

# Myths & Realities of Self-Publishing

Exploring the mindset & attitude required to make a living  
writing and self-publishing fiction

ANITHA KRISHNAN | [thedreampedar.com](http://thedreampedar.com) | Sunday, 17 November 2024 | BurlLITFest

# Who am I?

- Speculative fiction author & award-winning poet
- Started self-publishing in 2018
- Total of 15 titles so far  
(2 novels, 2 novellas, 10 short stories, 1 poetry collection)
- ‘Dying Wishes’ finalist for 2023 *Rakuten Kobo Emerging Writer Prize* in Speculative Fiction category



# What you will learn today

- Various possibilities & opportunities that exist for indie authors
- What it takes to succeed (as a business) in the present market
- A better understanding of self-publishing so you can make more informed decisions as an author



Photo by Toa Heftiba on Unsplash

Myth #1

# Self-publishing is easy!

---

## Reality

- Lots of moving parts to keep track of
- Significant investment of time and money



Photo by Charlie Hammond on Unsplash

# It all begins with your stories!

## The Self-Publishing Ecosystem

---

### Ancillary Services:

Craft workshops/ Cover design/ Proofreading/ Editing/ Formatting/ Podcasts/ Conferences/ Mindset & productivity coaching

Ebooks  
Paperbacks  
Hardbacks  
Large Print  
Audiobooks  
Graphic novels

### Retail Platforms:

Amazon/ Kobo/ Apple/ Google Play/ Barnes & Noble

### Free/Paid Promotions:

Amazon ads/ FaceBook ads/ Newsletter builders/ Promo sites like BookBub

**YOUR STORIES**

### Distributors:

Draft2Digital/ IngramSpark

### Subscription Platforms:

Ream/ Patreon/ Wattpad/ Royal Road

### Author Platform:

Website  
Newsletter  
Blog/ Content Marketing

### Licensing Deals:

Foreign language rights/ Print-on-demand merchandise/ TV & film rights/ video games

### Crowdfunding:

Kickstarter

### Social Media

### Direct Sales:

Payhip/ Shopify

## Myth #2

**Self-publishing means you have to be everywhere and do everything all the time!**

---

## Reality

- The FOMO is real. But our time, energy and resources are limited.
- Different strategies apply to different stages of the author journey.
- Start small and gradually build over time.



Photo by Joseph Corl on Unsplash

# It all begins with your stories!

## The Self-Publishing Ecosystem

---

### Ancillary Services:

Craft workshops/ Cover design/ Proofreading/ Editing/ Formatting/ Podcasts/ Conferences/ Mindset & productivity coaching

### Ebooks

### Paperbacks

Hardbacks

Large Print

Audiobooks

Graphic novels

### Retail Platforms:

Amazon/ Kobo/ Apple/ Google Play/ Barnes & Noble

### Free/Paid Promotions:

Amazon ads/ FaceBook ads/ Newsletter builders/ Promo sites like BookBub

**YOUR STORIES**

### Distributors:

Draft2Digital/ IngramSpark

### Subscription Platforms:

Ream/ Patreon/ Wattpad/ Royal Road

### Author Platform:

Website

Newsletter

Blog/ Content

Marketing

Social Media

### Licensing Deals:

Foreign language rights/ Print-on-demand

merchandise/ TV & film rights/ video games

### Crowdfunding:

Kickstarter

### Direct Sales:

Payhip/ Shopify

## Myth #3

Self-publishing is a get-rich-quick scheme!

*or*

There is no money in writing and self-publishing!

---

## Reality

- Low-margin, high-volume business
- Market *appears* saturated
- Concept of ‘magic bakery’



Photo by Sarah Elizabeth on Unsplash



# **Findings from 2024 Indie Author Survey by Written Word Media**

Released on 24 October 2024

# Motivation for Publishing

---

- *“I want to make money from my book.”* **42.7%**
- *“I want my story to be told.”* **19.3%**
- *“Writing is a hobby I enjoy.”* **16.7%**
- *“I want to become a well-known author.”* **14.7%**
- *Other* **6.8%**

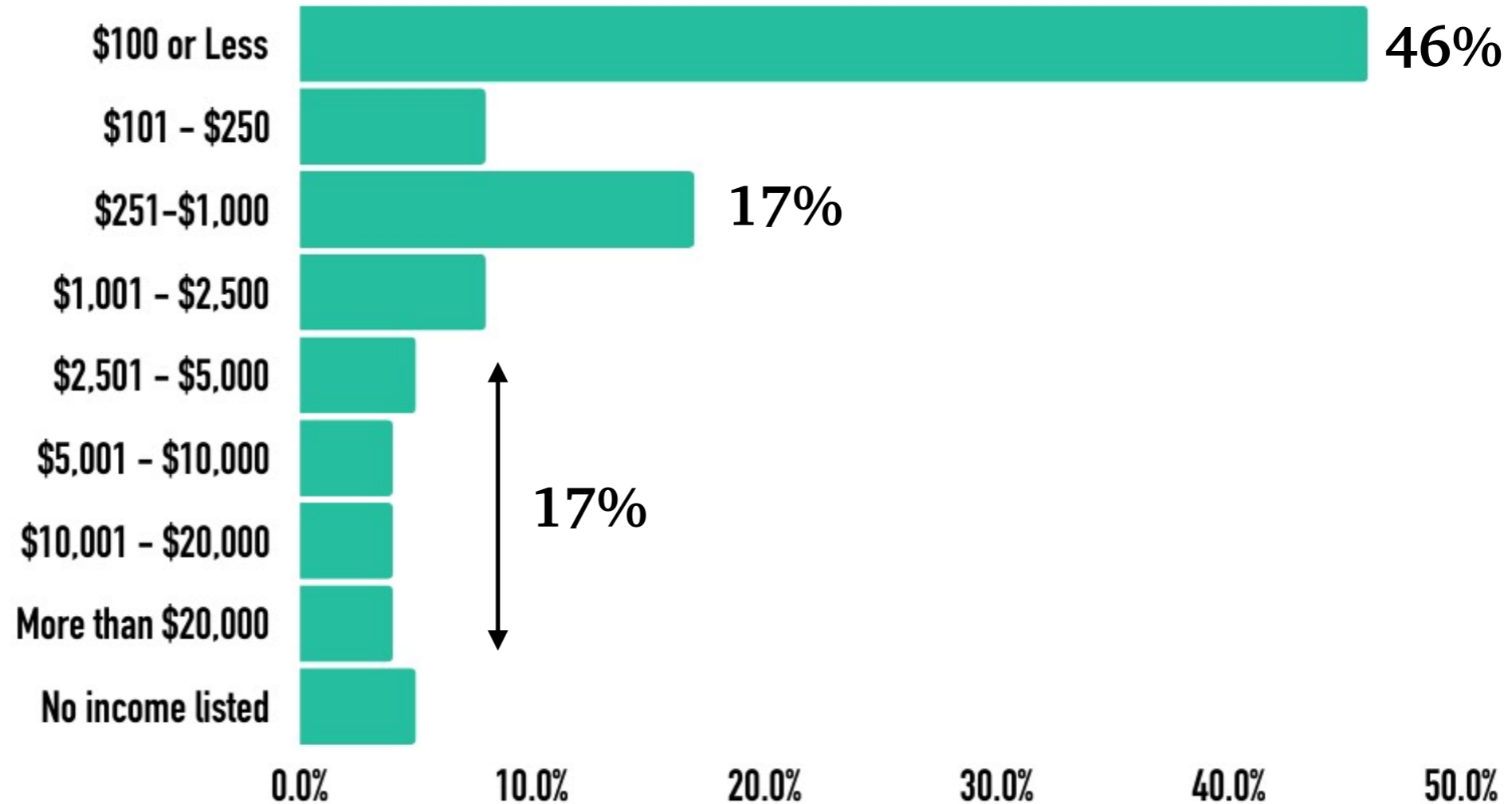


Photo by Thom Milkovic on Unsplash

# Income Breakdown

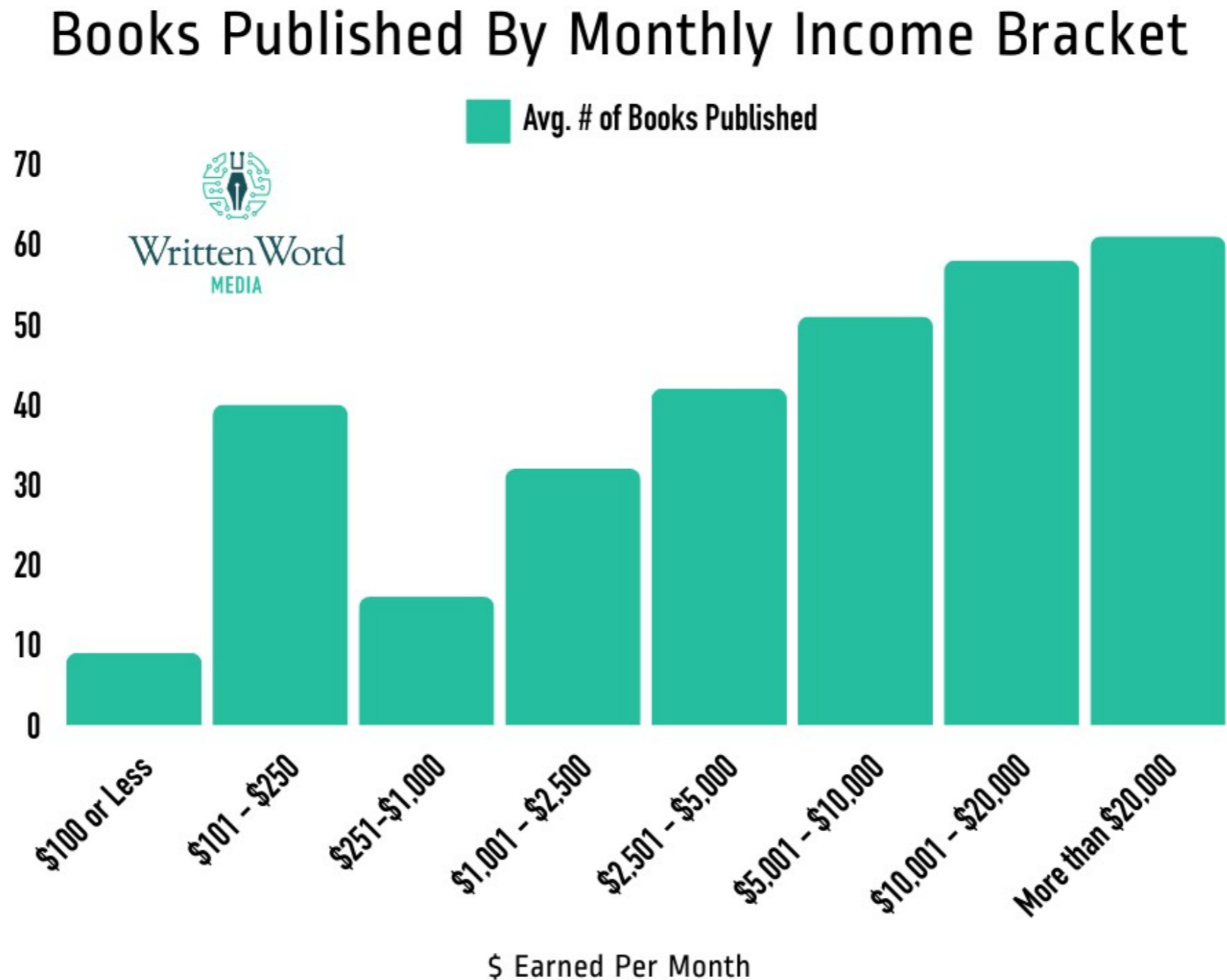
Show me the money! 😊

How much do authors earn selling books per month?



# Number of Books Published

How many books does it take?



## Myth #4

**Self-publishing is an objective, merit-based industry!**

---

## Reality

- Luck plays a far greater role than most people admit.
- Art is subjective, and the market's responses are hard to predict.



Photo by Jakob Cotton on Unsplash

## Myth #5

**If I can do it, so can  
you!**

---

## Reality

- Everyone's strengths, interests, and capacities to work differ.
- We're constantly evolving too.



Photo by engin akyurt on Unsplash

## Myth #6

**You must be on social media to be successful!**

---

## Reality

- Social media does not sell books.
- Write a book for your fans to rave about on social media.

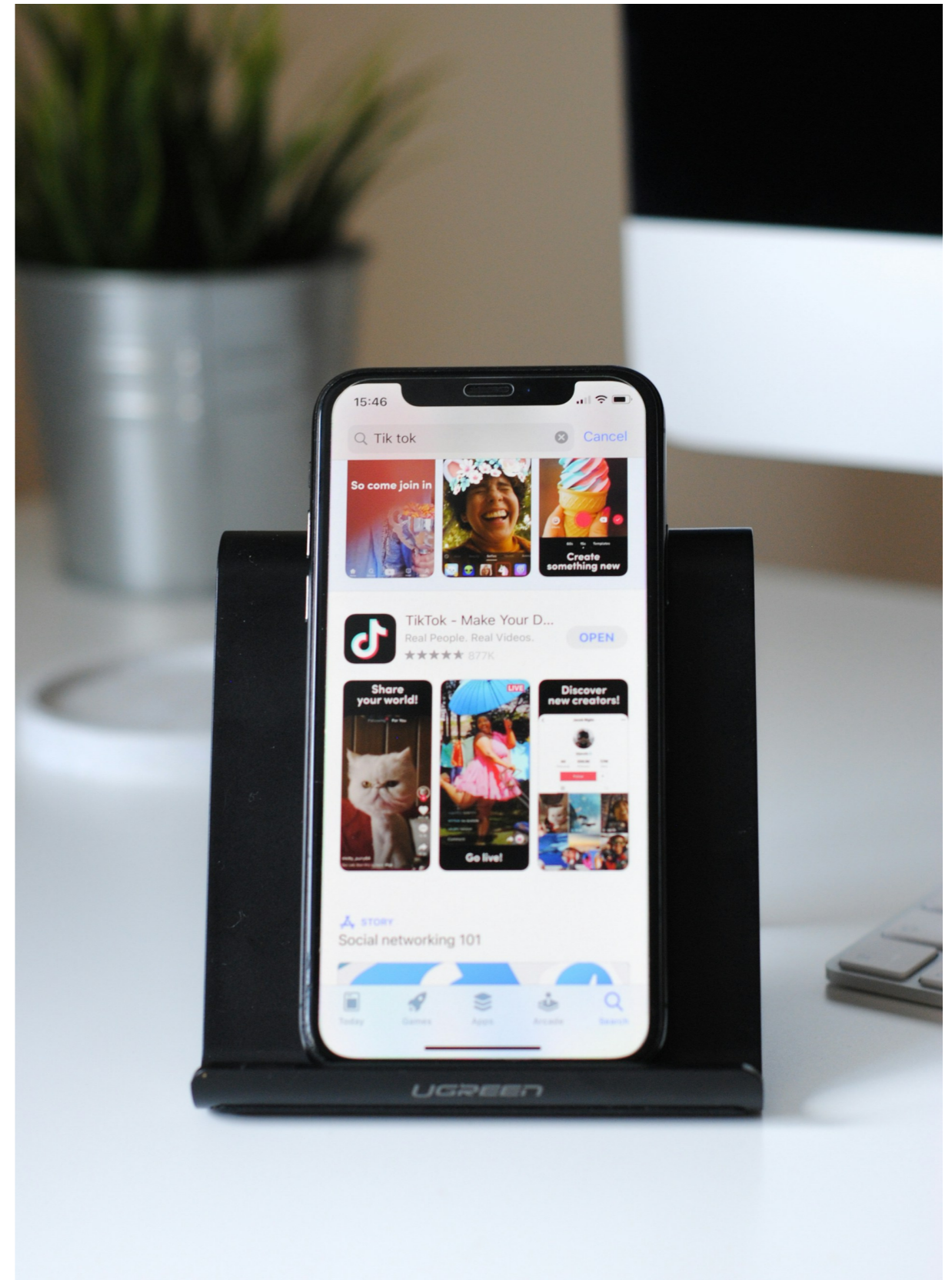


Photo by Nik on Unsplash

## Myth #7

**You need to know  
where you're going in  
order to get there!**

---

## Reality

— *As you start to walk on the way,  
the way appears.* ~ Rumi

— Every experience is information to  
guide you onwards.

— Choose your path and stick to it.  
Or pivot, if you decide to.



Photo by Eileen Pan on Unsplash



## Myth #8

**Go big or go home!**

---

## Reality

- The range and scope of success are vast and varied.
- ‘Big name’ and ‘superstar’ status are no longer viable end-goals.
- Niche markets make more room for us to thrive.



## Myth #9?

# AI will decimate the creative industry!

---

## Reality

- The future is unknown but we can choose how we respond to this uncertainty.
- Regulations and industry responses are still evolving.
- Tap in to our human foibles and vulnerabilities to differentiate our work from AI-generated content



Photo by Gabriella Clare Marino on Unsplash

# So, what next?

---

- Try to write books in a series.
- 5 books each in 4 interconnected series = 20 books
- Build your mailing list alongside.
- Submit short stories to magazines.
- Experiment with ads and paid promo sites when you have a *sufficient* backlist.



Photo by Lindsay Henwood on Unsplash

# Key Takeaways

---

— Self-publishing is a low-margin, high-volume business.

*“It is a ‘numbers’ game. A game won by the writer who keeps the most stories out in front of the most markets.”*

~ Douglas Smith,  
*Playing The Short Game.*



Photo by Glenn Carstens-Peters on Unsplash

# Key Takeaways

---

— Time in the market and consistent production matter in the long run.

— There are no guarantees.



Photo by Renáta-Adrienn on Unsplash

# Key Takeaways

---

*As for the rest,  
there are NO RULES!*



Photo by Peter Conlan on Unsplash



# You don't have to go it alone!

## TORONTO INDIE AUTHOR CONFERENCE

---

Beeton Hall, Toronto Reference Library

April 26—27, 2025

<https://torontoindieauthorcon.com/>

Join the community on Discord!

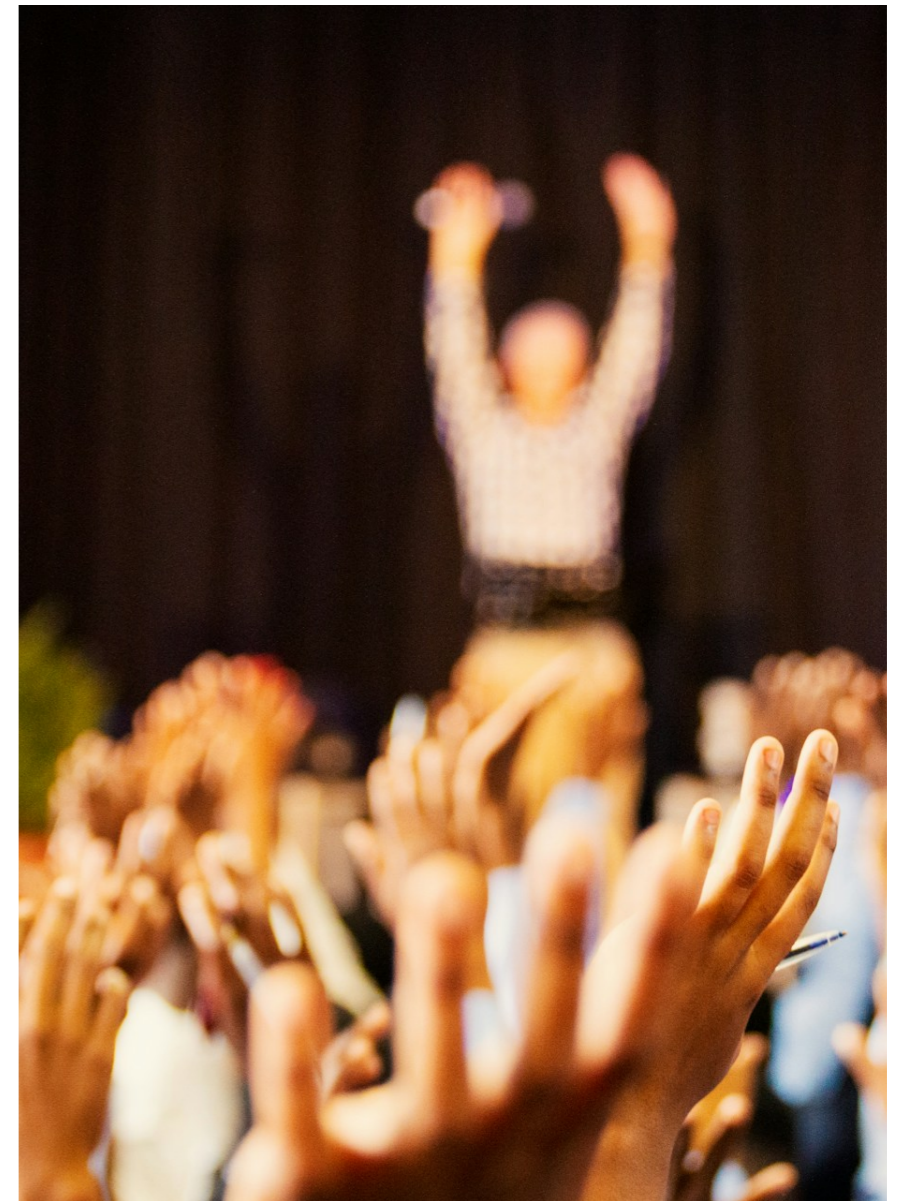


Photo by Jaime Lopes on Unsplash

# Questions?

Stay in touch! Write to me at [thedreampedar@gmail.com](mailto:thedreampedar@gmail.com)

Download digital copies of the presentation and handout at  
[thedreampedar.com/bpl](http://thedreampedar.com/bpl)