

Consider the elephant: nine ways to feel a bookstore

Citation metadata

Author: David Malki
Date: November-December 2011
From: Poets & Writers Magazine(Vol. 39, Issue 6)
Publisher: Poets & Writers, Inc.
Document Type: Article
Length: 8,757 words

Main content

Article Preview :

WHEN you don't know any better, there's nothing to stop you. This is why, last fall, two friends and I decided to start a publishing company. Now, with twenty-five thousand copies of our first book in print, a five-figure unpaid invoice from the late Borders, Inc., and an incessant, restless anxiety--all things I didn't have twelve months ago--I have tried to wrap my mind around that elephant in the room for anyone who thinks they can put out a book: the bookstore.

Everybody has an opinion on this topic. Financial analysts and book-industry insiders wring their hands as e-books threaten to outpace physical volumes in readers' hearts and shopping carts, authors increasingly wonder what those stores are doing for them that they can't do for themselves with a website, and the people who work every day between towering stacks of Penguin Classics and get-rich-quick hardcovers wonder if they'll have jobs by this time next year. The bookstore is one of those elephants that the blind men take turns feeling in the old parable. You know the one: The first guy feels the trunk and cries out, "It's like a snake"; the second guy grabs a tusk and says, "It's like a horn"; the third sticks his head up the ass and says, "It's warm, and smells like unhappiness." Depending on whether you're a reader, a publisher, an author, or a bankruptcy-court plaintiff, the bookstore looks and feels like something very different. And whenever I think I've finally gotten a sense of the shape of the thing, my fingertips brush another hidden set of thick, craggy folds.

All experiences are by nature anecdotal, and while I'm grossly tempted to develop a lecture series titled *How Our Self-Published Book Became a No. 1 Amazon Best-Seller in Just One Day--and Yours Can Too!* it would be baloney. Sure, conference stages around the world yield their real estate every weekend to one-hit wonders cashing in on flashy, irreproducible successes, but I don't hesitate in saying that our achievement (on October 26, 2010, we really did become Amazon's No. 1 best-seller in, and for, one single day) isn't something the average person can just go out and do with her self-published book of poetry about poodles.

My colleagues and I are, and for the most part remain, outsiders to the traditional publishing industry, and none of our mortgages are dependent on the success or failure of our book. So we're more willing than some publishers to try things on a whim, discard "industry-standard" practices that don't make any sense to us, and, most helpfully, compare the way "it's supposed to be done" with experience and perspective from successes we've had in other media.

By way of background: I have had three books (of comic strips) published to favorable reviews but fairly average sales. Over the last few years I've also printed--published would be too strong a word--a few thousand copies of books that I've sold in person and through my website with decent success. (I'm...

[Access from your library](#)

This is a preview. Get the full text through your school or public library.

Source Citation

Source Citation

Malki, David. "Consider the elephant: nine ways to feel a bookstore."*Poets & Writers Magazine*, vol. 39, no. 6, 2011, p. 97+. Accessed 13 Nov. 2020.

Gale Document Number: GALE|A272245776

Explore

This is a preview. Get the full text through your school or public library.



Footer

- [About](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Terms of Use](#)
- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Accessibility](#)

Your world is more feeling based, subtle and dynamic, prone to rapid changes in a way that boggles me at times. I'm doing my best to follow you, learn about you and enjoy the unique way you are. And sometimes I want to talk about "stuff" with you. Depending on who I am is going to determine what that stuff is—it may be extreme sports, martial arts or the latest spiritual philosophy I have been studying, yet I want to talk about the details of it. Indulge me! Ask questions and maybe even debate about it with me. By creating an account you agree to Elephant's Terms and Privacy Policy. Welcome to the Elephant Ecosystem! May this site's daily new articles inspire & expand your mind& heart in the midst of this busy-busy world of ours. Create account. The Second, feeling of the tusk, Cried, "Ho! what have we here So very round and smooth and sharp? To me 'tis mighty clear This wonder of an Elephant Is very like a spear!" The Third approached the animal, And happening to take The squirming trunk within his hands, Thus boldly up and spake: "I see," quoth he, "the Elephant Is very like a snake!" The Fourth reached out an eager hand, And felt about the knee. "What most this wondrous beast is like Is mighty plain," quoth he; "'Tis clear enough the Elephant Is very like a tree!" The language itself is not the absolute truth, but a way to express the truth. MUST READ: Five Great Vows (Maha-vratas) of Jainism. In Hinduism How to Start a Used Bookstore. Despite the rise of e-readers and giant online book sellers, used bookstores remain popular. They are a place where people can gather, spend as much time as they like browsing and discuss novels old and... You may also consider visiting internet sites that explore the buying, selling and collecting process. {"smallUrl":"https://www.wikihow.com/images/thumb/v4/v4c/Start-a-Used-Bookstore-Step-11.jpg/v4-460px-Start-a-Used-Bookstore-Step-11.jpg","bigUrl":"images/thumb/v4/v4c/. Go out of your way to cater to their demands. By doing this you stand a good chance of gaining a repeat customer and of that customer referring a friend.[16] X Research source. Looking to see some elephants while on vacation this summer? Before signing up for any tourist attractions involving elephants, read this post to ensure you're fun isn't causing harm to others. The result is that all elephants in the tourist industry are wild animals that are trained through a process of pain, fear and force. enn.com. Advertisement. For them to be kept with any degree of safety in a captive situation; they must: Undergo a cruel and painful process called the Phajaan which is designed to break the elephant's spirit and force them to accept human control. The process is horrific and performed on baby elephants. They are shackled, starved and beaten. The bookstore is many things to many different people, but in the age of Amazon, is it really the best place to sell a book? Every week a new publishing professional shares advice, anecdotes, insights, and new ways of thinking about writing and the business of books. More. G&A: The Contest Blog. Stay informed with reports from the world of writing contests, including news of extended deadlines, recent winners of notable awards, new contest announcements, interviews with winners, and more. More. Top Topics for Writers. Since our founding in 1970, Poets & Writers has served as an information clearinghouse of all matters related to writing. While the range of inquiries has been broad, common themes have emerged