

## **Obstacles Encountered by Authors during the Publication Process of Books: An Investigative Study of University of Peradeniya Sri Lanka**

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### **Abstract**

*Publishing books is an attractive mode of dissemination and sharing knowledge; however, it is a significantly challenging task for authors in Sri Lanka, particularly in the current critical situation in the country. The primary objective of this study was to identify and comprehend the challenges faced by authors in their book publication. The study population consisted of 32 authors who had published books in the years 2021 and 2022. Data for this research was collected via a survey that sought insights into the challenges they faced and the perspectives of these authors regarding the book publishing field. 72% (23) response rate obtained from authors predominantly associated with the Faculty of Arts at the University of Peradeniya. The survey sought to gain a more comprehensive insight into the obstacles faced by authors throughout the publication process and to discern their perspectives on the assistance and resources required for achieving success in book publishing. This research explores various facets of these challenges, encompassing aspects such as finding a professional publisher, marketing books, book demand limitations, limited copies acquired from the libraries, limited funds and lack of proper guidance or mechanisms to support the authors. Furthermore, the research findings elaborate on the suggestions made by the authors when seeking publishers, promoting their books, establishing an online presence, distributing their works effectively, and preparing guidelines for professional publications.*

**Keywords:** Author Challenges, Authorship, Publishing Challenges, publishing of books, Writing books

## **Introduction**

Books have been a key medium for sharing knowledge for centuries. Authors write books on a wide range of topics, from fiction to nonfiction, to educate and inform readers. The primary channel for disseminating knowledge is through the publication of research and creative writings by creative writers. It is conventionally assumed that book publishing is a process through which writing is related to readers: publishing is conceived as publication. At most, publishing is acknowledged as a process which writing passes through, with effects that are partially acknowledged for mass-market genre fiction and almost universally denied for literary fiction (Malik, 2008). In this context, the authors encounter various challenges when publishing their books, making it a multifaceted endeavor fraught with numerous obstacles. “Writing and publishing a first book can be an exciting and rewarding journey. However, it also comes with its fair share of challenges. For aspiring authors, bringing their words to life and sharing their stories with the world can be a daunting task” (Hassan, 2023). The overarching objective of this research is to identify the primary challenges faced by authors when bringing their books to the public and to provide insights into the evolving dynamics of the industry. The study population comprised 32 authors who had published books in the years 2021 and 2022. A survey was conducted, and responses from 23 out of 32 authors primarily associated with the Faculty of Arts at the University of Peradeniya. The research findings pinpointed several key challenges faced by authors, including difficulty in finding a recognized publisher, financial constraints in publishing, challenges of marketing, lack of publisher interest in certain subject areas, protracted editing and proofreading processes, issues surrounding publisher agreements,

publishing additional copies without author notification, and attempts by some publishers to alter or remove crucial content that authors wish to retain. Furthermore, the authors proposed important measures to address these challenges. These suggestions included allocating special funds from the university to sponsor authors, promoting book publication among university academics through incentives and encouragement, establishing mechanisms to support and facilitate authors, expanding university library collections with works authored by faculty, and encouraging the adoption of authors' books as textbooks within the university or department curriculum. The authors also emphasized the need for an effective marketing strategy involving university support to create a thriving market for their publications. Additionally, establishing a functioning university press was deemed essential to facilitate more publications while acknowledging the institute's contribution. Providing clear guidelines, offering consultancy services, and implementing guidebooks were identified as crucial remedial actions to address the challenges encountered by authors in the publishing process.

### **Problem Statement**

Creative writing and the publishing of books are essential for promoting reading and acquiring knowledge. In the present scenario, book publishing is challenging for the authors, especially in the university sector. These challenges may impact the success and dissemination of their publications. When considering knowledge dissemination, it's important to highlight that university authors significantly contribute to productivity in this regard. Therefore, this survey aims to explore the challenges faced by university authors during the process of publishing

their books. The study gains a comprehensive understanding of these challenges and provides valuable suggestions, strategies, and support mechanisms to overcome these challenges.

### **Objectives**

- To identify the challenges that authors at the University of Peradeniya encounter in the publishing of their books.
- To identify the alternative solutions proposed by the authors themselves to address these challenges.

### **Materials and Methods**

This study was based on the publishing of books by the authors at the University of Peradeniya. According to the books acquired from the Main Library, University of Peradeniya, in 2021 and 2022, most of the authors identified at the Faculty of Arts. Hence, the selection of the population was the authors from the Faculty of Arts at the University of Peradeniya. To identify the list of authors, I mainly checked the collection of the Main Library of the University of Peradeniya, as well as the official website of the Faculty of Arts. Through this process, researchers identified 32 authors and data collection was carried out from this list. For the study, a survey research method was employed utilizing a questionnaire as the primary tool. The questionnaire was specifically designed to gather information related to the challenges faced by authors during the book publishing. The survey questionnaire included open-ended and closed-ended questions and was distributed through Google Forms. Descriptive analysis was performed using MS Excel and, based on the results obtained through the analysis, derived the conclusions.

## **Significant of the Study**

This research is important as it explores the various obstacles and difficulties authors encounter while publishing books. Significantly, understanding the challenges authors face provides valuable insights into the publishing industry. These identifications will assist in overcoming the issues related to the publishing of books and authors. Publishing is not only a creative endeavor but also an economical process. Understanding the challenges authors face can have significant effects on promoting the economic implications for the book publishing industry. Finally, the findings of this study will help the university administrators to discuss and assist the authors in publishing books.

## **Results and Discussion**

The Results of this study revealed valuable insights into the challenges and strategies of authors in the context of book publishing in the university sector. When analyzing the demographic profile of the respondent's majority secured by the male authors (78%). The survey found that most of the respondents belonged to the age category of 46-55 (39%) followed by 56-65 (30%), while the remaining authors were below 45 years old. Regarding the subjects primarily written about in books, a significant proportion of authors (91%) focused on academic and subject-specialist topics, with smaller percentages writing in the categories of Fiction (26 %) and Poetry (13%). The majority of the books published in academic and subject-specialist topics may be to increase the subject-related resources and for their promotional requirements. The study also explored the number of books published to date, with the majority (69%) having published between 1-5 books, followed by 11-15 books (13%), and 6-10(9%) 15 or more books (9%).

Authors' completion times for writing books varied, with 61% taking 1-2 years, 30% taking 3-4 years, and less percentages taking 5-6 years or more. A substantial portion of authors (52%) published their books under the patronage of publishers, and 48% reported that they published their books as author publications. Moreover, the primary language used for publication was Sinhala (83%). The study identified the primary purposes of writing books, with the majority of authors (87%) indicating that they write books to disseminate knowledge. Others included fulfilling subject gaps (39%), meeting promotional requirements (26%), and pursuing writing as a hobby (26%). The majority of respondents (83%) used social media marketing as a strategy to promote their books, followed by book exhibitions (48%), email newsletters (39%), and book reviews (30%). However, the authors' views on the effectiveness of these strategies varied, and they highlighted social media marketing as the most effective way to promote books (83%). Respondents overwhelmingly believed that having a strong online presence is crucial for effective book promotion in the digital age, with 87% in agreement. Common challenges mentioned by the authors included bookshops not willing to stock author-published books, outdated distribution methods, and limited demand from libraries and readers. All respondents (100%) reported no issues related to copyright, intellectual property, or plagiarism during the publishing process of their books. In response to the question about what additional support or resources could ease the challenges faced during the book publishing process, the following suggestions were made: Providing financial support for publishing, increasing institutional support and awareness of book publishing, creating marketing opportunities and mechanisms, offering guidance, establishing a university press for publications, setting up specific funds

at the university, and facilitating distribution mechanisms.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The conclusion of this survey can highlight the significant accomplishment of publishing books and the challenges faced by the authors in the university sector. It also acknowledged the types of challenges that the University authors encounter such as, including lack of experience and confidence, finding a publisher, editing and revising, marketing and promotion, financial considerations, building a readership, and sponsorship. With determination and support, the authors can successfully navigate these challenges and fulfil their dream of sharing their knowledge. To overcome these challenges, the authors should encouraged by the university in many ways, such as preparing a guide books, conducting awareness programs to follow before the publishing of books, there should have proper marketing plan, proper appreciation system, such as an awarding ceremony, book launching ceremony, the University should have a press to publish books, Library should purchase more copies to the readers.

## **References**

A Guide to Self-Publishing Your Book. (2007). Montana: The Magazine of Western History, 57(4), 60–63. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25485665>.