

# SELF-PUBLISHING OF ACADEMIC TEXTBOOKS IN SOUTH AFRICA: FACT OR FICTION? \*

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## ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to explore the nature and the reasons behind the self-publishing of academic textbooks in the higher education environment of South Africa. Through the collection of secondary data the authors describe the academic publishing landscape in relation to current trends in higher education in South Africa and explain what constitutes self-publishing as an alternative publishing model. Primary data obtained through surveys proves many of the myths associated with self-publishing false and establishes that academic authors have valid and just reasons for opting to self-publish. Some final conclusive findings could assist the commercial academic publishing sector in acting accordingly on this increasing trend in the higher education environment. It is important to note that the concept of self-publishing in this research extends to the publishing of academic textbooks only and does not include electronic publishing on the internet and the publishing of scholarly or research-based publications.

## KEYWORDS

Publishing, Academic publishing, Self-publishing, Commercial publishing, Vanity publishing, Textbook, Higher education

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

South African academic publishing activities traditionally focused on producing content for universities, technikons, teacher training colleges, private colleges, nursing colleges, agricultural colleges and technical colleges (CIGS 1998:37). With the recent mergers of tertiary institutions, under the Higher Education Act No 101 of 1997, the academic publishing environment now incorporates universities, universities of technology, comprehensive institutions, private colleges, nursing colleges and further education and training (FET) colleges. The study considers texts produced by authors associated with universities, universities of technology and comprehensive institutions. This environment has a unique dynamism, since its activities are bound to the prescription of books (Van Rooyen 1996:64). It is the smallest sector of the publishing industry in South Africa and rarely includes scholarly publishing or research-based titles.

Academic publishing is a very competitive industry sector that tries to keep a small base of authors and clients satisfied. It is important to keep in mind that authors of academic textbooks are also the decision-makers on whether a specific text will be prescribed or not. Thus, although students use academic textbooks, their immediate needs are only considered by publishers through what is communicated to them by the lecturers and authors. Academic communities are both the producers and consumers of their published material (Graham 1994:56). For this reason, competition in this sector of the publishing industry is fierce and ensures a dynamic business environment where alternative textbooks often exist for a single subject or course. Self-publishing is a developing trend in this publishing sector.

The reasons for (the increase of) academic self-publishing have not been scientifically investigated and documented. Most sources on this phenomenon originate from the general or trade publishing sector, hence the need for this study. Useful and reliable statistical data analysing the South African book industry has until recently not been readily available in a sensibly organised and accessible format, even to publishers themselves (Galloway, Bothma & Du Plessis, 2005; Galloway 2002:204 and Wafawarowa 2004:1), although the *PASA Annual Industry Survey* has done much to counter this. The annual PASA survey, however, investigates broad trends and features of the industry and not specific phenomena.

Elements of this study are based on current perceptions expressed in secondary sources and on anecdotal information gained during six years of publishing experience in the academic sector. There are many myths surrounding self-publishing that need to be investigated in order to measure the impact of the phenomenon on commercial publishers and the local book industry.

## 2 RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

The research question which shaped the research is: What is the current state of self-publishing in the South African academic book publishing sector and does it impact on commercial academic publishing? A quantitative research approach was followed and the principles of exploratory research allowed for analysis of the research findings obtained through two methods:

Firstly, a study of secondary sources of information was undertaken, including a literature review of the current trends in the academic publishing sector, and a literature review of the concept of self-publishing and how it differs in essence from conventional book publishing. The secondary sources include books, journal articles, newspaper articles, electronic sources (email, internet and search engines), and publications by corporate bodies and government departments. The literature reviews revealed previously unknown sources of data; introduced important and recent authoritative voices or ‘thought-leaders’ on self-publishing ; made known earlier approaches to the same problem that could be built on during the research ; provided the opportunity to spot gaps in past research that substantiated the new research; helped to identify the most widely accepted definitions of key concepts and current underlying assumptions of the research question and its sub-problems, subsequently helping to formulate the main research problem (Leedy 1997; Mouton 2001; Struwig & Stead 2001; De Vos 2005). The literature review of mainstream academic publishing and self-publishing allowed the presentation of interesting and significant new findings.

Secondly, primary data was obtained through surveys directed at individuals who were likely to have opinions on the subject under investigation. One questionnaire targeted academic bookshops and the other academic lecturing staff who have self-published. Data obtained from the structured questionnaires, allowed new factual discoveries regarding academic self-publishing, confirmed the existence of this phenomenon and the reasons behind it, and dismissed some of the myths associated with self-publishing.

## 3 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 3.1 CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS OF THE CONTEMPORARY ACADEMIC PUBLISHING LANDSCAPE

*Multinational publishing corporations* operating in South Africa impact strongly on the local academic publishing industry. Various multinational corporations launched local publishing units since the 1990s. These units, although restricted by their multinational head office in the number of titles they publish annually, impact on the local industry in terms of the myriad of supplementary material and teaching aids they make available

in the form of CD-ROMs, websites, overheads or question banks with electronic exam paper generators.

South Africa has a *small higher education market* - around 800 000 students (Van Rooyen 2005:327) in comparison with the almost 17 million students in the USA (Byrd 2005:6). Since academic publishing in South Africa is mainly concerned with textbooks, the size of the market compared to the number of publishing firms active in this market is an indication of the sector's competitiveness.

South African students need *localised content* and the debate among academic staff and publishing firms, both local and international, is whether students will benefit more from locally authored titles or titles authored internationally.

*Technological advances* impact on all sectors of the publishing industry. The debate continues on whether print-on-demand (POD) technology can in fact be of benefit to the publishing of academic textbooks. At the same time academic publishers are forced to face the truth about publishing of customised online material and the emergence of e-learning and distance learning that most higher education institutions in South Africa are offering. This is a worldwide phenomenon: "More academic administration will be handled online, with students being offered customised course sites rather than reading lists" (Baverstock 2002:16).

Although the *merger of higher education institutions* has been completed on most campuses, the effect of these mergers is still felt by academic staff and students. Mergers highlighted issues that institutions and campuses were not necessarily prepared to face. These include administrative problems of moving campuses and combined book lists, but also new diversified student populations with new needs. These changes impact on the successful commission of new textbooks and on the adoption of existing textbooks by the new partners of a merged campus.

*Book production costs and book prices* remain one of the most critical issues in the higher education environment. Issues to be considered include the possible cost reduction that new technology can bring; royalties paid to authors; the monopoly of two companies; Mondi and Sappi, on paper production; and a lack of large student numbers to warrant cost-effective print-runs. The only feasible way to bring down the costs of books is to print more, as explained by Byrd (2005:6): "Because a large part of printing costs comes with setting up the presses – a set amount whether one or 1m copies are printed – printing more copies means that the costs come down. Economies of scale means the more copies there are, the cheaper each copy becomes."

There is an underdeveloped *book buying and book reading culture* among South African students. Students are willing to spend student loans and personal funds on private

items such as expensive clothing, but textbooks are merely seen as a means to an end and as such do not have value in themselves.

*Copyright* remains one of the most debated issues in publishing and more so in academic publishing, “as rights-holders (publishers and authors) and users (primarily librarians, educationists and students) seem set to challenge each other” (Evans & Seeber 2000:9). This challenge revolves mainly around copyright protection in terms of accessibility of information, and the levels of *photocopying* and fair use. “Photocopying is the single biggest threat to higher education publishing in this country. It is common on all campuses, amongst both department staff and students, and has been steadily undermining higher education publishing for years. It deprives the publisher of sales and the author of royalties” (Van Rooyen 2005:333).

*Student and lecturer profiles* have changed and these profiles require changes in the nature of textbooks. These include a consideration of the language of instruction; the level of comprehension and literacy with which students approach higher education; and the need for transformation in the author pool. To address the needs of a changing student population it is vital that both authors and publishers actively try to include black writers on their publications.

Academics have to ‘publish or perish’. Unfortunately this imperative does not refer to the publishing of textbooks or teaching material. According to the current DoE policy on *research output funding*, the publication of (a chapter in) a textbook does not qualify for funding – the emphasis is on accredited journals and, to a lesser degree, (chapters in) scholarly books. Textbooks therefore do not have a high profile in this research-output-driven environment: “Academics ... need to publish to receive recognition and advance their careers, and thus face an acute shortage of time [to write textbooks]” (Baverstock 2002:16).

In recent years the student population seemed to be growing due to available *student loan options*. However, these loan schemes are running into financial trouble as students are failing to pay back their loans, thereby limiting the funding of future students and an eventual decline in the student population. Moreover, student loan schemes do not ring face funds for the purchase of textbooks, and actually encourage students to buy textbooks second-hand.

Various *external role-players* in the public domain (e.g. the departments of Education, Arts and Culture, Trade and Industry, and Labour) and the private domain (e.g. the Publishers’ Association of South Africa, the Book Development Council, the Academic and Non-Fiction Authors’ Association and DALRO) impact directly or indirectly on the publishing industry. A discussion on the various policies and initiatives that influence the academic publishing sector falls beyond the scope of this article.

### **3.2 PROFILE OF THE ACADEMIC PUBLISHING SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Publishing in South Africa was pioneered by small family businesses and a handful of multinationals, with British publishers in particular making a real impression (Van Rooyen 1996:3). A brief profile of the current academic publishing sector in South Africa includes the following kinds of role-players:

- International agencies and distributors: Academic Marketing Services, Blue Weaver Marketing and Book Promotions.
- Multinational firms with local academic publishing units: Oxford University Press South Africa (OUPSA), the African branch of Cambridge University Press, Pearson Education SA, McGraw-Hill, Heinemann SA, and Lexis Nexis Butterworths (owned by Reed Elsevier). In the last two years Heinemann SA has shifted a large portion of its business towards publishing for the FET sector and Lexis Nexis Butterworths is a dominant publisher of local law and accounting publications. Pearson Education SA has increased its local publishing drive in higher education and FET and the company targets markets that need texts for bridging courses and adaptations from titles under well-known international imprints. OUPSA is one of the multinational companies with a well-established local academic publishing unit, which gained market share with the acquisition of the South African list of International Thomson Publishing (Gray 2000:176). McGraw-Hill is the most recent multinational to set up a local publishing unit, having advertised for a South African commissioning editor in January 2007 to commission local authors to adapt their international texts.
- Multinational firms without local academic publishing units that distributes international titles: John Wiley & Sons Ltd and Macmillan SA.
- Local academic publishing firms: Juta Academic and Juta Law, New Africa Books, Van Schaik Publishers and Protea Boekhuis. New Africa books sold their academic publishing list to Van Schaik Publishers early in 2008.
- University and research institution presses: Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Press, University of Cape Town (UCT) Press which is owned by Juta Academic, University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) Press, Witwatersrand University Press (WUP), Unisa Press and African Sun Media (ASM) at the University of Stellenbosch.

### **3.3 THE PHENOMENON OF SELF-PUBLISHING**

Self-publishing is the act of publishing work independently of a publishing house. It includes the action whereby an author undertakes all risk and responsibility for the publication of his or her work. It is also referred to as ‘author publishing’, ‘private publishing’ or ‘small-scale publishing’. “Self-publishing is what we call it when an author decides he does not need a publisher and simply handles the job himself” (Van Rooyen 2005:56).

From various sources, including Mathieu (1981), Appelbaum (1998), Wellington (2003), Higgs (2005) and Van Rooyen (2005), the following generic reasons for self-publishing were identified and classified:

*Financial incentives (royalties and sales)*

Some authors think that commercial publishers do not maximise sales and that they themselves could do it better and make more money. “Those [self-publishing] authors whose work has been published previously might wonder whether there is more money to be made, more rapidly, by publishing their own books instead of working through a publisher” (Mathieu 1981:241). On the other hand the profit motive is not necessarily strong enough to justify the money and energy that is needed to be invested in self-publishing.

*The author-publisher relationship*

Some authors may opt for self-publishing because of the obstacles involved in the relationship between content originators and commercial publishers. Publishers and authors tend to fall out over various issues, including the content, language editing (if the original meaning intended by the author was changed by a person external to the manuscript), royalties, price of the book, marketing and promotion and sales. These clashes are often the result of a combination of the author’s anxiety about the entire publishing process, his or her ego, a feeling of not being informed on decisions made about the publication and by a commissioning editor’s one-way communication (Davies 1995:152).

*Intellectual property / copyright*

Authors may also opt for self-publishing in order to prevent loss of control of their intellectual property. This reason is sometimes linked to the fact that the publisher does not explain the issue of rights or to the lack of a transparent relationship between publisher and author. Authors are becoming increasingly aware of the value of their intellectual property in a world in which small chunks of information are saleable in any format.

*Rejection versus recognition*

Sources claim that one of the most common motivators to self-publish is the rejection that an author has experienced on first submitting a manuscript for consideration to a commercial publisher. Decreasing numbers of readers and book buyers, and greater access to electronic information, makes academic publishing especially an increasingly risky business – publishers are therefore all the more cautious (Van Rooyen 1996:84).

On the other hand, publishing is part of the job description in the academic environment and more would-be authors are looking for alternative ways to get their name out there (Higgs 2005:7; Wellington 2003:4).

### *Technological advances*

Another generic reason cited for the increase in self-publishing is that it has become more affordable and accessible due to increased access to personal computers, desktop publishing (DTP) and new short-run print technology, most commonly print-on-demand (POD) (Higgs 2005:8). “Because of digital printing self-publishing has reached epidemic proportions” (Scott quoted in Kean 2004:22).

### **3.4 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SELF-PUBLISHING AND VANITY PRESSES**

“Certain people ... still consciously or unconsciously equate self-publishing with vanity publishing, and people in general also often confuse these very different publication processes” (Appelbaum 1998:193). A vanity press offers to publish an author’s work in return for payment from the author (Blake 1999:110; Van Rooyen 2005:59), and thus has no stake in the success of a book. It takes its money upfront by having the author pay all the costs of getting a manuscript into print – plus a generous sum that is pure profit for them. A vanity press is also likely to take a cut of the revenue from sales, and will charge the author for any copies he or she buys over and above the dedicated author copies stipulated in the contract. With a vanity press, the sole qualification for publication is the ability to pay – whether the book is good or bad (Cumiskey 2005). Distribution and marketing efforts by a vanity press are not very successful, as libraries, bookstores and book reviewers have learned to distrust publications from these imprints (Appelbaum 1998:89; Blake 1999:110; Poynter 2000:23; Cumiskey 2005). Vanity presses therefore do not undertake the promotion, marketing or distribution of books that they produce – this is left to the author.

Vanity presses are not the same as professional editing or production firms who assist a self-publisher with certain activities in the self-publishing process and charge a certain fee. These kinds of services are often procured by established publishing houses as freelance activities in the publishing process. A vanity publisher will go through the phases of editing, design, proofreading and put the author in contact with publicists or marketing opportunities, but they do not sell books.



#### 4 THE STANCE OF ACADEMIC BOOKSHOPS ON SELF-PUBLISHED TEXTBOOKS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

In order to conduct an empirical inquiry into the phenomenon of self-publishing in the academic environment, a systemic sample approach was used according to which the population is ordered or grouped in a directory, list or register (Uys & Puttergill 2003:111). In the case of academic bookshops a directory of these outlets was obtained from the South African Booksellers' Association (SABA). From the list 58 bookshops nationwide were identified as the sample for the academic bookshop questionnaire. Small, independent academic bookshops as well as individual branches of larger academic bookshop chains were included in the sample. One limitation of using this sampling technique is that independent academic bookshops that are not members of SABA were not contacted. A response rate of 43,1% was obtained from the academic bookshop sample. The questionnaire consisted of eight questions that either focused on the operations of the bookshop in relation to the self-published texts or on the relationship with self-published authors.

The literature review on self-publishing suggested that invoicing and supply is a particular challenge in the self-publishing environment, but the evidence obtained through the primary research prove otherwise. 85% of respondents indicated that *stock levels* of self-published titles is always influenced by student numbers and sales history but rarely by the invoicing and supply method or system of the self-publisher.

From the literature review it was speculated that bookshops sometimes *struggle to work with self-publishers* because each title and author is unique and there is no single system that allows for easy ordering of these titles for the students. However, 57,14% of bookshop respondents feel they do have a good relationship with self-published authors and 19,05% indicate they have a very good relationship with these authors. The positive response rate for this question is 76,19% and is evidence against perceptions reflected in the literature.

Closely linked to this, the literature review indicated that bookshops find it *problematic to sell self-published titles*, but 82,61% of respondents only sometimes or never find it problematic to sell these titles. Reasons for problematic sales include return policies, the quality of a book, and market related and administrative issues.

The most revealing discovery for commercial academic publishers derived from the questionnaire is that the largest portion of self-published sales (70% - 100%) are from titles in Business, Economics or Management Sciences, a field that is traditionally lucrative for commercial academic publishing firms. The second largest portion of self-published sales are in Medical, Nursing and Health Sciences, and Education – fields that require local focus and expertise and which are also traditionally lucrative

for publishing firms. The third largest portion of self-published sales is in Engineering and Information Technology. These are fields that are traditionally too expensive for commercial publishers to produce for a small market of students, yet self-published authors have found ways of producing these texts for their students. It can be deduced that self-publishing is increasingly taking place in academic fields where commercial publishers could start feeling threatened.

The literature review suggested that one of the main criticisms against self-published titles is the *quality of the final product*. The results of the bookseller questionnaire indicate that 52,17% of the respondents felt that the quality of self-published titles was good and only 13,04% felt that the quality was poor. A large number of respondents was indifferent about the quality of texts (34,78%).

It is sometimes taken for granted that *students*, who are the final users of textbooks, would give feedback on specific titles, be they commercially published or self-published, to a bookshop and its staff. But only 31,82% of bookshop respondents have, in fact, received any sort of feedback from students on the self-published textbooks they have in stock. When bookshops did receive feedback on self-published titles, 57,14% of the feedback was on the quality of the book (e.g. on being either very poor in comparison to commercial titles or of sufficient quality for its affordable price).

## 5 WHAT AUTHORS THINK AND FEEL ABOUT SELF-PUBLISHING

In order to collect primary data from authors a multistage cluster sample was compiled as it was impossible to obtain a complete list of the entire academic self-publishing population in South Africa, which is a numerically large and geographically spread population. A snowball sample that consisted of different stages (Uys & Puttergill 2003:112) also helped to establish the final sample for academic self-publishing lecturing staff or authors. Determining the final sample for the academic self-publishing lecturing staff consisted of the following stages:

- In the academic bookshop questionnaire, bookshop respondents were asked to list some of the self-published titles carried in their shops. From this feedback 36 titles and authors were identified.
- Higher education institutions were contacted with the request to supply their lists for prescribed textbooks for 2006. From this feedback 31 titles and authors were identified. It was difficult to obtain this information from institutions as each institution has a different administrative department in charge of the list, often including the library or the campus bookshop. It appeared that no one person or department was able to issue such a final list. This situation is a serious threat for the commercial academic publishing sector.

- The National Library of South Africa (NLSA) supplied a list of all registered self-published titles for 2006. These are titles registered under the 0620-prefix ISBN. From this list 11 academic titles and authors were identified.

The final sample consisted of 64 respondents. The questionnaire contained 26 questions that solicited biographical data, title specific data and process-specific data relating to self-publishing.

The aggregated data indicates that the largest portion of *self-published academic authors* is employed at senior levels within their departments: Senior Lecturer (25%), Professor (29,17%) and Associate Professor (8,33%) – however, Heads of Department do not rank high on the list. Authors employed in these positions can influence the titles prescribed for an academic year, because they are up to date with curriculum development and change and have the inclination to write and publish textbooks.

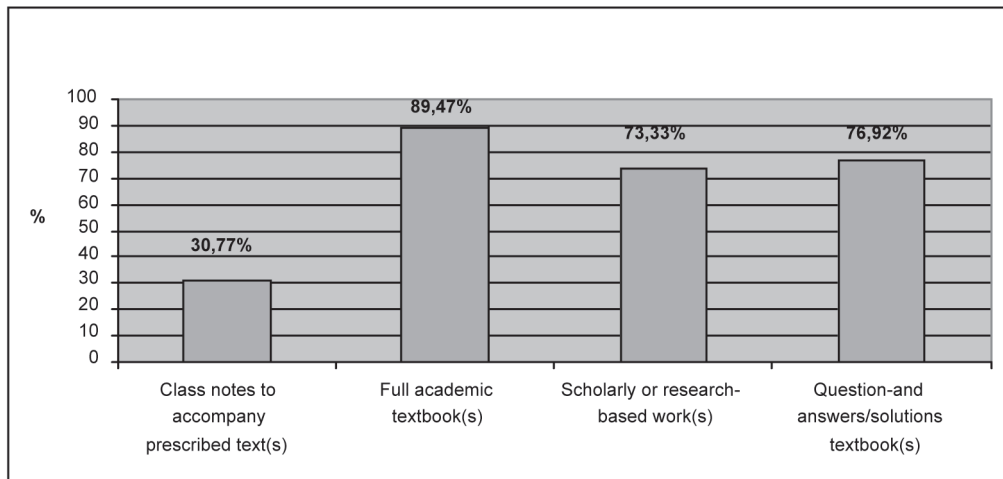
According to the survey results 45,83% of the respondents are *employed in the Faculty of Business, Economics or Management Sciences*. In this instance there is a correlation with the response by academic bookshops, which indicated that the largest portion of their sales of self-published titles is from fields in this Faculty. This provides further proof that self-publishing is taking place in the traditionally lucrative fields for commercial publishers.

Five statements about the *meaning of self-publishing*, derived from secondary sources, were listed and the respondents requested to indicate whether they were ‘true’ or ‘false’. The motivation for this question was to test whether these statements are based on outsiders’ perceptions, assumptions and anecdotes of self-publishing or on the experience of self-publishing authors themselves. The following feedback was received:

- To write, edit, print and sell your own book. TRUE 96,15%
- To take all risks involved in publishing your own work. TRUE 88,46%
- To act as publisher, marketer, distributor and warehouse for your own work. TRUE 84,62%
- To protect your intellectual property from other people (including publishers). TRUE 61,54%
- To promote yourself by making your own ideas available through your own publishing process. FALSE 53,85%

The last statement was somewhat contentious, and it was only by a narrow margin that this statement was indicated as false – 46,15% of respondents felt it was true that self-publishing implies that you promote yourself. This statement testifies to the vanity aspect often associated with self-publishing. Only two respondents indicated that self-publishing implies creating the possibility of receiving financial returns for one’s efforts and ideas.

51,85% of the survey respondents have published 1–2 titles and two respondents indicated that they had self-published more than 10 titles each. Most respondents had only self-published one title. The nature of these texts is indicated in Fig 1:



**Figure 1: Nature of texts self-published by academic authors**

The literature review indicated that the *processes* of marketing, promotion and distribution are difficult for self-published authors. The findings from the literature review were substantiated by the findings from the author questionnaire. Printing specifically seems to be the only process that is currently still outsourced by self-publishers.

Because marketing, promotion and distribution prove difficult for self-published authors, they often resort to *selling books directly* to students. The perception that direct selling occurs because self-published authors feel they can make more profit is undermined to some extent. Responses from academic self-publishers were closely divided, with 42,31% of respondents indicating that they do sell books directly to students and 57,69% of respondents indicating that they do not sell directly to students (but also because some institutions do not allow this practice).

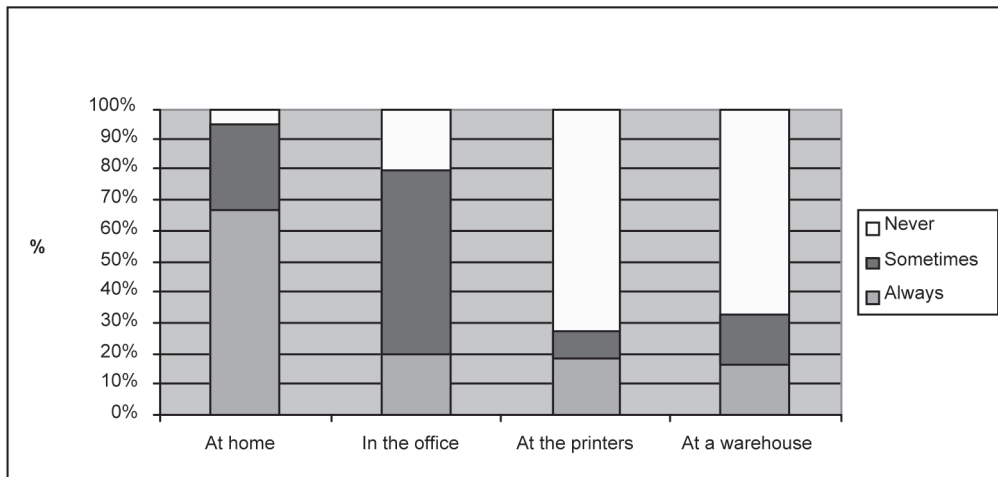
51,85% of respondents indicated that they were highly satisfied and 44,44% indicated that they were very satisfied with the *quality* of the finished product. While one cannot ignore the possibility that authors may be biased in favour of their own work, there is a positive correlation between the author response rate and the bookshop response rate on quality.

The perception exists that it is very *expensive to self-publish*. However, printing, as is the case with commercial publishing, is considered by self-publishing authors as the most expensive aspect of publishing a book. According to the questionnaire feedback

other processes are not considered expensive and this could be because self-publishers cut stages of the traditional publishing processes (for example in-depth copy-editing and multiple proofs).

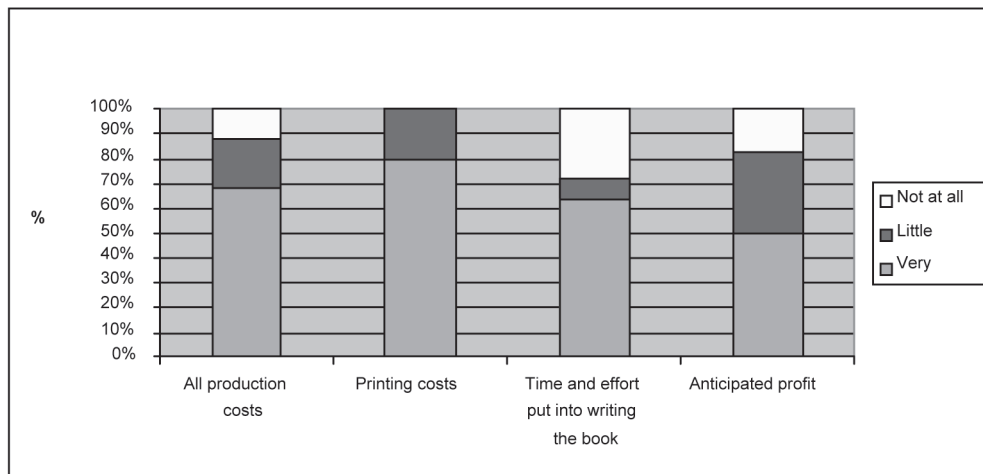
42,31% of the respondents indicated that they order *print runs* larger than 1 000 copies, which is a clear indication that self-published texts are not simply material published for small niche markets, but rather academic textbooks that are being prescribed for courses and subjects with viable student numbers. (It became clear that self-publishers understand the financial advantages of lithographic printing - the higher the print-run the lower the unit cost per copy). Actual *copies sold* in the first year did not exceed 500 per title.

There is a perception that once a book is delivered from the printer, the lounges and garages of the self-publishers are stacked with *stock* of their book. This general perception has been proved true as indicated by the feedback on a question on *stock* keeping (Fig.2):



**Figure 2: Where self-published stock is kept**

From the survey it became clear that self-publishers determine the *selling price* of their products in much the same way as commercial publishers do (see Fig. 3). 50% of respondents indicated that their anticipated profit is very important in determining the selling price of the book. This result undermines the perception that self-publishers' main aim is financial reward and profit.



**Figure 3: How price was determined by the author of self-published texts**

64% of respondents *approached a commercial publisher* (or are planning to) because they think it would be the best way to get their books marketed, to reach a bigger market or to get other higher education institutions involved in the adoption of the text. Those who then made the decision to self-publish did so because the commercial publishers were either not interested in their manuscripts or because they were disappointed with the royalties on offer.

The authors who did not approach commercial publishers with their manuscript, provided the reasons for this decision: commercial publishers are out to make an excessive profit; they cannot handle local sales as well as the author; the cost of production will be too high for commercial publishers to consider publication; the professional publication process would take too long; they would lose editorial control; or commercial publishers have little interest in manuscripts with a small market.

In an open-ended question self-published authors could provide *reasons for self-publishing*. The answers were grouped in the same way as the reasons deduced from the literature reviews.

#### *a) Financial incentives*

Reasons provided by the correspondents include a second income with the profit going where it belongs (to the author); financial independence as authors obtain a higher income than through a commercial publisher; instant return on investment as there is no long wait for royalties to be paid. According to some respondents it seems unfair that commercial publishers should receive the main financial benefit from their hard work.

*b) The author-publisher relationship*

Some authors feel that they received no helpful assistance from commercial publishers, while others want to keep control of the entire process in order to ensure timely updates and new editions.

*c) Intellectual property and copyright*

Many self-published authors indicated that they are unhappy with the fact that commercial publishers want full copyright of their intellectual property.

*d) Rejection versus recognition*

From the feedback it becomes clear that self-publishing bestows a sense of personal pride and achievement in the authors and that they enjoy writing and saying what they want without the interference of gatekeepers.

*e) Technological advances*

Contrary to speculation in the secondary sources technology does not seem to be a deciding factor for self-publishers. Maybe print-on-demand and desktop publishing technology is no longer viewed as new and unique, but rather simply part of the higher education do-it-yourself environment.

*f) Community service*

An additional and new reason, not mentioned in the secondary sources, for academic self-publishing became clear from the author questionnaire: Academic self-publishing authors like to help their students with an affordable appropriate text and to add value to the larger academic community with their publications.

92% of respondents indicated that they would self-publish again in future because they have gained valuable publishing experience; they did not encounter major problems with the processes involved; and they enjoyed the challenge and do-it-yourself feel of self-publishing. They also feel that publishers are making an unreasonable profit from other people's work and prefer to keep ownership of their intellectual property. The sense of community service is growing among them and they are prepared to self-publish again in order to fulfil the need of their students for specific learning material.

## 6 CONCLUSION

If more academics decide to self-publish in the future, commercial academic publishers will have to deal with a shrinking pool of new authors and limited market expansion. Although it may not pose an immediate threat, there is increased availability of self-publishing services and support for academic authors that could result in the expansion of the alternative sector of self-published local academic textbooks. The study made it clear that self-publishing exists within the academic community, that it transpires as a result of various conditions and that it does impact on the potential market share of commercial academic publishers.

The following evidence of interesting and significant patterns was recorded: academic self-publishing is as active a part of the publishing industry in South Africa as is general or trade self-publishing and academic self-publishers enjoy self-publishing for the same reasons that authors in the trade sector do.

New factual discoveries were made and the existence of hypothesised phenomena was confirmed: academic self-publishing is most prevalent in academic fields that are traditionally lucrative for commercial publishers; the quality of self-published academic textbooks remains a debatable issue; there is increased availability of services and support for self-publishers that could lead to an increase in the phenomenon itself; and marketing and distribution remain a challenge for self-publishers.

New interpretations recorded include: academic self-publishers have a sense of community concern for the needs of their students and for the scholarly environment itself; and commercial academic publishers in South Africa could possibly not be addressing author needs efficiently which contribute to the increased occurrence of the phenomenon of self-publishing.

“Publishing is not as remote and magical as it sometimes seems to aspiring writers” (Higgs 2005:9). If the aim of publishing remains the communication and sharing of ideas, then there certainly is a place for self-publishers in distributing their knowledge. This is especially so in the academic environment where new thoughts and ideas eventually lead to more research, innovation and subsequently growth and prosperity of a nation. Commercial academic publishers have defined their business and there can be no argument that there is some potentially publishable material that does not fit into the mainstream requirements of these publishers. But material not accepted by commercial academic publishers should not be considered unworthy of publication, but rather catering for a different market with different needs. In the higher education environment of South Africa there are increasingly more specialised niche subjects and courses. Along with the growth of these specialised markets, there is room for people who want to publish and market their own books.



“Is self-publishing going to grow? Without a doubt. As technology makes it easier and easier to self-publish and as authors want more and more control over how their intellectual property is managed, marketed and distributed and sold ... watch this space” (Hackney 2006:138).

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