

Call to Action

**For Independent artists, self-published authors,
and print on demand publishing companies**



I recently had the unfortunate experience of applying for an emergency grant that has been set up by a well-known Canadian organization to support and fund the efforts of Canadian authors in times of need. As any artist knows, the struggle to continue to create positive material during times of emotional and financial distress can be overwhelming and have devastating effects on the results of creative works. With this in mind, both governments and independent agencies have for years provided financial support for the artistic community. Unfortunately, it appears that for many of these organizations the validity of an artist's work is not based on the merit of the work, nor is it based on the positive social impact that the work may have, rather it is based on the size and the power of the organizations that have in the past supported the artist.

Speaking specifically in terms of an author applying for financial assistance there is a bias among those who provide such assistance to not support authors who are independently published or who have been published and supported by print to order publishing houses. Many organizations, including government grants have very clearly stipulated guidelines on their websites that stresses this particular bias. In fact, even

some well renowned awards will not accept novels as entries that come from self-published authors, or print to order publishing houses. Others make it very clear that eBooks are not acceptable either for applications for financial assistance or as entry into competition.

Given our current need to create a more sustainable way of sharing information due to the obvious fact that we have used and abused our planets resources for far too long, this bias against print to order publishing houses both confuses and concerns me. If in fact, an author chooses to remain with a print to order publishing house due to personal concern for the environment, then their resources become very limited and their options for assistance even more so. I find this unacceptable in today's society and feel that it is an issue that needs be addressed and openly discussed in a public venue in the hopes that in the future these organizations will re-examine their priorities.

Speaking of my own personal experience, with an organization that I will not name out of respect for the fact that one man's actions does not reflect on an entire group of people who may truly desire to help further creative ambitions, I was appalled to discover that my email application was both dismissed out of hand and to be addressed in said email by a name that is not mine.

I am a published author who began my career over three years ago as a self-published author who did initially pay a publishing house to publish my first novel. Since that time, my work has been picked up by a publishing house in the USA that works as both a self-publishing agent and a traditional publishing house that accepts manuscripts for submission. What sets them apart however and why I have remained with them is that they offer a print to order and eBook solution to our 21st century environmental needs. They are a small family based business who focus on the authors' needs and encourages the authors' responsibilities both with regards to involvement with the creative process and with having a social media presence and ongoing interaction with their readers. I am published through Grave Distractions Publication on contract, as a traditionally published author as was outlined by my publishers letter of reference to the organization that I was applying to. What troubles me is that my application was dismissed on the grounds that I am not considered a professional author as my publisher is in fact a print on demand publishing company. It did not matter that I have published 2 novels in print, 3 novels in eBook format and 1 compilation of donated blogs in eBook format (a charity project that included writings by ten authors), nor did it matter that I work in a socially conscious genre and that the project I was applying for assistance to complete is in fact a book designed to inspire and uplift those suffering from chronic pain and illness so that they might find their way to healing. In fact the merit of my work never came into question only the legitimacy of my carefully chosen publishing company. I am including in this article the guidelines for this organization as outlined on their website...

1. Canadian citizens or permanent residents.
2. Working on a book-length project in the category of fiction, creative non-fiction, poetry, play-writing, or children's literature.

3. A professional writer engaged in the production of literary work for some time (a minimum of 2 professionally published works or an equivalent body of work; self-published and ghostwritten works will not be accepted).
4. Facing an unforeseen financial need (usually a matter of exigency including but not limited to illness, legal issue, or debt problem, rather than an on-going, chronic problem of making a living) that imperils the completion of their project.
5. What follows is a line from the email explaining why my application was rejected...

“In reviewing your application we unfortunately conclude that you do not yet at this point in your writing career meet the program’s eligibility requirement.

To be eligible for the Woodcock Fund a writer must have professionally published a minimum of two literary titles. It is our understanding that your previous publications were with a firm (Grave Distractions Publications) we would categorize as a print-on-demand or self-publishing operation.”

I am disappointed in the blatant disregard of my application and the obvious bias against the company that I have been blessed to be represented by and I would hope that in the future there might be a more open and accepting attitude towards agencies that publish print on demand works.

My reasons tonight for writing this article are not to cry out in anguish over my personal failure to acquire the funds I need but rather they are due to my concern for the future of publishing and for the art of the written word. If we cannot find a way to marry our need to create sustainable publishing with our need to continue to support the arts then surely we have failed in one of the most important elements for shifting our society over to a more sustainable way of life.

I am blessed to be secure in my sense of self-worth, due to years of public exposure as an author, blogger, screenwriter, producer and on-line radio show host. I am surrounded by a massive support network who continues to supply me with a never ending flow of inspiration. My concern is that if such a response could briefly bring me to question my own professional worth as an author, what effect would such a response have on a young dreamer who is just stretching their creative wings?

How do we define the worth of an artist, do we judge the work itself, the merit and the potential it has to bring joy into our world or do we judge it on the size and power of the company who promotes and markets it.

It is time for us to look into our hearts, as individuals, readers, artists, producers, publishers and grant-makers and ask ourselves what we would like the future of publishing to look like. Do we want it to reflect the creative dream that drives all authors to put pen to paper or do we want it to reflect the greed of those who would continue to rape and pillage our resources in the never-ending quest for the almighty dollar.

It is time we spoke up...

I implore you as readers, as writers, as publishers and producers, musicians and artists, independent and otherwise to speak out against this... Write poems about it, talk about it in your video's and on your radio shows ... Blog about it, make songs about it... Bring this issue to the forefront of the public through your various social media networks and demand that this abuse of our creative energy be halted. We are not here to make money for big corporations, we are here to create – to uplift and to inspire and it is time that our governments, charitable organizations and the public supported our passion, our talents and our unrelenting drive to do so.

 [Everyday Connection \(http://s.tt/1im1y\)](http://s.tt/1im1y)