, realizing that the weaker his magic was, the funnier was his patter.

Those are also paths to "best sellerdom" for the unchosen. There are as many, or more, winning paths in non-fiction too. I suspect there are thousands of writers of wee books who are puffing with pride just having the best they can do available digitally or in paperback. They'd take the fame and chat with Charlie but in the meantime they can scarcely hide their smile when somebody whispers, "I read your book. It was great."

And what happens if only a handful of people buy or read your book. Don't brag too loudly about your fan club. There's no reason to say anything. Keep that book in your goods box to give your grandkids. You wrote and published a book. How many others in your family are in print? Or your friends? You count.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

Also use Nook Press to publish your own book--free!

I've been selling my e-books through Nook Press for four years and it's a **good way to get your book posted for sale at Barnes and Noble**, which runs it. (Its platform was earlier known as Pubit!)

It's probably **the easiest free ebook press site to use**. (The others most used are Kindle and Smashwords.) Simply go to Nook Press.com and there are three choices: E-Book Publishing, Print Books, and Help Services. If you want to publish and sell your books through them, go to the first. If you just want them to print your books, the second, and if you need help putting the book together, the third.

Just follow the submission directions in the publishing section, (My book, [How to Get Your Book Published Free in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days](#), will ease your march through the steps, if needed.)

There are usually **two perplexing areas** in the free publishing formats: (1) **who you can talk to**—actually talk to, or at least type to and have them immediately type an answer back, and (2) **how many copies have you sold**, when, and when will those royalties be paid.

(1) **Live assistance is great at Nook Press**. If you have questions it will tell you where to go and how to do it immediately.

(2) **Easy enough here too**, if you remember that you get paid 60 days after sale and you are paid for all of that month's total sales. For example, if you sold a book in March, you will be

paid at the end of May. (They will send you an email telling you it is en route [to your bank account] at that time.) So if you sold \$42 worth (say six books) in March, you will be paid the \$42 at the end of May. Go to the SALES button and it will tell you the number of books sold the present month, how many were sold last month, and you can go down a list of previous months and it will tell you specifically which books were sold during those earlier 30-day periods. (There's also a graph on the SALES page telling the number of books sold each of the past six months.)

I need that by-the-month information (in our example, for April) because it tells me exactly which six books were bought that month. That's important to you if you have more than one ebook published by Nook Press. For me, I own a publishing company and I submit the books written by my five authors (see www.meetingk-12needs.com), plus me. So I need to know which books by which authors (and the royalty for each) they are paying. That's so I can pass that royalty on to them.

That's it. **Consider adding Nook Press to your selling force.** If nothing more, it's another publisher in your growing in-print domain. **Your kids will shriek with delight.** So will your spouse when those additional royalties get heavy in your account!

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. If you want to **read other comments**, usually how-to, in the 400 or so blogs at this site about any of the "open publishing" sites, go to the **SEARCH** box at the top, right, of the first page of this blog and type in the publisher's name (one at a time). The blogs will be lined up for you to read! What are the other related publishing outlets you might want to know about? Try Nook, Kindle, Smashwords, BookBaby, Create Space, Amazon, Lightning Source, Lulu, Scribd, Blurb, iBooks,

and Kobo.

Where self-publishing and ebooks stand in late 2014

(1) “Ebooks have grown exponentially and reached a healthy balance by 11/14,” says **Mark Coker**, head of [Smashwords](#) in a no-nonsense delivery at [BAIPA](#) (Bay Area Independent Publishers Assn) on Nov. 8. Here is a much-abbreviated summary of Mark’s very enjoyable 10-point presentation. When Mark began Smashwords, about 8 years ago, ebooks accounted for .5% of the books published. **Today they are 35% of the U.S. total. But in the last year that growth has held steady at about 35%.** That may represent a rough new balance between bound books and ebooks in the future.

(2) **“The stigma of self-publishing is disappearing,”** Mark feels. It’s no longer a sign of failure, a last resort, or a desperate “inch from evil.” The growth was led by romance writers, with Amanda Hawkins the pivotal figure, who first cracked the million-copy ebook threshold. “It’s best for all publishers if there’s a healthy selection of traditional and self-published books available for choice.” But Coker assured the audience that the indies have the flexibility to outsell, outcompete, and underprice the big traditional producers.

(3) **Writers earn a much healthier bite of the royalties by indie publishing,** 60-80% of the list price, versus about 25% net royalties (12-17% of the price) of the traditional houses.

(4) **“The big (traditional houses) just don’t understand self-publishing.”** They couldn’t make money from writers, so they had to fleece them. They turned to vanity press, like Author

Solutions (bought by Penguin), and then give bad, over-priced service to those they otherwise wouldn't let publish at the top level. "They should just abandon the vanity approach," say Coker.

(5) **The democratization of the publishing tools is what freed the indies** from having to use the overpriced, underpaid, and tortugian-produced big-press book process. Indies today have full access to presses, have much freer and faster promotion venues, can change prices in minutes, and can play with pre-ordering, free copies, two-for-one, and many more means to put their printed products in others' hands.

(6) **"Keep your eye on the ebook subscription services,"** Mark advised, "like [Oyster](#) and [Scribd](#) where anybody can pay \$10 or so to read any book in their catalog—and those book publishers with the catalog products are paid as if the whole book was sold if a small percentage is actually read. Amazon also has a form of this through Kindle Unlimited but the model isn't very friendly because you must give them exclusivity of use and Kindle pays a much smaller percentage from a pool, which seems to be about \$1.50 a read.

(7) Mark discussed **the new court decision between Amazon and Hachette**. The decision revolves around the agency model. Let me pass on this because the decision is so new that the dust hasn't cleared sufficiently to see who won, who lost, and how it will affect indies (like us). See future blogs here and elsewhere for emerging clarifications.

(8) **Ebooks are going mobile**. Lots of selling abroad. Apple iBooks sell 45% of their eproducts overseas.

(9) Mark got a laugh when he said that he had read that "self-publishing creates a tsunami of dreck." He agreed that lots of self-publishing books are mediocre in appearance but he felt, overall, **there is "more high quality content in books than ever before."**

(10) Yet selling books is getting harder. Now there's a glut of high quality print and it is harder to reach readers. Add to that that the growth in books is outstripping the readership, and folks read less in part because of the many other ways to learn and be entertained. There are fewer major publishers, fewer agents, and lower advances in the traditional arena. "But don't despair: ebooks are immortal, they sit there waiting to be found forever. And **right now there has never been a better time to publish, when there are more world readers than ever before.**"

I must remind blog readers about an overlooked element of self-publishing that largely circumvents the usual paths but uses all the now-available presses—and can be pre-tested for title, author, theme, price, and format before a word is written or a page published. That is the [niche field](#), which is **always begging for more tightly-focused books** and where the selling price is largely determined by how well the book answers one critical question or defines a new process (or an old process done in a new way). As many of you know, this is my area of specialization so let me send you to a list of [related products](#) that might help you explore this indie and traditional field.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

[The new Nook Press isn't an](#)

"open" publisher

Nook Press just announced its new paperback and hardback print service. Its features look similar to those of "open" publishers, like Create Space, Kindle, Smashwords, and others (including Nook ebooks). But here you simply build your book, prep the files, and upload the print-ready PDFs for the interior and cover. They print the book and can have it in your hands in a week. (Maximum order is 125 copies, but you can get many orders simultaneously.) A 200-page paperback (black/white interior, 6×9, on white paper) will cost \$4 apiece, plus tax and shipping. But that's it. They don't sell it to others. What you do with the printed book is up to you. (Nor is there a discount for larger orders. "We hope to offer it in the future.")

Just don't confuse this with the "open" publishing full services where the book is produced, then sold by the publisher and/or through other distributors, as Nook itself does for ebooks. This new Nook Press service ends with the printing, period. According to Amanda at [NOOK Press](#), "The NOOK Press print platform creates print books for personal use. The eBook platform creates digital books to put on sale through NOOK and BN.com. The NOOK Press print platform program is for you to print books for your personal use, and does not include selling those books through Barnes & Noble stores or BN.com. You may sell the books you print on your own, however."

If interested, check the details. Looks straightforward enough. I'm eager to see the end product.

But I am also a bit bewildered why I would have my book just printed if I could get it printed by the "open" publishers at (about) the same cost and put on the market for sale, and then they would send me royalties (even if they are modest and arrive slowly). Maybe the print-only folks don't want others to see or have their book. I suppose there's nothing wrong

with that, though it seems a hard way to share your genius or be rewarded for the sharing.

Best wishes,

Gordon Burgett

P.S. I explain the “open” publishing process, mostly the prep and submission procedures, in [How to Get Your Book Published Free in Minutes and Marketed Worldwide in Days.](#)

Niche books are very profitable. How are their authors chosen?

I publish to niche markets, in my case to K-12 school administrators. All of those who write books for my firm must have a specific field of expertise of interest (and meet needs of) K-12 school administrators. Two examples, our two latest books, are [*The Art of School Boarding: What Every School Board Member Needs to Know*](#) and [*The School Principal's Toolbook*](#). Our book titles tell the kind of knowledge (and expertise) the author is sharing.

Before we ask an author to publish with us we know that they are the best expert we can find about their topic. The author tells us what of their expertise our niche members will pay to read about; that is, what buyers' needs their book will help the buyer meet. Together, we write a title that tells in one short line what their book is about, and from it we create a book description that explains more fully what the book will cover and what benefits they will receive from buying (and

applying) the book's message and processes. Finally, we develop a tentative table of contents so that everything important is covered in a sensible order.

The writer then writes their book, we edit it (in collaboration with them), they rewrite what needs redoing, we have it proofed, we edit a last time, and out comes the book.

I mention the process because we have a second and equally important selection criterion for the writer: that they have experience speaking to the niche, are an association member, and expect to regularly offer major presentations built around the book and their expertise to the niche. A logical extension is that their listeners will want to buy their book after hearing their presentations. (We also encourage them to write articles based on their book for association newsletters, journals, or related venues.)

We want to help our authors build their own expertise "empires," and we hope that the book that we jointly create is the foundation of that growth.

The reason for this blog? How do we select or reject authors is a frequent question asked when I speak about niche publishing, so I hope the information above shares some insight into our firm's procedure.

We also pre-test our niche books so we know, before the books are written and printed, an approximate number of bound books we will sell, the price (or range) that buyers will pay, and if the title is acceptable. How that's done requires much more detail and examples. The best source is my [**Niche Publishing: Publishing Profitably Every Time**](#). Other related material can be found [here](#).

Best wishes,



Gordon Burgett
