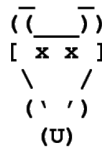


# Self-Publishing and the Computer Underground

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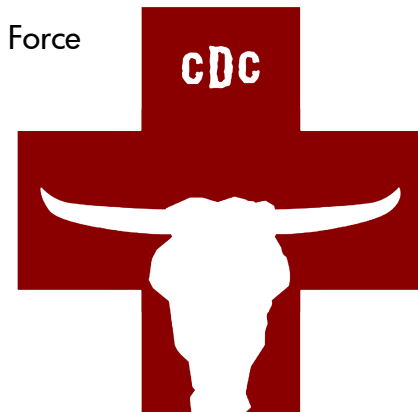
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# Overview

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  - Definition
  - Relevant Self-Published Works
- Content
- Investment
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- Marketing
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- Accepting Payments
- Reviews
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# 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)

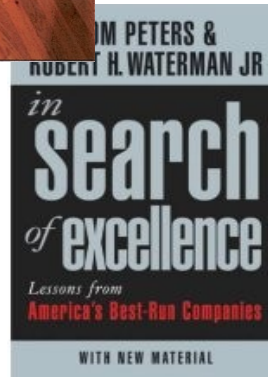
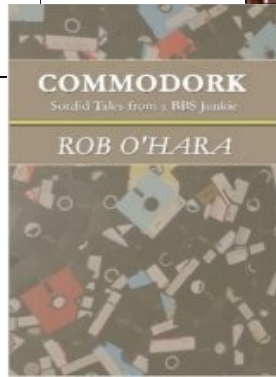
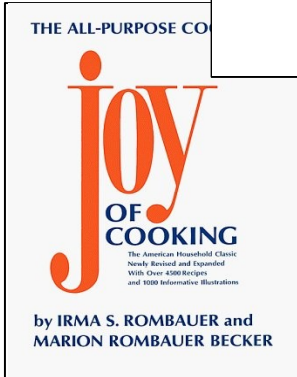
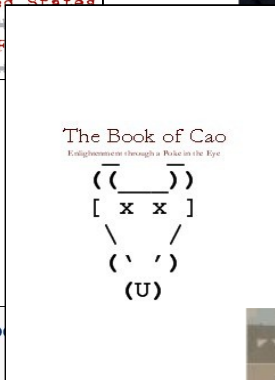
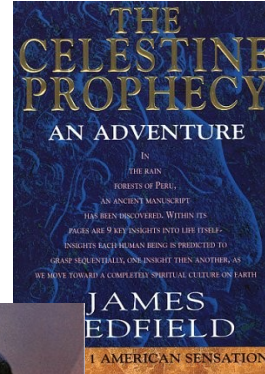
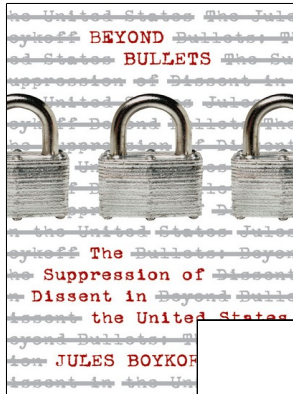


# Introduction

- Rob O'Hara, a.k.a. "Jack Flack"
  - Member, cDc's Ninja Strike Force
  - Webmaster, [ninjastrikeforce.com](http://ninjastrikeforce.com)
  - Reviewer, *Videogame Collector* magazine and the Digital Press zine
  - Moderator/administrator/feature writer, Digital Press ([digitpress.com](http://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](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
<b>AuthorHouse</b>	authorhouse.com	Print on demand	???	Professional design and layout, copy-editing, promotional services	5% – 50%	1
<b>Booksurge (Amazon.com)</b>	booksurge.com	Print on demand / short press run	\$99	Editing services, “publishing packages,” “total design freedom”	Depends on distribution channel	1 / ???
<b>Café Press</b>	cafepress.com	Print on demand	\$0	N/A	Set by author	1
<b>iUniverse</b>	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 / ???
<b>Lulu*</b>	lulu.com	Print on demand	\$0	Editing, graphics, translation, marketing, publicity	Set by author	1
<b>Snapfish</b>	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](http://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](http://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](http://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?

