

## E-Books and You

In spite of the fact that e-books are the wave of the future (see my article, The E-Revolution, in “Random Musings”), deciding whether or not to go the e-route can be a wrenching decision. As an author with a foot in both camps (seven print books and seven e-books), I think I can safely say, “Been there, done that. Here’s what I’ve learned.”

**Note:** The comments below refer only to royalty-paying e-publishers who offer editing, artwork, and pay a substantial royalty on downloads. Most will also offer your e-book as a trade paperback. If you have doubts about whether or not you should submit to a particular e-publisher, I suggest checking with other members of your local RWA chapter or an online RWA chapter. If that isn’t possible, a web site known as Preditors and Editors publishes a generally well-accepted list of recommended and not recommended publishers. Their URL is: <http://anotherrealm.com/preditors/pubagent.htm>

Let’s take a look at the good things first.

**Content.** E-publishers are looking for fresh ideas, new voices. They came into being as *alternatives* to print publishing, determined to offer a wider variety of ideas and styles than was acceptable in the traditional New York market. E-publishers are not afraid of cross-genres, older heroines, historicals set in the twentieth century, a long separation between the hero and heroine, or books set in foreign countries other than Britain and Ireland. If a book is well-written, it doesn’t have to be rejected because the marketing department says it’s too long or doesn’t have a hook they can sell. Yes,

economical publishing costs make this feasible, but the open-minded attitude of e-publishers is the key ingredient which will appeal to the eager minds of Internet users looking for the world of the twenty-first century.

**Accessibility.** Most print books, particularly category, have a lifetime of four to six weeks. That's right, 30-45 days. After you spent six months, maybe a year writing it? Not a happy thought. E-books are not only good for the length of your original contract, but for however long after that you want to keep your book on the web site. And your book is not fighting for doubtful placement at Barnes and Noble or even at your local mom and pop bookstore. Your book is right there on the World Wide Web, as available in London and Sydney as it is in New York, Boston, Chicago, suburbs across the nation, farms in the heartland, or college dormitories. To those with the newest cell phone upgrades, it's even available on the beach!

**Money.** For most of us who write romance, e-book royalties are best described as "not much, not yet." The royalty percentage of each download is high (often around 35%), but e-books are still in their infancy and volume has not yet had time to build. Except for erotica. The demand for e-erotica has been astonishing, and its authors are making good money, as much as print books, if not more. So even if you don't care for erotica, it's helping increase e-readership, and we should all be grateful for its impact.

**E-readers.** Many people are held back from reading e-books because they don't want to read on screen. Let's face it, cuddling up with a good book is half the fun.

Unfortunately, with the Internet suffering through mid-teen growth, the companies that make e-readers are still engaged in a tug of war over e-book format. (Understandable, since they're each trying to make the best e-reader at the right price.) The situation is also complicated by the number of different formats (to fit the variety of e-readers) an e-publisher feels it must offer. So until a universal format triumphs, and at a reasonable price, e-readers remain out of reach to many.

**Publishers.** You read the above and you think you might want to consider submitting to an e-Pub. Where to begin? Again, if you belong to an RWA online chapter, that's a good place to ask questions. If you're not an RWA member, then check the list of recommended publishers at Preditors and Editors (e-addy above).

Be sure you submit only to a royalty-paying e-publisher known to pay its authors in a timely fashion. Can you get caught short anyway? Of course you can. Just as New York publishers suddenly do away with an entire line of books - and the authors who wrote for that line - a creditable e-publisher can bite the dust without warning. That's publishing. We have to think positive or we'd never submit our precious gems to any publisher at all.

**Should YOU consider e-pub?** If you write in the groove . . . if you write straight down the middle of whatever line or single title publisher you're targeting, then maybe not. There's generally more money in print pub, so go for it. But if you have an odd kick to your Gallup, or maybe just the teeniest bit of deviation from New York marketing's norm, then maybe e-publishing is your best bet. I e-pubbed before I print-pubbed and

got some great reviews to put in my New York query letters. Each year e-publishing gains more credibility. Only a few Neanderthal die-hards still put e-publishing down. Believe me, quality e-publishing exists. Do you want to take advantage of it? The decision is yours.