

## Many Persons Publish Their Books Privately; Some Are Big Sellers

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Ego, Not Profit, Is Motive  
Often; 74 Rejection Slips  
And a Rise to the Top Spot

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NEW YORK — Harold Weisberg doesn't give up. He wrote a book and wanted it published. He submitted it to 74 publishers, and he got 74 rejection slips.

So Mr. Weisberg took his manuscript to a printer, paid to have 5,000 copies printed and bound and then arranged for the distribution himself. Today the book, *Whitewash: The Report on the Warren Report*, is in its third printing.

"You are making publishing history," Mr. Weisberg quotes book-industry friends as telling him. Well, not quite. Such private publishing ventures are hardly new, but they apparently are increasing, printers say, though there aren't any figures on books published privately.

What is new, though, is that a surprising number of these books are posting impressive sales. Indeed, the top-selling nonfiction book in the U.S., *How to Avoid Probate!*, was first published privately by author Norman Dacey. That book, like some others, attracted a commercial publisher after the initial

private economic advantages are favorable subjects for private publishing. William Wake, Jr., a mailman studying for a doctorate in Assyriology at the Dropsie College for Hebrew and Cognate Learning in Philadelphia, noticed that there wasn't an everyday translation of Babylonian literature. So he translated one "I had to," he says. The limited edition will cost for \$50.

### The Wrong Everything

Private publishing differs from so-called vanity or subsidy publishing, in which the author pays a publisher to produce and distribute his book and then receives royalties based on sales. Private publishers arrange for their own distribution and get all profits. Many authors who publish privately insist they would never go to a vanity publisher.

But Edward Uhlan, president of Exposition Press, Inc., which does subsidy work, says he gets more than 200 inquiries a year from private publishers who want him to distribute their books. "Usually the books have the wrong jacket, the wrong price, the wrong size and the wrong format," he says. "But I've taken a number of them on and made real books out of them."

Most commercial publishers apparently figure the private publishing isn't hurting their business. In fact, it can help it. Crown Publishers, Inc., which contracted to publish *How to Avoid Probate!* after the 100-copy private printing sold out quickly, has sold more than 450,000 copies of the book.

Nevertheless, at least one publisher thinks a person is foolish to try to publish a book himself. Says Mr. Uhlan of Exposition Press: "Anybody who knows anything about publishing just does not try to do it himself."