



Online Publishing current scenario

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Abstract:

This article attempts to unravel the current scenario in online publishing. Advent of internet has brought with it tremendous changes in the publishing industry. What was hitherto an industry dominated by publisher has been thrown open to one and sundry. Online publishing has brought with it a reach which was hitherto never been imagined. In the normal course it would take atleast a year to publish a manuscript. Online publishing has managed to bring this time down to a few weeks / at most a month. This article attempts to discuss the positives and perils of online publishing scenario.

Introduction:

Previously publishing scenario (conventional ones) had the following stakeholders:

1. Author
2. Publisher
3. Reader
4. Third party stake holders

Before the advent of online publishing scenario, authors were after publishers to publish their work. The entire process went through a complicated process which consumed lots of time. Of Course it had stood the test of time. Usually it took about a year¹ for the entire process to be completed and the book to reach the end user i.e the reader. Changes occurring now are rather rapid that lots of things could have changed within the course of year. In this changing scenario a wait of one year for a book to reach the reader is considered rather too much. On top of it the present day authors are too restless and are not prepared to wait and grind through their way out of the maze of publishing houses.

Even money made as royalty is not commensurate with the efforts of the authors who spend lots of time generating a manuscript. Statistics reveal that majority of the books published by reputed publishers fail to make at least 80% of the projected revenue. The author is just left with 10-20% royalty from the proceeds to content with. Major deterrent of conventional publishing is that the copyright of the work is transferred to the publisher with the author getting only a percentage of the sale proceed.

Advantages of online publishing:

Major advantage is the time factor. The time taken for the author's work to become public is just few months. There is virtually no delay on the part of the publisher. It is also easy to market electronic versions of the product. Modern hand helds and E book readers add to the charm of electronic document. The current text books in otolaryngology are outdated because it takes nearly 4-5 years to bring out a text book by which time considerable amount of literature would have been added to the knowledgebase. Online publishing is the only reliable way to stay current at affordable rates.

Copyright issues pertaining to online publishing has become fairly simple with the introduction of creative commons copyright ². This helps the author to release his work in public domain entire free of cost with the advantage of keeping the copyright to himself instead of handing it over to the publisher. Classic creative commons license has a three layer design:

Layer I: This layer is the traditional legal jargon which the advocates are conversant with. This layer is also known as "Legal Code Layer"

Layer II: This is also known as the Common's deed. Since majority of creators are not conversant with legal jargon this layer caters to simplifying the legal jargon. This should be considered as handy reference tool for licensors and licensees, summarizing and expressing some of the most important terms and conditions. Simplistically quoted this is actually the legal jargon which could be understood by the lay public.

Layer III: This is actually a machine readable deed which could be identified by search engines and indexing softwares.

"Taken together, these three layers of licenses ensure that the spectrum of rights isn't just a legal concept. It's something that the creators of works can understand, their users can understand, and even the Web itself can understand." (Courtesy Creative commons official website)

Processes that an author has to undergo to get his work published in the classic traditional way:

Author

Publisher

Editor

Reviewer

Copy Editor

Printer

Image showing various steps a conventional publishing needs to go through

Online publishing is getting attractive due to:

1. Falling Hardware prices
2. Availability of internet facilities and bandwidth at affordable rates
3. Open source software
4. Free online storage repositories

Computer hardware prices are falling steadily. Hardware which were hitherto not affordable has become affordable suddenly. Internet penetration is also adequate these days.

Free online storage repositories like:

1. Skydrive ³
2. Google drive ⁴
3. Scribd ⁵

4. Online institutional repositories (Eprints, Dbase etc)⁶

These have added to the charm of online publishing. These repositories not only provide free space but also reliable and secure storage services. Most of these services are free.

Open source software that help in online publishing:

Open journal system:

Open Journal Systems (OJS) is a journal management and publishing system that has been developed by the Public Knowledge Project through its federally funded efforts to expand and improve access to research. List of academic journals using Open journal system ⁸. This list is actually a comprehensive list of journals using this software. This is actually the best software for journal sites.

Open Monograph press:

This software is used for online publishing of manuscripts and E Books. OMP ⁹ is an open source software platform for managing the editorial workflow required to see monographs, edited volumes and, scholarly editions through internal and external review, editing, cataloguing, production, and publication. OMP will operate, as well, as a press website with catalog, distribution, and sales capacities.

Otolaryngology online e publishing ¹⁰:

This Otolaryngology e book publishing service was started with the intention of giving a platform for budding authors from the field of otolaryngology to keep their publications going. Books presented to this platform will be published after going through review process.

Wordpress blogs that can be converted to journal publishing sites:

Wordpress blog with annotum theme is a very useful adjunct to online journal publishing. More and more journal sites are being created using wordpress free blogs with annotum theme¹¹.

This is one classic example of journal site built on annotum wordpress theme.

<http://entscholar.wordpress.com/>.

Conclusion:

Online publishing scenario is rather exciting. With the sheer number of open source software available for this purpose it is all the more important for publishing otolaryngologists to explore these avenues.

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