

SELF-PUBLISHING

Sometimes called vanity publishing, self-publishing often has a bad reputation. Even the term vanity publishing is made to be said with a sneer of derision. The implication is that authors who self-publish are those whose works no one wants to read and, consequently, no publisher is willing to invest in publishing.

In popular imagination, the tragi-comic figure of Crabcalf in Mervyn Peake's *Titus Alone* represents the archetype of the self-published author – condemned to spend his life carrying his remaindered books around with him.

Mr Crabcalf was propped up, not against pillows or a bolster of straw, but by books; and every book was the same book with its dark-grey spine. There at his back, banked up like a wall of bricks, were the so-called remainders of an epic, long ago written, long ago forgotten, except by its author, for his lifework lay at his shoulder blades.

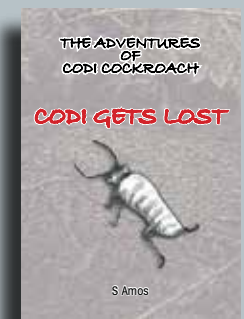
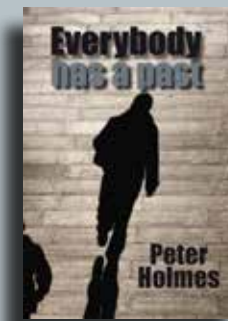
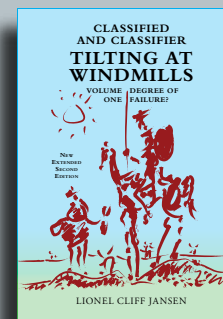
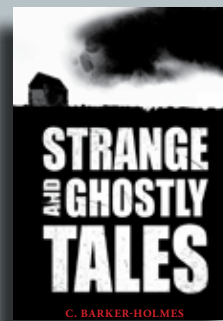
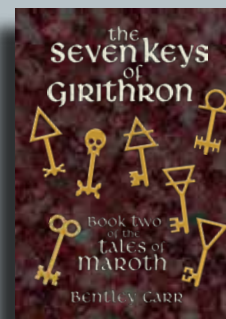
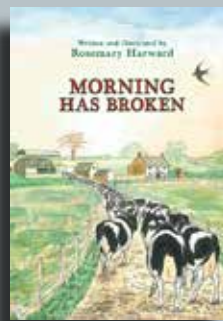
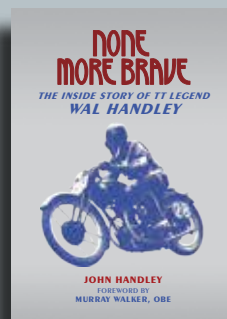
However, this caricature is inaccurate; many famous authors and popular or

critically acclaimed works were first released via the author self-financing the publication. Notable authors who have self-published or self-financed the printing of their own books include Marcel Proust, Mark Twain (*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*), James Joyce (whose friend Sylvia Beach published *Ulysses*), Walt Whitman, Virginia Woolf (whose Hogarth Press published many of her own works), Beatrix Potter, Thomas Paine, Edgar Allan Poe, T. S. Elliot and John Grisham.

Self-publishing has long been a means by which those authors, who were not considered to have mainstream appeal, or whose work was considered risqué or

controversial, could put their work before the public. Such authors include Aleister Crowley and Sir Richard Burton, the latter having created his own publishing society, The Kama Shastra Society, to evade the strict Victorian laws against obscene publications. *The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* (The Arabian Nights), and *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* were both published by him. D. H. Lawrence, who found publication of his works difficult after the banning of *The Rainbow*, published some of his work in Italy. Perhaps most significantly, the great poet, artist, printer and mystic, William Blake, wrote, illustrated and printed all of his own works.

In the current economic climate, even the established publishing houses are seeing the benefits of self-publishing. Penguin recently bought a self-publishing company and are said to be eager to join the sector. This change in the status quo is due to technological advances in digital printing and the growth of e-books, both of these developments having brought self-publishing within the means of most people, not just a privileged elite as was previously the case. Authors are now choosing to bypass traditional publishers by releasing and marketing their own titles, thus enabling them to retain their rights, keep control of their work, and decide how and when their work is released.



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