

## **BBC Radio 4: [Money Box; Self-Publishing](#)**

*Originally broadcast on 22 June 2022*

Do you want to write a book? How would you go about publishing one? Many people now look away from traditional publishing and towards self-publishing. Whether it's doing it all yourself or using hybrid publishers, which offer publishing services for a cost, it can be a risky and potentially expensive option for would be authors.

Felicity Hannah is joined by our panel of experts to discuss self-publishing and to hear experiences, comments and questions from callers.

Panel:

Nicola Solomon - Chief Executive - Society of Authors

Adam Croft - Author of The Rutland Crime series.

Producer: Paul Waters and Drew Hyndman

Editor: Beatrice Pickup and Justin Bones

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### **My response**

On the 22nd June, 2022, a fascinating radio programme was broadcast on BBC Sounds, all about self-publishing. I am so happy to finally see self-publishing given the limelight it deserves, and it is clearly gaining interest, having been discussed in such detail on BBC Radio and suggested to be the future of publishing in an article written by four industry experts (see here). The presenter of the programme was Felicity Hannah, joined by Nicola Solomon, the Chief Executive of the Society of Authors, and Adam Croft, a prolific and successful self-published crime author, who, after 12 years of hard graft, briefly beat JK Rowling on the bestsellers chart on Amazon. I found this program so interesting that I wanted to pick apart the most important points of the discussion and share it with you.

I always find it interesting to hear about self-publishing from different perspectives because everyone seems to have a different view on it. Of course, my mission is to make one view universal: self-publishing is about staying in control and breaking down the gatekeepers of publishing. Anyone can self-publish. But can anyone do it successfully?

First and foremost, an author who is new to self-publishing needs to learn their options. They need to do their research and get advice. During this radio program, it was mentioned that there is a lot of free advice out there. At Softwood, we offer free, no-obligation Zoom consultations because we feel that it is a necessity for authors to know what they're looking for and what is available to them.

The radio program began by talking to an author about her publishing options. She was toying between traditional publishing and self-publishing but was told that, when self-publishing, she would have to outsource her printing to China or Italy at a high cost and would have to print thousands of books to make a profit. This, quite understandably, deterred her from self-publishing, which I thought was a real shame, since she clearly hadn't been told the full picture. You do not need to print thousands of books, and you don't need to outsource to printers abroad. There are plenty of printers in the UK alone who are dedicated to printing sustainably and are significantly cheaper. Printing locally also cuts down on carbon emissions

caused by shipping, and with readily available print-on-demand services, printing is arguably more environmentally friendly than ever before. Furthermore, most printers accept minimum print runs of 100 books, but some offer print runs of only 10 books!

There are three routes to publishing: traditional publishing, self-publishing, and hybrid publishing. With traditional publishing, the publisher does all the work for you, and you sign over the copyright of your work to them. However, it is notoriously difficult to get a publishing contract this way (often equated to winning the lottery!) and, nowadays, authors are expected to have their own thriving social media presence, showing that they are already in touch with their audience. With hybrid publishing, an author essentially pays to be ‘traditionally’ published. Hybrid publishing is often referred to as ‘vanity publishing’, which the panel on this program noted as a ‘cruel phrase’. But with self-publishing, the author owns their own copyright, hires in professionals to do the more technical parts of the process, and gets 100% of the profits.

Nicola Solomon spoke at length about hybrid publishing, warning against it, and suggested that self-publishing would offer far more control and royalties. I found myself wanting to add that it also gives you much more flexibility – there is a plethora of options available within self-publishing.

Adam Croft explained that self-publishing, or “independent publishing” is a business. This form of publishing either helps you build a portfolio for work you already do, giving you PR opportunities and a product to sell, or is a business in itself. An author wanting to self-publish successfully must think of themselves as the publisher – they are running a business. And, as with any new business, the author needs to learn, do their research, and invest in professional services and promotion. But authors shouldn’t expect immediate profit, just like with any new business.

While it is true that not all authors have the knowledge or expertise to execute every step of the self-publishing process, like every other business, they need to outsource to professionals, and Adam Croft pointed out that this would end up being cheaper than using a hybrid model and would offer more control.

What I found most interesting about this program was that discussions around self-publishing always came back to the concept of control. A few authors were interviewed or mentioned on the show, saying that they would turn to self-publishing as their first choice because it was “the most fulfilling” or because it offered the most control. At Softwood, this is our slogan: ‘Putting you in control of your publishing journey’. It is so important to us that authors always feel in control of their manuscript and publishing journey, financially and creatively, and self-publishing offers just that.

**MADDY GLENN**

**Director**

**Softwood Self-Publishing**

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