

# Inkwater Press is a collaborative effort

## **Books — Jeremy Solomon's company shares the costs and the profits with its authors**

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It used to be that writers who paid to have their books published wanted to keep that information to themselves. But in the blur of the Internet and new forms of publishing, that stigma has faded.

Entrepreneurs such as Jeremy Solomon of Tigard-based Inkwater Press publish literary works and topic-oriented books, sharing the cost and profit with the author. That means Inkwater Press can pay the writer a higher-than-usual percentage of the profit for sharing the risk of publishing the book.

Here's how it works: For about \$300, anyone can have his or her book put into digital format, with a title and an illustrated cover in paperback. The books are made available on demand through such Web sites as Amazon.com, Bordersstores.com and Powells.com.

As the books are sold, the profits are split — usually 60 percent to the publishing house and 40 percent to the author.

“The reason we share the cost with the authors is that we can manage the risk (of book publishing),” Solomon said. “Book publishing is highly competitive, and it's not unusual to lose money on it.”

This form of publishing is good for those who haven't succeeded with a larger publishing house, for those who want complete control over the content and life of their book, and for those who want to be noticed by big-time publishers, Solomon said.

Although Inkwater is profitable and has doubled its staff since 2006, growth has been slow.

In 1988, while living in Brooklyn, N.Y., Solomon helped a friend find a publisher for his book. He slowly began doing some work as a book agent while holding a variety of day jobs, including running a nonprofit organization.

In 1992 he created First Books after purchasing the rights to a “Newcomer's Handbook for Moving to and Living in New York City.” That series gave life to First Books and, soon, a subsidiary: Inkwater.

“Newcomer's Handbook” is in its 21st edition, and the series now covers 11 cities, including Los Angeles, Atlanta and Chicago. Portland will join the list later this year.

Solomon moved from Brooklyn to Philadelphia to Chicago, and has been based in Tigard since 2003. At its founding, Inkwater Press focused on fiction and nonfiction for children and adults. The rent-paying First Books, meanwhile, focuses on training guides for professionals in various fields, including guides on writing and finance, as well as the city guide series.

Solomon does little advertising and says his clients find him mainly through the Internet. As a full-service publisher for authors who are often first-timers, Inkwater sells editing and marketing packages that assure clean, grammatical text and placement with appropriate media outlets.

Prices vary widely, Solomon said. “We want to sell books. And if we think that a book doesn’t have potential for success, we will dissuade the author from marketing it.”

Newberg resident Bob Fessler self-published a book of poetry for children with Inkwater titled “Hey!. You Aren’t the Boss of Me.” In doing so, he hopes to open the gate to a writing career.

“By working with Inkwater Press, I have been given an opportunity to publish and become sellable, and my goal is to use this opportunity as a starting point for a career,” Fessler said, noting how difficult it is for an unknown author to get a book of poetry published by a major commercial publishing house.

Corvallis resident Jeff Lee Manthos, who wrote “Steel Beach: My Life as a Naval Air- crewman 1972-1976,” took a different path.

He had Inkwater publish his book, but he was the publisher’s best customer, buying 1,000 copies that he’s marketing and selling himself on his own Web site. Inkwater is perfectly happy with that.