



Books & Writers



*Want to publish a book?
Forget Amazon—just head to Canton bookstore*

Yawn's Publishing succeeding in a tough market

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When's the last time you went into a bookstore?

Perhaps you were killing time and found one of the (few) Barnes & Noble stores left or maybe you are one of the lucky ones who still has a small bookstore near your town.

Like small, independent movie theatres, the small, independent bookstores are harder and harder to find.

With the emergence of Amazon which, according to the Open Education Data Base, sells about 22 percent of all books in the United States—a market share that is worth about \$5.2 billion a year—small bookstores have had a tough time.

Many stores have disappeared in the past few years, including Waldenbooks, B. Dalton and, most recently, Borders, which has filed for bankruptcy.

Are you one of the 28 percent of Americans who own an e-reader? That business alone is believed to have contributed to the downfall of thousands of small, independent bookstores across the country.

According to Forbes, there are about 50 percent fewer independent bookstores in the U.S. than there were 20 years ago—and independent book stores account for only 10 percent of all book sales.

But one local bookstore that not only survived but changed with the times is right down the road in downtown Canton.

As the only family-run independent bookstore and publisher in northwest Georgia, Yawn's Publishing has moved from a 4,000 square foot bookstore on Main Street to cozier surroundings just off North Street.



Farris Yawn in front of Yawn's Publishing in Canton. The Yawn family publishes more than 80 authors as northwest Georgia's only independent bookstore and publisher.

"Books have always been a passion," said Farris Yawn, who opened his first store about 11 years ago. But the business began to evolve.

"We'd have local authors come in and ask us to carry their books," said Yawn, president of Yawn's Publishing. "We'd take a look at the books and some of them were poorly laid out with a bad cover design, and then we'd look at the price and the author would be asking \$24.95 for a little paperback," he said with a smile. "While we love to support local authors, we knew no one would buy a book like that at that price."

So the Yawns smartly got ahead of the curve.

"We got to thinking, 'we could do a better job than that,' so we opened up a side business as a publisher."

While Yawn's traditional bookstore business was shrinking with the dawn of Amazon and its Kindle, "...the publishing side was taking off."

So, Yawn's Publishing was born, and it's prospering today, proudly publishing more than 80 authors.

But in this highly competitive field, the road for an independent publisher is not an easy one.

One of biggest challenges is getting a new book noticed. Yawn said with more than 1.5 million new titles released each year, the challenge for both the publisher and the author is getting a new title noticed.

Besides going up against online giant Amazon and the Big Five traditional publishers like HarperCollins and Simon & Schuster, independent publishers like the Yawn family have to

compete on the basis of the highly personalized service.

"Most of our business is from word-of-mouth and repeat clients," said Yawn.

Yawns will tailor their books for the author's needs. "We offer many services, from help with reading, editing services, illustrations, cover design, printing and whatever the author needs," said Yawn.

While it may take more than a year to publish a book through a big publisher, Yawn said their process normally takes three to four months, depending on many factors.

Publisher Nadine Yawn added "...it has a lot to do with acceptance on the author's part on how hard they are willing to work." She said "...you've got to be able to sell the content and you've got to set your goals up front."

"We invite prospective authors to go to the library and read books like they want to write," Nadine said. She added that will give first-time writers an idea of what's involved with writing a book that people will want to read.

"You've got to treat it as a job, as a business," added Farris.

Yawn says he uses printers in several states, including some here in Georgia, "...it just depends on the size of the project."

Stepping into Yawn's is a little like walking into a bookstore you might have visited during your younger days. It's full of different titles that you won't find just anywhere, biographical notes about the authors they publish, an array of children's and inspirational titles as well as some of the more popular books on the market today.

You will be met with friendly and knowledgeable neighbors who will not only show you some terrific books that they have published, but also guide you through the process of publishing your own work.