

## BOOK WORKS FACT-SHEET THREE DISTRIBUTION

### Distribution

Distribution is the dissemination of information to an audience. It is how the book finds its audience through bookshops, galleries and libraries, or other alternative spaces. It is the final part of the book's journey that starts with its initial concept and finishes in the reader's hands.

Distribution is the selling of books; it involves showing new titles to bookstores and seeking out markets for books. Finding a distributor as a small publisher or a publisher of just one title may be difficult. It is useful to research markets for the book - any exhibitions that the book could be linked to, for example - a book with a defined market and highlighted selling points is a more attractive proposition to a distributor than one without.

It is not impossible to distribute your own book. Consider the networks available to you - for example bookshops and gallery bookshops that you have links with. Maybe you have access to a mailing list - either electronic or hard copy - that you can utilise to promote the book. The market for artists' books is quite small, so it is feasible to make appointments and visit all the outlets for artists' books in London, for example, within a short time. In addition, booksellers outside of London can be contacted by phone or email. The Directory of Booksellers Association Members lists most bookshops in the UK and Ireland.

Visiting bookshops to solicit orders, invoicing, packing, despatching and credit control are time consuming but none are impossible tasks - this fact-sheet aims to demystify these processes.

### Pricing

It is important to decide on a realistic retail price for your edition that takes into account all of the production costs (see example budget on fact-sheet one) You should also note the fact that the booksellers' standard discount is 35% though many stores, with the abolition of the net book agreement, now ask for 40% discount or more - a demand that many small presses cannot meet.

The size of the edition will affect the price of the individual book. It is worth remembering that the amount of books ordered and sold by bookshops may be quite low and also that sales may not be particularly fast. When deciding on a price, consider that the whole edition may not sell out or that the edition may take many years to sell - this can involve other costs such as warehousing.

Another factor in deciding a price is the fact that many bookshops insist that stock is returnable. If stock is unsold and returned to the publisher it may not always be in a re-sellable condition. Book Works ask that all returned books are in mint condition though damaged books do sometimes slip through. Remember, too, that a certain number of

the edition will become display copies and that some will be given away as complimentary copies. All of these factors should be taken into account when calculating the cost of the book.

### Invoicing

Most bookshops will ask for an invoice when you supply them with books. All invoices should state clearly the name and address of the supplier and also the name (if it is different - you may have a trading name, for example) that the cheque should be made payable to. If you require payment by bank transfer add your details to the invoice or send on a separate sheet. The title of the book, author and ISBN should be shown along with any post and packing charges. The name of the person who ordered the book should also appear on the invoice and any order reference given by the buyer. Keep a copy of the invoice for your own records.

If the books are supplied at the time of the order the invoice can double as a delivery note. If the books need to be posted then it is usual to supply a delivery note that includes the invoice number whilst the invoice is sent separately - often to an accounts department. However, this will vary from shop to shop - check with the person placing the order.

The standard credit period after which invoices become due is 30 days. However, most retailers usually pay between 60 to 90 days. If a cheque has not been raised by this time you may need to phone the bookshop or accounts department to chase payment. It is not unusual to be asked to send a copy of the invoice. Remember to include payment details with the invoice. In some cases it may be necessary to visit the bookshop in person to get the payment but, usually, a few phone calls or emails will work.

Sometimes shops will ask for books on sale or return or on consignment; this means that the shop will keep the books for an agreed time after which the unsold ones are returned to the publisher. At Book Works we always send books that are supplied on consignment with an invoice that has an extended credit period to cover the agreed time that the books are consigned for. When the books are returned to us we will issue a credit note and the difference between the invoice and the credit note becomes due. Never send books without an invoice as it will be difficult to trace your books if your books have not been entered on a bookshop system. If you do have to supply without an invoice always get a signature for the books supplied.

Sending books on consignment is not without its problems - the shop may want to return unsold stock that is shop-soiled, for example - but it can be a good way to get books into shops that are reluctant to take the risk of trying new titles.

It is best not to leave books on consignment for too long: bookshops often have a high turnaround

of staff, the person who took your books may no longer work in the shop and the books and paperwork forgotten.

## Distributors

Book Works only distributes the books that are published by Book Works. This model has worked well for us and we have developed a strong network of outlets for our titles. Some small presses and publishers of a single title work with a distributor. A distributor will typically handle the distribution of books by many publishers, they act as facilitators for publishers, invoicing for titles sold and mailing out books to bookstores. Most distributors produce a catalogue and have a website which is a useful way for small publishers to reach a wide audience. In addition, the distributor will employ a sales team who will visit the bookstores on your behalf, showing new titles and soliciting orders.

Distributors will, of course, charge for their services. Charges vary but are generally between 60% and 70% of the retail price. In addition, distributors may also make other charges for storage and for anticipated returns from bookstores. Contact individual distributors to find out more.

You should not totally rely on the distributor: you can also approach bookshops yourself and feed information to distributors about potential sales leads. This two-pronged attack is likely to breed better results than relying on the distributor alone.

Some distributors:

Art Data, 12 Bell Industrial Estate, 50 Cunnington Street, London W4 5HB  
[www.artdata.co.uk](http://www.artdata.co.uk)

Cornerhouse Distribution, 70 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 5NH,  
[www.cornerhouse.org/publications](http://www.cornerhouse.org/publications)

Distributed Art Publishers, 155 Sixth Avenue, 2nd Floor, New York NY 10013, USA  
[www.artbook.com](http://www.artbook.com)

Actar D, Roca i Batlle 2, 08023 Barcelona, Spain  
[www.actar-d.com](http://www.actar-d.com)

Idea Books, Nieuwe Herengracht 11, 1011RK Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
[www.ideabooks.nl](http://www.ideabooks.nl)

R.A.M. Publications and Distribution, 2525 Michigan Avenue, Number A2, Santa Monica, California 90404, USA  
[www.rampub.com](http://www.rampub.com)

## Stockists

There are relatively few venues that sell artists' books. Bookshops within art galleries are an obvious choice to stock artists' books. In London, Koenig books at the Serpentine Gallery Bookshop, Tate Modern Bookshop, ICA Bookshop, Donlon Books, X Marks the Bökship and Artwords all stock an interesting range of artists' publications. Outside of London, the Fruitmarket Gallery Bookshop in Edinburgh, Dundee Contemporary Arts Bookshop, Arnolfini Bookshop in Bristol, Baltic in Gateshead and Ikon Gallery Bookshop in Birmingham also stock a range of artists books.

It has become increasingly difficult for small publishers to place books in the major chains (Waterstones, Borders and Books Etc); centralised buying, demands for larger discounts and concentrating on special offers and bestsellers has meant that chainstores are no longer an option for small publishers. However, there are exceptions and it is possible to find enthusiastic supporters in even the most corporate environment.

It is worth considering how bookshops display artists' books; some stores have a space dedicated to artists' books whilst a more general bookshop might integrate the books with the rest of their stock. Fragile or valuable books may need to be kept under lock and key along with small, easily stolen books. Book Works publications have sold best when retailers have given over space to show our publications altogether or with other artists' books - but this is not always possible!

When approaching a suitable shop it is usually best to phone to make an appointment with the art book buyer, although if you are only selling one title it might be possible to see the buyer without an appointment. Choose a time when the shop is not busy - your selling technique will not be appreciated if there is a queue of customers that needs dealing with.

Book Works has been successful in selling advance copies of books to galleries. We offer special discounts to galleries who represent artists working with Book Works, as an incentive to order copies in advance of publication. This is a useful method of raising revenue and recouping costs early on in the book's life.

Another type of 'stockist' that is worth considering are websites. There are several websites that promote artists' books that reach audiences that may be unattainable for small publishers.

[www.artistsbooks.com](http://www.artistsbooks.com)  
[www.artmetropole.com](http://www.artmetropole.com)  
[www.barbarawien.de](http://www.barbarawien.de)  
[www.boekiewoekie.com](http://www.boekiewoekie.com)  
[www.bookartbookshop.com](http://www.bookartbookshop.com)  
[www.bookstorming.com](http://www.bookstorming.com)  
[www.florenceleowy.com](http://www.florenceleowy.com)  
[www.printedmatter.org](http://www.printedmatter.org)