THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE EDITOR IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL PUBLISHING

A thesis submitted to the
Kent State University Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for University Honors

by

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May, 2017
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing my Senior Honors Thesis has been a wonderful and challenging experience for me. I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Dr. Don-John Dugas, for his patience and guidance through developing this project. I would also like to thank my father, Ed Gosney, for introducing indie publishing to me as a topic that I enjoyed researching. I also thank him for the connections I was able to make with independent authors and editors whom I interviewed in my research. I would like to thank each of them – Ellen Campbell, Nick Cole, Ted Fauster, David Gatewood, Therin Knite, J. M. Madden, Samuel Peralta, Chris Pourteau, E. J. Stevens, Kevin G. Summers, and H. W. Vivian – for their willingness to share their publishing experiences through these interviews. I also thank the members of my Honors Thesis Committee – Claire Culleton, Janet Leach, and Dr. Susan Sainato – for their willingness to participate and give excellent feedback on my thesis and oral defense.

Lastly, I would like to thank my friends and family who supported me during the writing of this thesis and my entire academic career thus far.
INTRODUCTION

Rapid technological change is constantly altering the publishing industry. One of the most significant responses to change has been self-publishing. In the past, if an author chose to self-publish her work, she had to pay to have copies printed and then hope she could sell them on her own (and maybe even make a profit). Today, companies such as Amazon provide services that enable books to be published digitally. Books can then be purchased digitally for devices such as the Kindle and, at no cost to the author, hard copies of books may also be printed and shipped on demand. Although a stigma regarding quality still remains for junior authors, this technological and practical shift has transformed the publishing industry, in general, and for popular fiction in particular.

That more and more rising authors are choosing to self-publish and forego the traditional publishing houses raises many questions about the future state of jobs within the publishing industry. Although famous authors will continue to publish works traditionally, less-famous authors wishing to avoid the gatekeeping obstacles of traditional publishing and desirous of independently selling quality work that can compete with traditionally published have the option to seek out and work with freelance editors and artists. The rise of self-publishing has led to an increase in demand for editors. This creates the opportunity for authors to network directly with editors or, in other instances, small digital publishing companies. An editor with the necessary skills and qualifications is able to make money in this way without working for a large publishing house, which is an extremely competitive career. Instead, she can run her own
freelance editing business and make contacts through upcoming authors and digital publishing companies.

Observing the changes in the publishing industry brought on by the rapid evolution in technology and rise of digital publishing reveals that one must also assess the impact this has on the role of editors. Editor-author relationships have always been a key component in the success of a work. One might assume that editors are not involved with digitally published authors, but that is not the case. Indeed, although some self-publishing authors choose not to work with editors for various reasons, others prefer to do so in order to assure that what they publish adheres to higher standards of quality.

The rise of self-publishing has affected editorial occupations in a way that necessitates further research on the subject. This study examines the role editors play in the world of digital publishing in 2017 – a subject understudied in the assessment of one review: “The motivation and working practices of editors, and the name of their associated client base, have been under-researched” (Baverstock 44). To do this, I surveyed independent authors and editors in an attempt to unlock greater understanding of the role and qualities of independent editors in relation to independent authors.

“Previous research has addressed the role of independent editors in the book publishing industry, although this was prior to the rise of self-publishing which provided an added impetus to this form of work” (Baverstock 44). The purpose of this study is to address the role of editors in an indie publishing world.

Examining the rise of digital publishing and analyzing the role of an editor within it will broaden understanding of the field and its viability for career opportunities beyond
traditional big publishing houses. Working with self-publishing authors and small independent publishing houses is a great way to start an editing career. Studying what freelance editors do today, including the requirements of a freelance editor in relation to digital publishing, will be beneficial for those wishing to begin a career in editing. This research will support the conclusion that editors continue to have a place in the world of digital publishing, and that there are more options out there for people hoping to pursue careers in editing.
LITERATURE REVIEW

The World of Digital Self-Publishing

The main technological advance that spurred the growth of digital self-publishing is the e-book, the most popular format of which is the Amazon Kindle. Amazon’s release of the Kindle in 2007 rocked the publishing industry. During its release in November of that year, the devices sold out in only five and a half hours (Carreiro 220). The e-book has “arguably caused the greatest transformation to the long-established publishing industry since Gutenberg and his printing-press” (220). This disruptive technology has not made print books obsolete by any means, but more and more readers are choosing it. The term “electronic book” covers a range of media, including “software, hardware, or content: ‘In other words, there is no single technology that defines the e-book in the way that paper and binding defines the traditional book,”’ (221). Defining the e-book is imperative for examining its effects on the publishing industry. Authors Vasileiou and Rowley conducted a study “in which they solicited all of the current definitions of an e-book in an effort to identify the common concepts and themes within these descriptions and from there construct a working definition” (221). Their two-part definition is as follows:

An e-book is a digital object with textual and/or other content, which arises as a result of integrating the familiar concept of a book with features that can be provided in an electronic environment. E-books, typically have in-use features such as search and cross reference functions, hypertext links, bookmarks, annotations, highlights, multimedia objects and interactive tools. (221)
The first part of the definition can be seen as stable because “it focuses on persistent characteristics, while the second is dynamic and will need to be revised regularly” (221). This revision will be necessary because of the constant change in technologies over time. This definition of the e-book is important in understanding where the technology currently stands in its functions and capabilities and how it is able to affect the publishing industry through the integration of the traditional book and electronic media. E-book reader devices “may mark the first steps toward a new kind of literary object that combines the physicality of the printed book with the lightweight efficiencies of software” (221).

This new technology opened the floodgates for an outpouring of writing that was previously kept from the public by the big publishing houses, which effectively served as gatekeepers. Today, an ever-increasing percentage of this content is self-published, which Stehlik defines as:

[A book] in which the author or authors initiate the creation, production and distribution of a title and therefore have control over the process; as opposed to a contract with a commercial publisher which may include advance payments but also involves deadlines, restrictions and guarantees of minimum sales that the writer may have no control over. (Stehlik 54)

Although “private publication was the norm in the time of highly regarded and popular authors such as Charles Dickens, Mark Twain and Jane Austen,” self-publishing in the twentieth century was neither popular nor respected; the technological advances of the last decade changed all that (Stehlik 54). “Publishers can be seen as a ‘gatekeeper’ by
providing ‘a service to readers, since presumably only the best books are published” (Carreiro 226). However, “some might contend that many worthy books are turned away and never see the light of day” (226). Self-publishing has enabled a flooding of content, previously deemed unpublishable by the strict gatekeepers, to reach a wide audience of readers. Before Amazon and similar online publishing platforms, self-publishing authors would be on their own in the creation and marketing of their works, also having to pay usually hefty fees to have copies of their books printed for them to try to sell on their own. In short, it was not a very desirable route for publishing books: “For most authors, the decision to self-publish…is a decision of last resort and their only way into the world of published writers” (Di Leo 23). The technological advances of the past decade have allowed books to be published digitally through online platforms, greatly driving down the cost of publishing.

Technology has drastically changed how books are published today, especially in self-publishing. Although distribution of the book online is free, there are potential costs involved with digital publishing. One of these costs includes purchasing an ISBN, which is recommended for any books being published in print form and can cost around $125 (Sattar). Other costs are optional in self-publishing, such as editing, design, formatting, and marketing. Authors seeking out these options for their books have three choices. One is to do all of this themselves, another is to hire freelance editors, etc., and the third option is to purchase these services from companies online. Various online publishing platforms offer publishing packages that involve various degrees of editing (Di Leo). Costs for such services can range from the hundreds to thousands (Sattar). So although
digital publishing is technically free, most authors will end up paying for some degree of assistance with their works.

Now supported by large digital companies such as Amazon that provide accessible platforms for publishing, self-publishing is becoming ever more central to the publishing industry. A variety of companies now offer many kinds of support; authors may now choose to purchase various services (Di Leo). These could include, but are not limited to, self-publishing packages provided by online companies, artists, and freelance editors, all of which help to improve the quality of the published work. The author chooses whether or not she will purchase outside help. This leads to a wide range of qualities that can be seen among self-published works. Still, “a DIY approach to writing and publishing does not necessarily assume a lower standard of quality, and does actually put the power and control over publishing back into the hands of authors rather than in the exclusive domain of large publishing houses” (Stehlik 54). This concept is revolutionary because, thanks to the current advances in the self-publishing industry, authors can now choose to have full creative control over their works, which is something traditional publishing companies do not allow, save for the most prominent authors.

Another cost-effective advance in digital publishing is the introduction of print-on-demand books. Authors no longer have to pay to print hundreds of copies of their books and hope to sell them. Now, services such as Amazon will print copies on demand whenever purchased, which reduces the costs the author has to pay. “This new technology allows publishers to print single copies of a title as it is sold (print on demand, POD)” (Haughland 3). “The text is saved in digital form, when a copy is ordered, a
service such as Lightning Print…prints a single copy and sends it to the buyer or bookstore” (3). This method is an efficient use of resources and is environmentally friendly. It also means that books need not go out of print, and publishers are no longer forced to make a choice between letting a title go out of print or producing and storing hundreds of copies, which can be a risky endeavor because of the possibility they do not sell enough to make a profit (3). Thanks to this POD technology, “Thousands and thousands of people whose work does not appear on the lists of traditional publishing houses are now published authors whose books are listed in the Books in Print database, on Amazon, and therefore available to readers everywhere. And it’s big business” (3). For example, “the largest of the major POD houses, AuthorHouse, as of May 2006, claims to have more than 33,000 books in print. Lulu.com, which does not charge for posting content, adds 3000 titles a month” (3). Ads for other POD servicing firms appear in publications such as Writers Digest, the New Yorker, and The New York Times, to name a few (4). POD is unique because it uses the newest technologies to produce one of the oldest forms of media: a printed book.

There are three main types of publishing models that incorporate both e-books and POD, all of which have different business models. The first is traditional royalty publishers. In his analysis of contemporary book publishing, John B. Thompson explains that “Publishers today are essentially content-acquiring and risk-taking organizations oriented toward the production of a particular kind of cultural commodity” (Haughland 4). Publishers purchase rights to use content and then mold it into something they can sell enough of to make a profit (4). “Publishers compete in two markets – the market for
content (finding the best content for the lowest price) and the market for customers (selling books to readers)” (4). Publishers are not the only ones involved in the book-making process, but they often are “the organization whose reputation and economic well-being rests on the success of the book” (4). From Thompson’s analysis, book publishers add value to the product in six ways:

1) Content acquisition (selecting manuscripts), 2) investment and risk-taking (speculatively purchasing rights), 3) content development (editing/design), 4) quality control, 5) management/coordination of the publication process, which would include making arrangements for warehousing and distribution, and 6) sales and marketing (making potential readers aware of the book). (5)

Although there is much value in the work of traditional publishers, they function as “gatekeepers” – choosing the content they will publish and basing the continued success of their enterprise on the books they produce.

The second type of publishing is what has become known as POD subsidy publishing. POD publishers “do not acquire content (they don’t buy rights) or take risks (they don’t invest in the books they publish)” (Haughland 5). In this model, “authors provide digital content and pay a publisher to produce and distribute books as they are ordered” (5). “The publisher adds significant value to the product in only one area (rather than six) – management/coordination of the publishing process” (5). Such publishers do not judge quality or reader interest in selecting content, nor do they edit or market the books unless the author pays them to do so (5).
Self-publishing is a publication model of its own. In this method of publishing, the author and the publisher are one and the same. “Self-publishing authors contract for all production services themselves. They apply for an ISBN and sell books directly to readers, stores, or distributors and retain all sales income” (Haughland 6). For this reason, self-publishing can be worth the “risk” to authors who may have faced many rejections from traditional publishers. Unlike their counterparts who engage in subsidized publishing, self-published authors themselves retain all sales income. This is critical for authors who are able to build up an audience on their own and hit it big in sales by developing a paying readership. With the advent of new technologies and the increasing popularity of digital and POD books, greater numbers of self-publishing authors are finding success and making profits doing so because self-publishing allows them to invest however much they deem fit for the quality of their books, and then keep whatever profit they make, cutting out the middle men.

An analysis of the statistics behind self-publishing and traditional publishing provides evidence to support the claim that this type of publishing is both competitive and here to stay. Much of this is thanks to Amazon, which the May 2016 US Author’s Report finds accounts for eighty-five percent of all non-traditionally published book sales of any format in this country. Based on those numbers, the report concludes that “a comprehensive cross-sectional snapshot of Amazon.com’s sales, like the one we are describing here in our May report, is a definitive look at more than half of all daily US author earnings, period” (Author Earnings). In 2007, when the Kindle reader was introduced, “about one out of five books published was self-published. However, by
2013, the number would increase by over 600%” (Di Leo 24). In 2014, Publishers Weekly (PW) shared some interesting statistics found in that year’s Author’s Report. At that time, the Big Five traditional publishers (Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins, Macmillan Publishers, Penguin Random House, and Simon and Shuster) accounted for only sixteen percent of the e-books on Amazon’s bestseller list (Sargent). Perhaps surprising, self-published books represented thirty-one percent of e-book sales on Amazon’s Kindle Store, and were “dominating traditionally published authors in sci-fi/fantasy, mystery/thriller, and romance genres but they [were] also taking significant market shares in all genres” (Sargent).

The increase in self-publishing’s legitimacy parallels its growth. There are an “increasing number of titles that are seen as equivalent to any commercial publication in terms of quality, editing, peer review and production values” (Stehlik 54). Commentators have suggested that “the self-publishing market ‘has in the past three years become the fastest-growing segment in publishing’” (54). This is reinforced by the actions taken by large publishing companies in order to remain competitive in a shifting industry. For example, Penguin Books purchased a self-publishing service established in the US:

In acknowledging the success of self-publishing in the fiction consumer market, Penguin books have recognized that…self-publishing has moved into the mainstream of our industry over the past three years [2009-2012]. It has provided new outlets for professional writers, a huge increase in the range of books available to readers and an exciting source of content for publishers such as Penguin. (54)
The landscape for writers and freelance editors has changed dramatically. In January of 2010, Amazon announced that “it was ready to offer authors a seventy percent cut of the sales of e-books for Kindle customers, stating that writers would make more money publishing with the company, essentially encouraging authors to circumvent traditional publishers altogether” (Carreiro 230). The arrangement applied only to digital sales and not print versions, and writers could still sell to other vendors so long as they would match or lower the selling price for Amazon (230). “The only catch is that authors would have to sign basically all digital rights over to the company, ‘including the ability to turn text to speech and all future features of the Kindle’” (230). Despite these terms, many writers are finding that the benefits of a self-publishing platform such as Amazon in terms of revenue may in some circumstances outweigh the services of publishing companies. For example, best-selling marketing author Seth Godin “may choose to forsake traditional publishers and vendors altogether” (230). Godin made the decision to drop his publisher, Portfolio, to try and make it on his own (230). Having fostered direct customer relationships on his blog with nearly five hundred thousand followers, Godin has abandoned traditional publishing services because self-publishing allows him to generate larger profits (230). “He plans to sell future books as e-books, print-on-demand books, audio books, apps, PDFs, and pod casts” (230). Godin stated that even though much of the production will be done on his own, he “will hire a top-notch editor” (230).
Independent Publishing

Independent publishing is a term that encompasses both self-publishing and publishing through small, independent companies “dedicated to building niche presses” (Bell). According to self-publishing author Jessica Bell, “Indie publishing allows the readers who love exactly the kind of books you write to find you, even if that number is too small to interest a mainstream press” (Bell). As small as some niches are, some indie authors find readers in the hundreds, thousands, and even millions, all without the help of mainstream big publishing (Bell). Bell observes that “Mainstream publishers are driven by market trends, leaving a unique opportunity for indie authors to cater to niche markets and target audiences” (Bell). Self-publishing and small, independent presses provide products for readers that the Big Five US publishing companies do not. Although they target a mainstream audience, independent publishers often corner a niche in the market (like the popular steampunk genre and subgenres, for example) and build a dedicated fan base of readers. Bell sums up her argument in support of independent publishing thusly:

Indie publishing is not the only solution, but if you don’t get that big break because the mainstream publishers are only publishing a select number of books, and yours doesn’t happen to be what they’re looking for, then submitting your work to a small press, or publishing your books yourself, may be your best option. In fact, for some authors, even if a mainstream publisher is interested, indie publishing may still be the route you prefer to take. Indie publishing allows all writers of all stripes access to the world’s readers.
Top Online Publishing Companies and the Editorial Services They Provide

In the world of online publishing, there are three popular services that are the most widely used by authors. The first and largest of these is CreateSpace, an Amazon company that publishes books in both print and electronic versions. CreateSpace works with authors from beginning to end and has consultants available to answer questions throughout the entire process. CreateSpace is a highly-valued publishing platform because, unlike most publishing services that only provide their services as packages, it allows authors to select and choose which services they would like to use (Online Book Publishing Reviews). For instance, an author may choose to do her own editing or graphic design or outsource those efforts to freelancers instead of purchasing them through CreateSpace. The publishing company provides POD services and also allows for use of the Digital Text Platform service that, through Kindle Direct Publishing, prepares books for being published to Amazon’s Kindle Store (Pack 39). E-book and POD technology enables authors to avoid paying for a certain amount of copies of their books to be printed; “There are no setup fees or print minimums that force you to buy multiple copies, but CreateSpace requires you to buy and approve a proof copy” (39). (CreateSpace has since changed this policy and no longer requires that authors first purchase a proof copy).

Using CreateSpace, authors are able to sell their books through Amazon.com as well as through their own e-stores (such as a personal website) along with many other channels that are available for purchase. This gives authors considerable freedom in the distribution process. CreateSpace even allows authors to change the covers of their books
whenever they want to update its look. Although authors can pay for marketing services through CreateSpace, a work being published on Amazon alone is enough to greatly increase the chances of a book being viewed by consumers because of Amazon’s large customer base (Online Book Publishing Reviews). “CreateSpace works with the largest book distributors in the world. A solid reputation, flexible services, and expansive distribution options make CreateSpace an attractive online publishing option” (Online Book Publishing Reviews).

Another major online publishing company is Indiana-based AuthorHouse. Its parent company, Author Solutions, is a subsidiary of Penguin Random House. AuthorHouse is similar to CreateSpace in that it provides POD services to authors and freedom in formatting, but it also offers a unique feature that is the Booksellers Return Program (Online Book Publishing Reviews). This optional program provides retailers a risk-free way to stock books – a critical service in an industry in which brick-and-mortar booksellers have traditionally been “reluctant to carry books from unknown authors” (Online Book Publishing Reviews). This is a great option for writers who are trying to get established and wish to have their books sold through hard-copy retailers. For example, AuthorHouse allows for books to be published through popular retailer Barnes and Noble’s website. AuthorHouse is also able to format e-books to be sold on Amazon. Having published over 70,000 titles since 1997, AuthorHouse is a well-established and commercially successful online publishing company. Along with AuthorHouse, Author Solutions owns a host of other online publishing companies, such as Xlibris, Trafford Publishing, iUniverse, Palibrio, and Booktango (Online Book Publishing Reviews).
A third major company in online publishing is Lulu, a POD online self-publishing service that was founded in California in 2002, the same year that CreateSpace was founded. Like it and AuthorHouse, Lulu offers packages and individual resources, and it allows for outsourcing of cover art and editing (Online Book Publishing Reviews). Because Lulu is easy to use and navigate, it often attracts beginning self-publishing writers. It also allows books to be sold through other companies such as Amazon and Barnes and Noble. However, there are reduced royalties when selling through Amazon, which is not the case with Amazon-owned CreateSpace (Kindle Direct Publishing).

The Amazon-affiliated CreateSpace offers basic editorial services that can be purchased by authors choosing to use this platform to publish their work. The pricing for these services is based on word count and they range from $160 for the Copyediting package to $470 or more for the Editing Package Plus, which includes all services (CreateSpace). The editing packages start lower and then increase in cost as more services are added on for the higher-priced packages. The most basic service is copyediting, which provides help with technical aspects such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, and consistency. The second service is line-editing. This involves stylistic elements such as concept, intended word use, and tone. Higher-priced packages include both the copyediting and line-editing services as well as up to three rounds of editing. The professional editor will provide an Editorial Letter explaining the changes and recommendations he or she made, but the downside to this service is that there will be no direct communication between the author and the editor (CreateSpace). Also important to note is that the prices for these services go up by $0.047 per word when the manuscript
exceeds ten thousand words, which is typical given that the median length for all books is about 64,000 words” (Habash). This number was found by looking through books’ text stats until Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* landed in the middle, with 64,531 words (Habash). Although average word count varies greatly based on genre, the average word count being well above ten thousand can make editorial services through companies such as CreateSpace quite costly.

Much like CreateSpace’s editorial packages, AuthorHouse offers Core Editorial Services and Advanced Editorial Services. The former includes editorial assessment, line-editing, content editing, and cover copy polish (AuthorHouse). The latter packages give authors access to editors who look at “content and other stylistic considerations including content, plot, and pace” (AuthorHouse). The Development Editing Package costs $0.064 per word and provides content evaluation on the paragraph, chapter, and book levels. “For fiction works, the editor will analyze the readership and genre to determine whether the content is appropriate. Then, things such as plot, pace, characterization, and dialogue will be closely examined” (AuthorHouse). After this process of big-picture editing, the manuscript is examined for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. The Preferred Editorial Package charges at a rate of $0.084 per word and is the only AuthorHouse editorial service that offers “personalized interaction with an editorial consultant to discuss structural ideas, thoughts, and suggestions” (AuthorHouse). This is an opportunity to speak over the telephone to an editorial consultant about structural aspects of the book.
Lulu offers fee-based editing services as well, including content editing, editorial assessment, line editing, developmental editing, and cover copy polish (Lulu). All services are sold separately, but the Developmental Editing Package includes content editing to check for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation. The rate for this service is $0.081 per word. However, the developmental editing service is available only by recommendation from an initial editorial assessment that costs $499 (Lulu). The line-editing service provides help with spelling, grammar, punctuation, syntax, and word choice. This service also provides light recommendations for improving the readability for the work and costs $0.037 per word (Lulu).

None of the companies provide much information on the editors they use. CreateSpace subcontracts editorial work, and freelance editors are able to get work through the company if they pass an editing test and are selected. CreateSpace does not have a permanent staff of editors. Rather, it hires freelancers under contract to take on editing projects. The confidentiality of editors is of great importance to all three companies. An author has limited interaction with her editor, which the companies assert is in the interest of professionalism. An FAQ on the AuthorHouse website states:

Will I be able to talk with my editor?

Confidentiality is essential for an atmosphere of professional honesty. Just as we protect our authors’ privacy by prohibiting our editors from disclosing information from any editing done, we likewise do not disclose our editors’ identities. Maintaining this confidential relationship allows our editors to provide straightforward, honest feedback. Our contract with
our editors requires us to keep their identities private, so we can’t allow an
author to personally speak with his editor. If you have brief, specific
questions regarding your editing, you can call the editorial department at
800-839-8640.

Authors who use the AuthorHouse editorial services will not have any direct contact with
their editors and are not given much (if any) information about their experience and
qualifications. This can be off-putting for some authors because, although they do not
have to make the changes that the editor suggests, they are paying for a service about
which they know little.

Aside from using such editorial services provided by these companies, an
independent author has the option of directly hiring a freelance editor. Doing so gives an
author more advantages than these publishing services provide. Specifically, being able
to directly discuss a novel with an editor allows for clarification on many aspects such as
plot, characterization, spelling preferences, consistency issues, etc. Building a
relationship with an editor is also important for authors who publish books in series
because the editor would have prior knowledge of the series so that it will make sense to
them when editing. Although purchasing editing services directly from their publishing
company is convenient, such services never include direct communication between the
author and the editor. Authors can purchase the same services through independent
freelancers and gain the advantages that come from having a direct line of
communication with their editors.
CreateSpace, AuthorHouse, Lulu, and other self-publishing companies offer a wide range of purchasable editorial services that can help authors improve the quality of their work. These services are certainly useful, but they can often end up costing more than they should, considering their disadvantage to the author of the anonymous nature of their editing practices, and most professional authors do not use them.

**Social Media Networking and Reader Reviews**

Whether they publish their books through a company or themselves, authors rely on reviews to increase sales. In indie publishing, getting readers to leave reviews is vital to success (Sargent). So, how do authors gain readers and reviewers? The answer is social media. Social media is used by authors for “building relationships with [their] readers, showcasing [their] knowledge, and engaging [their] audience” (Social Media for Self-Publishers). Bypassing traditional publishers means that authors do not have the same access to marketing that they would have through such publishers. Therefore, authors are responsible for figuring out how they can market their works in order to generate sales, and the most cost-effective method of marketing is through social media. Use of these platforms is free, and authors can use them to create networks of fans. According to Beat Barblan, director of identifier services for Bowker, a bibliographic information service provider, “People are more aware now that they have to market their work, and work with an editor, convert the e-book to the right formats, and this has been an ‘aha moment’ for a lot of authors” (Palmer). She explains that the new process behind self-publishing is not “I’m handing over my document and I’m done,” but there is a lot more to the process.
that authors are now realizing they must take responsibility for (Palmer). *Publishers Weekly* has joined the marketing game by creating *Publishers Weekly Select* (now part of BookLife), a site that offers tips and articles on self-publishing that also provides an advertising service where authors can pay to have their books promoted through *Publishers Weekly*. Besides using services where authors pay to have their books advertised, social media is often free to use, and, if utilized properly, authors may be able to build an audience on their own through such means.

Blogging is critical to promotional efforts for independent authors, and the first step an author should take in creating an online presence is making a blog. “Blogs are [a] great way to connect with current readers, other self-published authors, and potential readers” (Social Media for Self-Publishers). Regular blogging on specialized topics helps authors attract attention. They can also use blogs to allow readers to sign up for email newsletters, which is a great way to keep fans involved and updated on an author’s current projects. Although gaining an audience is important, keeping it interested is equally important. Blogs can also be a way to interact with other independent authors. Inviting other authors to guest blog or review their works on a blog gives visibility through capturing the attention of another’s fan base. Still, a self-publisher needs to do more than just blog to gain readers. According to Diane Mancher, owner of One Potata Productions and co-creator of the Self-Publishing Book Expo, “It’s going to become second nature for authors to know they can’t just throw up a Web site and leave it at that – they have to add content to their Facebook page, Twitter account, and really keep those outlets active” (Palmer).
Creating an author presence (one that is separate from personal accounts) on popular social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter and then linking those to the author’s blog is another effective marketing tool. Gorham printing encourages authors to use these platforms to personally interact with readers and other independent authors. Barblan notes that, “There are all kinds of things to make people know your book exists – blogging, Twitter, giveaways” (Palmer). There are a variety of ways authors can interact with potential readers and reviewers on social media. Dan Blank, founder of author consultancy WeGrowMedia, advises writers, “Don’t focus on the number of your followers – it’s a flawed metric. The way social media is important is the quality of those followers and how engaged they are in what you have to say” (Palmer). According to Blank, quality is more important than quantity in terms of gaining followers on social media. Gaining visibility is important, but so is building a community with readers and other writers who will remain invested in an author’s work.

Using the social media platform for books, Goodreads, is another way for authors to build up their communities. Goodreads is a social media site dedicated solely to books. Through it, authors can “create discussions about books, create a virtual book club, and even share their own writing,” among other things (Social Media for Self-Publishers). Goodreads is a useful platform for authors because they can share their writing on it and invite other users to review it. In turn, authors may find it helpful to review works from other authors and make connections that way.

Reader reviews are one of the most important ways for independent authors to increase their sales. Reviews on bookselling sites such as Amazon or social media sites
such as Goodreads help authors gain recognition. An author’s books may also be reviewed by blogs and other websites as a way to market the work. Barbara Hoffert examines the differences between traditional print reviews and reader reviews and concludes that “The two coexist comfortably because they fill different needs” (Hoffert). Traditional book reviews are still important, but as more books are being sold online today, reader reviews have increased in number and significance. With social media and bookselling sites such as Amazon, reader reviews have become marketing tools for authors. Independent authors gain more recognition and are able to build up their audiences through positive reader reviews. The internet has allowed reader reviews to grow and change in the last decade, as “today’s raging stream of voices has radically altered the idea of reviewing” (Hoffert). Now that every reader is a potential reviewer, independent authors heavily rely on these reviews, which can either hurt or help their publishing efforts. When asked if he would trust a professional book critic over any single reader reviewer on LibraryThing, founder Tim Spalding said that he would trust the critic. However, he also says “But given a choice between her review and 100 LibraryThing reviews, I’d usually take the latter” (Hoffert). The number and diversity of reader reviews shows that they are significant in influencing potential readers and publishers. Still, there have been some controversies with reviews online, especially involving Amazon’s review policy which many independent authors have claimed as a hindrance for selling books.

Although Goodreads was purchased by Amazon in 2013, its review policy differs greatly from the one its parent-company uses, and book reviews directly posted to
Amazon’s website have been at the center of some controversies in the past few years (Kaufman). Although Goodreads allows anyone to review a book, even members of an author’s family, Amazon removes reviews from users it believes have a personal connection to an author. Amazon’s review policy that allows the deletion of certain reviews has “generated an uproar about what it means to review in an era when everyone is an author and everyone is a reviewer” (Streitfield). In past years, there were several publicized cases of writers paying for or, in some way, manipulating their reviews. Amazon’s attempt at controlling reviews has some positives, such as keeping reviews honest, which is important to its integrity as a company. “Nowhere are reviews more crucial than with books, an industry in which Amazon captures nearly a third of every dollar spent” (Streitfeld). For independent authors, however, aspects of Amazon’s review policy can be harmful. Self-publishing writers rely on a close network of readers and other writers as they begin publishing. Kiona Smith-Strickland details the experience of independent author and blogger Imy Santiago as she purchased an e-book and posted a review on Amazon. Santiago received a notice that her review was taken down, and eventually received an email from Amazon stating that they could not post her review because “[her] account activity indicates that [she] know[s] the author” (Smith-Strickland). Santiago replied that “she interacted with several authors through social media, but didn’t know any of them personally” (Smith-Strickland). Santiago is both an author and reader in the independent publishing community, where connections to authors are common and often fairly impersonal (Smith-Strickland). Amazon’s review policy disallows anyone from leaving a review they perceive as having a financial
interest or a close personal relationship with an author. Yet, “nothing in the Guidelines or FAQ mentions how Amazon determines who knows who” (Smith-Strickland). An email from Amazon told Santiago, “Due to the proprietary nature of our business, we do not provide detailed information on how we determine that accounts are related” (Smith-Strickland).

This type of review policy helps remove some biased reviews, but it may also remove honest reviews from readers who are involved in communities of independent publishers. “Its approach may not be fair to authors, who rely heavily on reviews to make sales on Amazon and through other online booksellers” (Smith-Strickland). If Amazon is using social media contacts to determine whom they perceive as having a personal relationship with an author, those who are self-published or published through small, independent publishing houses may be in trouble, as they mostly “rely on blogs and social media for much of their marketing” (Smith-Strickland). “Even for authors whose work is published by one of the big publishing houses, with all their clout and distribution, social media matters and reviews are crucial to online sales” (Smith-Strickland). As self-publishing continues to grow and Amazon evolves to better serve its consumer base, changes will be made to ensure that book reviews are fair and honest.

The FAQ for Amazon reviews was updated in 2015. Amazon states: “We recently improved our detection of promotional reviews which resulted in the removal of reviews, both new and old. While our enforcement has improved, our guidelines have not changed” (Smith-Strickland).
From Independent Editor to Project Manager

The increase in the number of independent or freelance editors mirrors that of independent authors. According to researchers Alison Baverstock, Robert Blackburn, and Marfuga Iskandarova, there exists a growing demand for publishing services within the self-publishing market. Indeed, they find that “There is evidence to suggest a growing awareness among self-publishing authors that professional editing is an essential component for increasing the chance that their work will sell” (Baverstock 43). They also note that “there are increasing opportunities for independent editors to provide publishing services for what seems to be a growing market” (43). As the number of independent authors increases, opportunities for independent editors do likewise.

Most editors surveyed for this article “belonged to at least one organization” (Baverstock 49). One of the most prominent of these is the National Association of Independent Writers and Editors (NAIWE), which numbers “copyeditors, proofreaders, academic writing evaluators, and fiction editors involved in a range of tasks including ghost writing, indexing, rewriting, and technical writing” among its members (44). The research also found that “it was relatively routine for aspiring editors to work as a personal assistant or secretary before moving into a role as an editor” (47). About a third of editors surveyed had previously worked for a publishing house, while the other two-thirds had not (47). “However, 83.9% of the sample had undertaken training since then and three-fifths had paid for it themselves” (48). These findings show that independent or freelance editors are often experienced, self-motivated, and committed to obtaining the proper training and qualifications required to succeed in the industry.
More and more publishing companies are using freelance editors. Indeed, as Baverstock, et al. writes “There has been a general decline in publishers employing editors within the organization with a shift to using freelance services.” This means that permanent, salaried positions are quickly disappearing. Still, as a freelance editor, one would have opportunities working for both publishing companies and independent authors. Also, “other organizations are increasingly in need of the services of independent editors. The ability to manage and present content effectively is not something that is a requirement within the publishing industry alone” (48).

Freelance editing continues to grow in importance as the self-publishing industry continues to expand. Because they are foregoing the services provided by traditional publishing houses, self-publishing authors are seeking out the services of freelance editors to ensure greater quality of work. Betty Sargent, founder and CEO of self-publisher association Book Works, explains in PW Select that “There has never been a book published in traditional publishing that has not had an editor, copy editor, and designer” (Palmer). These collaborative efforts used to be one of the significant advantages the traditional publishing industry had over self-publishing, but freelance editors and designers are leveling the playing field. Sargent “urges her members to seek out these kinds of ‘publishing partners’ in order to ensure their books have a high level of quality, and expects in the coming year (2014) to see more indie authors taking that approach” (Palmer).

Authors are increasingly viewing their self-published books as collaborative creations rather than as individual projects. With a rise in varied offerings of freelance
editing, design, and formatting work, Diane Mancher “expects more authors will take on
more of a project manager role in their book’s development” (Palmer). The project
manager role means “allocating funds specifically for editorial and art assistance, rather
than just paying for an all-in-one self-publishing package from CreateSpace or Lulu”
(Palmer). Mancher suggests that individual editorial assistance has more to offer an
author than the editing packages available through the self-publishing companies. As
more authors opt to self-publish, more editors are making their services available to them.
This opens up a whole new area of job growth for those with an interest in editing.
“Helping to stoke [self-publishing] is growth on the supply side, as editors, designers, and
other professionals from traditional publishing companies have offered up their services
with growing regularity” (Palmer). Mancher goes on to explain that editors and designers
are realizing that self-publishing is a continuously growing field of publishing that they
should seriously consider.

The publishing industry has been evolving at an advanced rate thanks to rapid
technological change. A PW Select article about the Self-Publishing Book Expo says that
“Mancher felt the industry quake in 2009 as friends began to lose their jobs. Many
publishing pros – particularly editors – went independent” (Joe). During this time, more
authors were also beginning to forego the traditional publishing route. “At the same time,
self-published authors began to seek out those people [editors]. ‘The two kind of met up,’
Mancher says. ‘The smarter authors were availing themselves of help, and suddenly there
was help’” (Joe).
METHODS

I interviewed several authors and editors in order to gain a better understanding of the role editors play in relation to digital self-publishing. All of them have experience in indie publishing. Several also have experience in traditional publishing. Via email, I interviewed seven fiction authors – Nick Cole, Ted Fauster, J. M. Madden, Samuel Peralta, E. J. Stevens, Kevin G. Summers, and H. W. Vivian – and four editors – Ellen Campbell, David Gatewood, Therin Knite, and Chris Pourteau. These interviews were arranged by my father, Ed Gosney, who is an indie author experienced in both self and small-press publishing. The authors and editors who agreed to be interviewed were emailed a set of questions – one specific to authors was sent to the authors, and another specific to editors was sent to the editors. The two sets of questions are provided in the appendices.

I requested that the interviewees be as specific or concise in their answers as they would like, and I also told them they should feel free to include whatever relevant anecdotes or personal experiences they wished to share. The questions ranged from general to specific, with the more specific ones focusing on the field of editing in relation to independent publishing. The following analysis of the research findings will discuss certain trends in interview answers.
Experiences in Independent and Traditional Publishing

As stated, all the authors I interviewed have experience publishing independently, and several also have had works published traditionally. Three of the seven authors began their careers in traditional publishing. New York Times and USA Today bestselling author J. M. Madden stated that she submitted her book idea to a small digital publisher and “gave that publisher, as well as a couple of others, rights to about 6 books.” She also stated that a friend of hers started publishing independently, and that she then began to publish independently as well and has been doing so ever since. Madden also noted, “I have a couple books I’ve gotten the rights back to that I have yet to republish, but they will be Indie as well.” Author Kevin G. Summers began his writing career publishing traditionally through a number of publishers of varying size before he started to self-publish. Author Samuel Peralta first published poetry traditionally, and “won awards through the traditional means.” Peralta states, “It was only when I realized it wasn’t selling – and therefore not being read – that I decided to try less traditional routes for publication.”

Author H. W. Vivian began her career with self-publishing, and later had one of her books acquired by a small press. She stated, “My relationship with them [the small press] did not develop well, and eventually the small press shut down anyway, so then I went back to self-publishing. I would say I prefer self-publishing.” As an independent author, Vivian chooses to only self-publish. Author Nick Cole began his writing career as an indie success. Cole stated he became a “Bestseller with The Old Man and the
Wasteland. Then got picked up by Harper Collins and wrote four books [for them].
Parted ways and went back to indie. Now, working with a number of small presses and remaining indie.” Two of the authors – E. J. Stevens and Ted Fauster – have only self-published their works.

The authors interviewed have varying opinions on indie publishing versus traditional publishing, although most stated a preference for the former. Peralta, who is now primarily a self-publisher, founded his own small press and says that he began publishing short story anthologies and his own works through it. Peralta says that he chose the indie publishing route because “[It] is quicker to market, provides the author with a far higher royalty share than traditional publishing, maintains control of all rights, and provides for a catalogue that does not get put on a publisher’s backlist.” Cole added that he chose indie publishing because “Initially, I couldn’t land a big pub contract. I had an agent but he couldn’t sell me or my book. Success on Amazon brought the big publishers to my door.” Cole’s opinion on self-publishing versus traditional publishing is that “Self Publishing is the future. The absolute future. Big Pub is dead and doesn’t even know it.”

Madden, however, is an author who believes there is still room for both forms of publishing. She notes that “Traditional publishing doesn’t move industry-wide as fast as Indies can, and they certainly don’t have the transparency I have when I indie publish my own work.” She states that she would never rule out a traditional contract to reach more readers, but she currently enjoys what she is doing in indie publishing. Fauster, who is completely self-published, still believes that traditional publishing is something every
writer should pursue. He notes that “Traditional publishing provides an enormous pool of resources, although you are still expected to shoulder a very big portion of publicity.” Although some authors such as Madden and Fauster still believe in the traditional publishing model, others, such as Cole, believe that indie publishing models will eventually overtake traditional publishing.

Control is a common theme among interviewees who stated that they prefer the self-publishing model. With self-publishing, authors retain total control over their works at every step of the publication process. For example, Vivian says that she much prefers self-publishing because “There is less bureaucracy and discrimination when it comes to self-publishing. Traditional publishers tend to prioritize their authors based on popularity and fame.” Greater diversity and freedom of thought were also stated by Vivian as reasons she prefers self-publishing.

**Digital Influence**

E-reader technologies have allowed indie publishing to become what it is and what it continues to become. When asked about the developments of technology in relation to the publishing industry, many authors interviewed spoke of e-reader technologies and the internet. All authors reported being active on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. Peralta says, “I’m quite active on Facebook and Twitter, and maintain a presence on other social networks. It’s my main venue for interacting with other authors, but more importantly, with my readers.” Some use social media as a way to gain readers, while others simply approach it as a way to interact with their established readers. Madden’s
approach to social media is more to interact with her readers and less to push her books: “You gain a following organically, and you cultivate that. I don’t just go on there to sell books. I take an interest in my readers’ lives and they love that. They appreciate that.” Summers says that he has picked up the majority of his readers through Facebook. The interviews reveal that indie authors use social media to build a community of readers and interact with them. Madden states, “If we didn’t have a way to talk to our readers, Indie publishing would be nothing.” The importance of social media is huge in indie publishing. An author’s presence on social media allows them to reach a larger audience. Vivian says that technology and social media has “made publishing more accessible to the masses, and it’s made it easier for indie and self-published writers to express themselves.”

Indie authors also use social media to interact with colleagues. For example, Fauster says that he uses it to find friends and professional contacts. Many authors reported using social media to create professional and friendly contacts with other authors, editors, book formatters, cover artists, and so on. Nick Cole expresses the importance of using social media to build a platform, mentioning that he blogs six days a week: “You have to build a platform that will weather corporate shenanigans and allow you to connect with your audience no matter what. Takes time, but is a must.” He mentions that his platform includes his website, blog, social media accounts, and mailing list. Cole also has a team of colleagues he works with to produce his novels, including a webmaster, two editors, an artisan book formatter, and a cover artist. Indie authors use
social media to build a platform and connect with their readers, fellow authors, and other publishing professionals.

Digital e-reader technology has also had a large impact on indie publishing. Although few authors said that they prefer e-books over printed books, many reported that the majority of their sales are e-books. Most publish in both e-book and trade paperback, thanks to POD technology. Several also publish audiobooks of their works. Stevens says that she publishes in trade paperback, all e-book formats, and audiobook: “I prefer e-book, but all formats are necessary.” Summers believes, “Indie publishing would be impossible without kindles and social media. 99% of the books an author sells are e-books, and social media makes it possible to connect with readers all over the world.” The introduction of e-readers changed the publishing landscape and gave independent authors the potential to reach a virtually limitless audience without the help of the big publishing houses. Peralta says that “Indie publishing as we know it today could not exist without the Internet, social media and the digital book reader. These developments have made it possible for authors to gain a distribution reach that is at par or better than traditional publishers, and have made it viable to pursue a professional independent writing and publishing career.”

**Importance of Editors**

All the authors interviewed stressed the importance of editors in the publishing process. Fauster clarifies the differences between a proofreader and an editor: where a proofreader will find mistakes such as typos, “an editor will help shape your writing and make you
better.” He notes the potential hindrance that is authors being unwilling to work with editors because they think their writing is already spectacular. Still, each of the seven authors interviewed stated that editors were absolutely necessary to the writing process. Cole even states, “Don’t publish unless you pay a pro editor to edit your book.” Madden reports that she has every book of hers professionally edited. She says that when publishing independently, a large part of the cost of a book goes to editing: “Editing your work is non-negotiable. When you put a book out with your name on it, you want it to be the best it can possibly be. Hiring an editor is integral to that process.” Madden also says that she encourages new authors to apply to small digital publishers with their work just to get experience with the editing process. She says that for her, this was invaluable.

In his interview, Summers expressed that he does not want to add fuel to the fire of traditional publishing’s attack against self-publishing: “There are thousands of traditional publishing advocates whose first attack against self-publishing is that indie authors don’t use editors and therefore produce error-laden junk.” Summers refuses to allow this accusation to apply to his work. He also talks about the benefits of working with a single editor over multiple projects: “If you work with a single editor on multiple projects, they will begin to see your strengths and weaknesses and be able to help you improve your craft. This is modeled on the way traditional publishing editors work with their authors.” Summers adds that he always hires an editor for novel-length work. Peralta is another author who always relies on professional editors and stresses the importance of doing so: “Hiring a professional editor is essential to any author’s career, not just beneficial. I write very clean prose, but my writing is always improved by an
editor.” The authors’ responses show that the work of a professional editor goes far beyond proofreading. Peralta says, “In many ways, an editor – besides the usual assistance provided – can represent your audience and how they approach your work.”

The authors were also asked about the editing packages offered on various publishing platforms, such as Amazon’s CreateSpace. Madden states, “Editing packages may streamline the process for some people, but I have one editor I use regularly.” All of the authors recommended hiring a freelance editor as opposed to purchasing an online editing package. Stevens says that she “will only deal with a professional editor (cover designer, etc) with impeccable references.” Online editing packages are an anonymous product, and authors expressed the importance of viewing samples and references before hiring an editor. Peralta says, “There’s a wide range of skills that are necessary for an editor to perform well, and I would prefer checking these out before committing.”

Authors note that editing packages offered by online publishing services are problematic in certain ways. Vivian advises an author to hire a freelancer editor who will stay with them throughout her writing career: “Not only is it nice to have someone catch your technical mistakes…but also for someone to understand your writing style – know what you mean when you write a certain phrase, or to suggest a flaw in a chapter or frame of thought.”

According to these authors, editing is an integral part of the publishing process and takes place in both traditional and indie publishing. Independently publishing authors are choosing to work with editors in order to improve the quality of their work. Still, hiring a freelance editor can be expensive, as some of the authors expressed in their
interviews. For self-publishing authors, hiring an editor or not is an important financial decision they must make. There are countless benefits to working with an editor, but in the self-publishing model, an author has the choice to publish without the help of a professional editor.
FINDINGS - EDITORS

Editing in Indie vs Traditional Publishing

The editors interviewed work with indie authors. Some are even indie authors themselves. David Gatewood, a strictly freelance editor, says, “The majority of my clients are self-published, and I think that’s the future.” His view on the traditional publishing model is that it made sense in a pre-internet era, but does not make sense today. Comparing traditional and indie publishing, Knite says, “The only noticeable difference between the two disciplines, in my experience, is that self-publishing moves faster, and so self-published authors write more books per year, on average, than traditionally published ones.” The rise in self-publishing as a much faster way to publish an author’s work affects the market for freelance editors. As Campbell puts it, “I think it creates a lot of room for good editors that would have been something else without it, just like indie writers.” Pourteau, both an editor and an indie author, recognizes the advantages and disadvantages to both traditional and indie publishing. He concludes that “the publishing avenue doesn’t matter, though there are far fewer ‘filters’ in indie publishing…than there are in traditional publishing. Still, there are many capable, talented indie authors out there whom traditional publishing hasn’t deigned to bless with a contract.” He makes the observation that both well-written and poorly written books can come from both traditional and indie publishing. Gatewood, on the other hand, takes a stronger position in favor of indie publishing: traditional publishing “just doesn’t have much to offer an author these days (unless you’re one of a small handful of mega-authors).” In his opinion, an author maintaining full ownership of her work outweighs the
traditional publishing model where creative and marketing control are given to the
publisher, as well as a large percentage of the revenue. However, as far as editing work
goes, Gatewood says, “indie publishing or tradpub; it’s all the same to me. If you’re an
author with a manuscript, I will help you make it the best it can be. What you do with it
then is up to you.” Other editors interviewed also shared this sentiment regarding editing
manuscripts. For example, Pourteau says, “I’ll venture the opinion that editing is editing
– a quality control/quality assurance step that ultimately benefits a work’s reader. It
should occur regardless of the publishing process (indie or traditional).”

**Skills/Qualities of an Editor**

Many of the editors interviewed stated that what they do depends on the type of editing
that they were hired to do for that particular job, which can range from simple
proofreading, to copyediting, and even substantive editing. According to Pourteau,
“There are different kinds of editing, and not every editor is good at all of them.” He
suggests that an editor should know his or her strengths and specialize in what she does
best. Beyond the specific type of editing work, Pourteau says that “A good editor is, first
and foremost, well-versed in the proper use of grammar and mechanics.” He says that
editors should be attentive to detail, aim for cohesion, and be flexible. To sum it up,
Pourteau says his job in editing is to “bring consistency, correctness, and clarity to what
[he’s] editing. All of those are aimed at two goals: improving the reading experience and
facilitating comprehension.” Along with stating these qualities of editors, Pourteau warns
that being a professional editor is about much more than being a close reader: “not all
editors are the same (in terms of what they look for) or have the same skillset (anyone can call themselves an editor – but being a “close reader” [alone] does not an editor make).” Because of this, building up a platform and a reputation as a good editor is very important as a freelancer. Knite lists patience, time management, and constructive criticism as qualities that are necessary to be a professional editor.

Another important aspect of freelance editing is pricing. Because hiring a professional editor is not cheap, Pourteau advises editors to price themselves competitively: “An editor should price their services, for example, at a rate that provides a decent living so they’re not constantly rushing to get the next job in the door. Because a rushed edit is a poor edit – you can’t be accurate and cheap and fast.”

**Author-Editor Relations**

Just as indie authors use social media to connect with readers and other authors, freelance editors use social networking to attract and connect with author-clients. According to Pourteau, “Improved visibility (via social media) and the ability to work and share files remotely (technology) have greatly enhanced opportunities for everyone involved in the publishing business, including editors.” Editors now have better ways to connect with clients. “By developing networks of author/industry contacts via, for example, Facebook, editors can develop a steady stream of recurring clients.” Still, there are obstacles to overcome in obtaining editing jobs. For one, Pourteau says, “Editors – good editors – aren’t cheap.”
Knite, also an author and book designer/formatter in addition to being an editor, talks about how many editors today, including herself, have international client bases, thanks to the internet. She also says, “Beyond clients, it’s also much easier to get in touch with and get advice from more experienced editors. There are countless editing groups on Facebook alone, where editors can gather and discuss best practices, ask questions about unclear grammar/style rules, consult one another on whether potential clients are good fits, etc.” Knite’s insight shows that not only is networking important between authors and editors, but also that freelance editors create online communities to support one another. She says that “In the age of social media, all publishing professionals, from authors to cover designers, mingle in the same spaces and frequently end up moving in the same personal networks.” Pourteau explains his opinion on networking with authors: “Getting to know a writer personally can help clarify authorial intent that simply reading their text on a page can’t. It can also improve efficiency in the editing process.” There are also professional organizations for freelancers, and Knite says that she belongs to the Association of Independent Publishing Professionals (AIPP).

Editors service authors by examining their works from a fresh perspective and adding value to it. Campbell says, “My job, my purpose, and my absolute goal is to make your work the best it can be.” She notes that it is difficult for a writer to be objective about their own work, and “you become blind to your own errors.” Knite points out that although most authors “do not possess the time, or the skills, to produce a clean manuscript on their own…on the other hand, there are some authors who take on the role of writer, editor, proofreader, and formatter – and some are quite good at managing the
whole process themselves.” She says that this takes an extreme amount of work, so many
authors who are capable of taking on all those roles themselves still prefer to hire
freelancers to prep their books for publication.
IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Findings from this study show that editors are becoming more involved in the independent publishing process for fiction than previously thought. The introduction of digital publishing platforms has greatly increased the volume and variety of books being published today. Digital publishing, either through self or small presses, is an extremely efficient and cost-effective method. As this publishing model continues to rise and compete with the big traditional publishing houses, there has been an increase in freelancers in the publishing industry. The literature review shows that as authors are choosing to forgo traditional publishing, more editors are turning toward freelance work.

The literature review gave a background on the topic of digital publishing and where it stands today. The purpose of the interviews as research was to find out from current authors and editors whether editors have a place in a publishing model that includes self-publishing, and to discover the significance and characteristics of that role. According to the authors interviewed, all of whom have self-published books, working with editors is an essential aspect of any type of publishing, including self-publishing. The interview results showed that despite its older connotation, self-publishing does not necessarily equate to an author doing everything on her own. Although it can mean this, research shows that authors value editors, even outside the realm of traditional publishing. The results of the research also show that the follow-up of a book is now more important for authors, as opposed to just the release as it used to be.

For editors, this means that the career is changing. The editors I interviewed have varied professional lives, but all practice freelance editing professionally. Technology has
enabled publishing professionals to interact in such a way that they may easily network with others and build their platforms/client bases. Although freelance work is not for everyone, the incredible growth of books, thanks to digital publishing, means there are opportunities for editors to work with authors in new ways. The research reveals a new area of growth for editors to help authors with the process of publishing. Freelance editors who know the process are able to take on a “mega-editor” role, not only editing an author’s work but also guiding her through other aspects of the publishing process. For example, these editors can offer support through social media, design, formatting, etc. With digital publishing, there are a variety of areas for the new freelance editor to specialize in, equipping them with a variety of skills to assist indie authors.

I believe these findings to be significant in today’s publishing world, while I also acknowledge that it is open to interpretation because of the small sample size. Technological advances in the publishing industry have created more up front work and more after-work in publishing than there used to be. With the option to self-publish, an author also takes on the many responsibilities that go beyond just the writing of the work. Editing, formatting, designing, marketing, and networking are some examples of the various aspects of publishing. A successful online editor will be one who knows the entire arc and can get an author through these steps successfully. Editors are in the best position to know all the steps of online publishing, and they are evolving into a project manager role. It is vital for an online editor to know and be familiar with this process so that they can broaden their careers.
WORKS CITED


"May 2016 Author Earnings Report: The Definitive Million-Title Study of US Author


Baverstock, Alison, Robert Blackburn, and Marfuga Iskandarova. "Who Are the
Independent Editors, How Did They Reach Their Role and and What Are Their


Technologies are Changing the Face of the Publishing Industry." Publishing


Habash, Gabe. "Average Book Length: Guess How Many Words Are In A Novel." The


APPENDIX 1

Author Interview Questions

1. What name would you like me to use for you in my paper?

2. Do you write under a pseudonym? If so, why?

3. What genre(s) of fiction do you write?

4. Do you primarily write novels, or do you write in other forms, such as short stories and/or poems?

5. What made you want to write?

6. Is writing your main career, or do you also have another type of job? If so, what do you do besides writing?

7. Do you have any educational background or experience that helped prepare you for writing?

8. Have you only published independently or do you have experiences in traditional publishing?
9. Have you ever self-published? If so, what are your experiences and opinions on self-publishing versus traditional publishing?

10. Why did you choose the indie publishing route?

11. How do you measure success as an indie author?

12. Have you won any awards? (Or have you been nominated for any?)

13. Did you have any preconceived notions about traditional publishing or indie publishing that have changed since your involvement?

14. What resources do you use for writing/publishing (people, software, etc.)?

15. In what format, paper or digital, do you primarily publish your writing? Do you prefer one form over the other?

16. Are you active on social media? If so, how do you use social media to gain followers/readers?
17. What kind of impact do you think technology and social media have had on indie publishing?

18. Have you ever had your work professionally edited?

19. What do you think are the benefits of having an editor? Also, do you think hiring an editor is beneficial and/or necessary? If your opinion is that hiring an editor is unnecessary, please explain why.

20. Publishing websites such as Amazon’s CreateSpace offer editing packages with anonymous editors. If you were to pay to have your work edited, would you prefer to purchase such an editing package or would you hire a freelance editor? If you have a preference for purchasing editing packages or personally hiring an editor, please explain.

21. If you have not worked with an editor before, would you ever consider doing so in the future?

22. What advice would you give an aspiring author?
APPENDIX 2

Editor Interview Questions

1. What name would you like me to use for you in my paper?

2. What genre(s) of fiction do you edit?

3. Do you primarily edit novels, or do you edit other types of writing, such as short stories, articles, etc.?

4. What made you want to be an editor?

5. Is editing your main career, or do you also have another type of job? If so, what do you do besides editing?

6. Do you have any educational background or experience that helped prepare you for editing?

7. What do you think are the qualities and skills necessary to be professional editor?
8. Do you edit independently (as a freelancer) or do you have experiences editing under a company?

9. Have you ever edited a self-published work? If so, what are your experiences and opinions on self-publishing versus traditional publishing?

10. Do you edit indie authors? If so, what made you choose to work in indie publishing?

11. How do you measure success as an editor?

12. Have you gained any special recognition in your career?

13. Did you have any preconceived notions about traditional publishing or indie publishing that have changed since your involvement?

14. What resources do you use for editing (people, software, etc.)?

15. Do you mainly edit for traditional paper books or digital e-books? Do you prefer one format over the other?
16. Are you active on social media? If so, how do you use social media to interact with other editors and authors?

17. What kind of impact do you think technology and social media have had on editing careers?

18. What effect do you think the recent rise in independent publishing will have on editorial professions?

19. What purpose do you feel you serve when editing a novel or some other work? What are your contributions/obligations?

20. Do you think editors are important/necessary (especially in independent publishing)? Why?

21. Do you think that editors should form close professional relationships with authors or do you believe that they should remain more anonymous?

22. What advice would you give to an aspiring editor?