

Self-Publishing and the Computer Underground

DEFCON 15 • 4 August 2007



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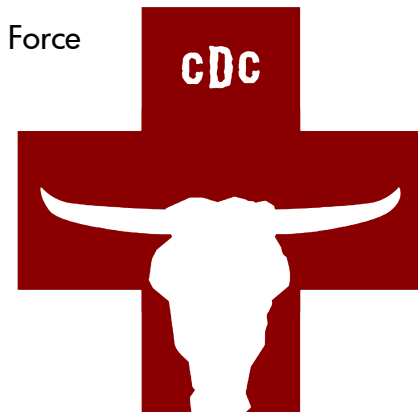
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Overview

- Introduction
- Background
 - Definition
 - Relevant Self-Published Works
- Content
- Investment
- Publishing
- Marketing
- ROI
- Accepting Payments
- Reviews
- Conclusion
- Questions



Introduction

- Myles Long
 - Director of Depravity, CULT OF THE DEAD COW
 - Webmaster, cultdeadcow.com
 - Administrator, cDc's Bovine Dawn Dojo Forum
 - Editor and writer, *CULT OF THE DEAD COW*
 - Editor, *The Book of Cao: Enlightenment through a Poke in the Eye* (cDc communications, August 2006)



Introduction

- Christian Wirth, a.k.a. “RaD Man”
 - Founder, ACiD Productions
 - Member, cDc’s Ninja Strike Force
 - Webmaster, acid.org
 - Organizer, Blockparty – a U.S. Demoparty
 - Interviewee, *BBS: The Documentary*
 - Editor/creator, *Dark Domain DVD-ROM* (ACiD Productions, 2005)
 - Owner, North American Distribution Rights to *Freax Volume I: The History of the Computer Demoscene* (CSW-Verlag/ACiD Productions, August 2005)

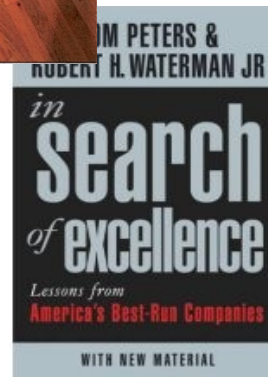
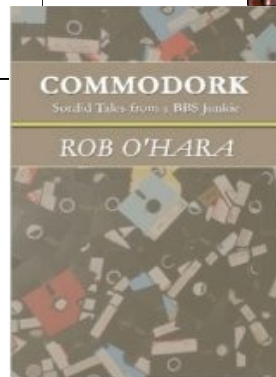
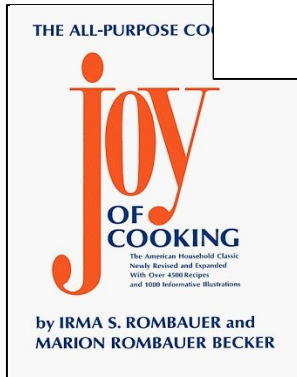
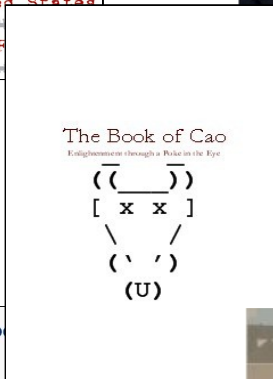
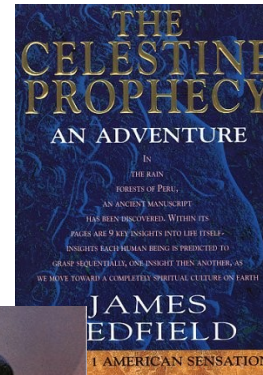
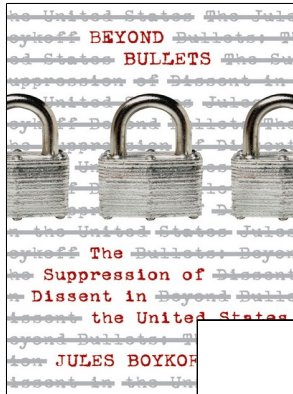


Introduction

- Rob O'Hara, a.k.a. "Jack Flack"
 - Member, cDc's Ninja Strike Force
 - Webmaster, ninjastrikeforce.com
 - Reviewer, *Videogame Collector* magazine and the Digital Press zine
 - Moderator/administrator/feature writer, Digital Press (digitpress.com)
 - Writer, *IGN.com*, *2600*:
The Hacker Quarterly, *CULT OF THE DEAD COW*, *TheLogBook.com*
 - Contributing author, *Retro Gaming Hacks* (O'Reilly, October 2005)
 - Author, *Commodork* (Rob O'Hara Books, September 2006)



What do all of these publications have in common?



- ~~Seven books, one magazine~~
- ~~Three bestsellers, five not~~
- *They were all originally published without the backing of a major publishing house.*



Background – what is self-publishing?

■ Definitions – self vs. vanity publishing

GOOD

- “**Self-publishing** is the publishing of books and other media by the authors of those works, rather than by established, third-party publishers...”

– “Self-publishing.” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 13 Jun 2007, 23:42 UTC. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 30 Jun 2007 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Self-publishing&oldid=138020420>>.

BAD

- “A **vanity press** or **vanity publisher** is a book printer which, while claiming to be a publisher, charges writers a fee in return for publishing their books or otherwise makes most of its money from the author rather than from the public.”

– “Vanity press.” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 5 Jun 2007, 11:14 UTC. Wikimedia Foundation, Inc. 30 Jun 2007 <http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Vanity_press&oldid=136035629>.

■ Analogous to shareware/freeware

- Author maintains control
- Author receives most/all proceeds
- Often niche-oriented



Background – relevant self-published works

■ Online

- E-zines
 - *Phrack*
 - *Soljo*
 - *CULT OF THE DEAD COW*
- E-books, websites, and blogs
 - CCC.de
 - DeviantArt
 - Hackaday.com
 - Hackcanada.com
 - Slashdot
 - Attrition.org
- Streaming/shared mp3s
 - Phluid
 - cDc tunez / NSF Radio
 - Hacker Voice Radio

■ Offline

- (Maga)Zines
 - *2600*
 - *Blacklisted 411*
 - *Die Datenschleuder*
- Books
 - *Practical Packet Analysis* by Sanders
 - *Security Data Visualization* by Conti
 - *End of Dayz*
 - *Freax*
 - *Commodork*
 - *The Book of Cao*
- Radio and other
 - *Off the Hook*
 - *Off the Wall*
 - *Dark Domain DVD-ROM*

Clearly, these lists are not exhaustive. Don't whine if we left your work out.



Content – what to convey?

- Is my work good enough?
 - Yes.
 - Everyone has a book/article/song/painting/etc. in them somewhere
 - If you do not think that you are that original/good, maybe your friend is
- But...
 - Getting sued is bad – intellectual property rights are key
 - Original content
 - Write what you know – clichéd but true
 - Example: *Commodork*
 - Previously published content for which you own or can obtain the rights
 - A plethora of underground-related content is just waiting to be republished for mass consumption – even if you can already download it all for free
 - Licenses that are your friends
 - GNU Free Documentation License
 - Creative Commons
 - Examples: *The Book of Cao*, *Dark Domain*
 - Obtaining distribution rights
 - Be sure to follow copyright law
 - Examples: *Freax*, *Dark Domain*



Investment – aside from content, what is needed?

- Audience
 - Less important than content
- Time (which equals money, as we all know)
- Money – depends on the avenue you pursue
 - Online is cheaper than offline
 - ISBN – ~\$25, for books/DVDs/individual issues of serials
 - May not be necessary, depending on where you want to sell
 - In general, must be purchased in blocks of 10
 - May be purchased from self-publishing site at a markup, ie. lulu.com
 - ISSN – free, for serials only
 - UPC – \$89, for all types of products
 - Print-on-demand
 - Very little cost
 - No inventory to manage
 - Could be free (unless you buy a copy for yourself)
 - Short press run
 - Minimum lot quantities of 500-1000 (usually)
 - Slightly better print/binding quality



Publishing – which site(s) to use?

Site	URL	Type	Upfront Cost	Other Services	Royalty	Min Order Qty
AuthorHouse	authorhouse.com	Print on demand	???	Professional design and layout, copy-editing, promotional services	5% – 50%	1
Booksurge (Amazon.com)	booksurge.com	Print on demand / short press run	\$99	Editing services, “publishing packages,” “total design freedom”	Depends on distribution channel	1 / ???
Café Press	cafepress.com	Print on demand	\$0	N/A	Set by author	1
iUniverse	iuniverse.com	“Supported self publishing” (print on demand / short press run)	\$299 – \$1199	Professional design and layout, editorial services, marketing help	20% (print) / 50% (online)	1 / ???
Lulu*	lulu.com	Print on demand	\$0	Editing, graphics, translation, marketing, publicity	Set by author	1
Snapfish	snapfish.com	Photo books	\$4.99 – \$19.99	N/A	N/A	1

This is a non-comprehensive list. Do your own research before choosing a site to use.

***DISCLAIMER:** Both *Commodork* and *The Book of Cao* were published through Lulu. We’re not endorsing Lulu in any way; they have pros and cons, just as the other sites do.



Marketing – promotion is a never-ending job

- You are selling yourself as much as your product
 - Making friends = making sales
 - Use every contact you have
- Online
 - Book-specific website
 - Press releases
 - Forums
 - Blogs
 - Websites/E-zines
 - Podcasts
- Offline
 - Press releases
 - Magazines
 - Meetings/Cons
- Common trap: writing for marketing
 - Solution: market the writing, don't write for the market
 - Thinking about marketing first is like writing pop music



ROI – how many copies can I expect to sell?

- To profit or not to profit?
 - Are you writing/publishing to make money or to get your idea(s) out there?
 - You can sell “at cost”
 - Naturally, you can mark up that price for a profit
 - Printing is so cheap that margins can be very high (e.g., 32% for *The Book of Cao*)
 - Regardless, you are not likely to get rich by self-publishing
- Sales depend on audience and availability of similar products
 - Print on demand works can, theoretically, be available forever with little-to-no inventory
 - Indefinite availability allows the audience to find the work



ROI (cont.)

- The average self-published book sells approximately 200 copies over its lifetime*
 - *Commodork* = ~500 copies in < 1 year
 - BBS memoirs appear to be big sellers
 - *Freax* = ~100 copies in North America in ~ 2 years
 - It is a coffee table book that retails for \$36.99
 - *The Book of Cao* = ~150 copies in < 1 year
 - Its content has been available for free for > 10 years
 - *Dark Domain* DVD-ROM = ~800 copies in ~ 3 years
 - Its content was available at artpacks.acid.org for several years

*<http://www.claredunkle.com/Design/pubpublishers.htm>



Accepting Payments

■ Amazon Advantage

- Site: <http://advantage.amazon.com/gp/vendor/public>
- \$29.95 annual fee + \$15 check fee (if not using EFT)
- Amazon takes a 55% cut of each sale
- Inventory is shipped directly to and managed by Amazon
- You can make 4% back per sale in referral fees by joining Amazon Associates if you refer the sale to Amazon from your own website
- Amazon manages inventory in their own warehouse

■ Amazon Marketplace

- Site: <http://s1.amazon.com/exec/varzea/sdp/sai-identify>
- \$1.35 closing fee + \$0.99 transaction fee
- Amazon takes 15% cut of each sale
- Payment made by EFT or gift certificate only, payment by check is not available
- You ship directly to seller
- Product must be listed on Amazon proper before it can be added to the Marketplace



Accepting Payments (cont.)

- PayPal
 - Site: www.paypal.com
 - \$0.30 transaction fee
 - eBay takes 2.9% of each sale (unless you have a high sales volume)
 - Easy to set up
 - Cons: Not available in all countries
 - 190 countries are currently supported
- Kagi
 - Site: www.kagi.com
 - \$1.00 transaction fee
 - Kagi takes 2.5% of each sale
 - Credit card fees range between 2.1% - 4.8%
 - No additional fee for cutting a check
 - Supports the largest variety of credit card and other payment options, helpful support
- DBA (assumed business name)
 - Accept checks using the name of your own business
 - No fees. :)



Reviews – there really is no such thing as bad press

- Good reviews come from people who are excited about you and your product
- Never stop promoting
 - We are still being reviewed a year later – this takes time
- Find “target” websites (ie. sites whose users would be interested)
 - Provide copies in exchange for reviews
- Contact websites/zines/newspapers
 - Offer interviews
- Provide electronic/PDF copies for reviews
- Take people's positive feedback/e-mail/comments, use as a review
- Use contacts (friends, writers, etc.) who can review your product
- Make sure you have all of your ducks in a row before soliciting reviews
 - Website set up
 - Ready for orders



Conclusion – GO FORTH AND PUBLISH

- Thanks to the Internet, everyone can be a published author
 - Anyone can do it
 - Everyone should do it
- Share the knowledge, share the wealth



Questions?

