


 Matador

Serious Self-Publishing



Bookshops

Making the Most of Your Local Bookshop

Regardless of how many books you hope to sell, your local bookshop is always a good place to start your own marketing efforts. Remember, this may not just include bookshops local to where you live. There may be other 'local' links, either to you or to your book, that you can use to garner local interest.

If your book is being marketed, don't forget to take a copy of your Advance Information sheet (AI) with you if you visit your local bookshop. It is a trade-standard document specifically designed with bookshops in mind, and contains all the information they need to make buying decisions and order copies of your book. Better still, show them a copy of your printed book; many bookshops have been wary of poorly produced self-published books, so give reassurance by showing them what a good quality 'product' yours is!

Your book will be listed by us on Nielsen BookData, which means it is available to order through the book trade. A bookshop will know how to do this, either through their regular wholesaler, or direct from our distributor.

When approaching your local bookshop, whether by phone, post or in person, think about what *you* can do for *them*. Put yourself in their shoes and think about why they might want to stock your book, and how you as the author could help them to sell copies. By taking this approach you are far more likely to be successful. For example, you could offer promotional posters or bookmarks, signed copies, or your attendance for a signing or event.

Ask if you can advertise their shop as a stockist in your promotional activities and on any marketing materials. 'Can I tell people to come and buy my book from your shop?' – if there was ever a good reason to stock your book, this might be the one! Ultimately, you both have a common aim – and successful sales of your book will benefit both of you.

Who should supply the books? Matador or Me?

We act as the agent for most of the books sold through the book trade, which means that most bookshops will order through us (either direct or via a book wholesaler). However, some authors prefer to supply books direct to bookshops themselves, rather than via us. Many bookshops will not deal direct with an author, particularly if they can get better terms through a wholesaler, but if you do supply books direct, make sure you have *agreed the terms of sale* with the bookshop in advance and *obtain paperwork* to prove that you have actually supplied the books. Most bookshops will expect a discount of between 35–45%, and will pay on receipt of an invoice, rather than up front. Many will only order on a Sale or Return basis, which means they will return unsold copies to you up to nine months later, and will expect a full refund. If you choose to supply the books yourself, you will be responsible for dealing with any negotiation of terms, the creation of an invoice and any returns. You will also need to make it clear to the bookshop that any returns must go back to you rather than to us or their usual supplier, as we won't be able to accept them.

Consider the Following...

- Before you make an approach, consider your timing. Cornering a harassed bookshop manager on a busy Saturday morning is not the best way to make a good first impression. Consider making an appointment, or be prepared to come back if the shop is busy with customers.

www.troubador.co.uk/matador

- Don't be pushy. While it's obviously important that you have faith in your work, you will gain little if you try to force your book into your local bookshop. Even if they do agree to take a copy, they are unlikely to make much effort to actually sell it this way, and you will have limited your options for the future. Equally, don't pester them once they have taken copies to see how many they've sold, or if they've re-ordered etc. There are more positive ways of maintaining a relationship!
- Don't bombard your bookshop with display materials they don't want or can't use. Do they actually have anywhere to put posters or bookmarks, for example? Ask first.
- Be genuine – think about ways you can cultivate a genuine relationship. Do you ever go there, for example, as a customer? Visit the shop and find out what kind of books they actually stock and how you might approach them successfully. Don't be afraid to ask the vital question: 'Does this kind of book sell well in your shop?' It doesn't matter how many copies they agree to stock if the answer is no.

Contact details for all your local bookshops are listed in the *Bookshop Directory*, which is published annually by the Booksellers' Association. You can search the directory online at <http://www.booksellers.org.uk/bookshopsearch>. You can also locate your local bookshops at <http://www.localbookshopsonline.co.uk/LocalBookshops/UkMap.htm>.

Chain Bookstores and Supermarkets

As chain bookstores in particular become more mainstream and conservative in their book selection, it is increasingly difficult for many publishers to get a book taken on as 'core stock' by a national book chain like Waterstones. In any case, most authors are likely to sell far more copies by working closely with individual, selected bookshops than they will if they have one copy of their book hidden anonymously on a shelf in a larger number of stores.

The costs involved in having your book on special display or as part of a national in-store promotion in a large book chain such as WH Smith can run into thousands of pounds and involve quantities of books well beyond the number most self-published authors would be advised to produce. Also remember that the larger chains will return any unsold books up to nine months after an order and expect a full refund – not just for the books, but for the cost of delivery as well.

Local managers at Waterstones do have the autonomy and a budget to select local titles at their discretion. They do not need their individual purchases sanctioned at head office level, but they may have to process the order through a central system. The response you will get from managers at different branches of the same company may vary considerably, but most, particularly at Waterstones, are very helpful if approached in the right way.

Supermarkets generally have their books selected for them by outside agencies and only stock a very narrow selection of 'bestsellers'. Even aside from this, they also demand quantities well beyond what the average self-published author would be in a position to provide. They also expect discounts that would make it impossible for you to make a profit on the books you sold through them.

**If you would like more information contact
marketing@troubador.co.uk
0116 279 2299**