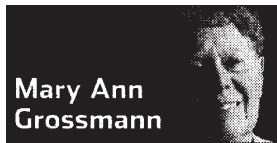


## Blueprint for new print

All those budding authors who have written books and have no idea how to get them published now have three guardian angels – the Book Architects.

Dorothy Molstad, Pat Morris and Linda Strommer are a formidable Minnesota trio with a total of more than 80 years of experience in publishing.



They've watched the industry they love change dramatically in the past decade, and now they've launched a business — Book Architects — that helps first-time authors navigate the bewildering, evermore-complicated paths to getting a book published.

The partners know that variations of publishing are exploding, including self-publishing and subsidized or co-publishing (in which an author shares expenses with the publisher).

The good news is that technology has made it easier to get a book into print. The bad news, according to this knowledgeable trio, is that some people are getting ripped off.

There was the California woman, for instance, who paid \$6,500 for 10 badly printed and edited books with a photo-shopped cover. Some naive authors sign contracts without realizing they will have to pay for all parts of production. Others end up with 5,000 books in their basement and not a clue how to sell them. One man was so excited to get a publisher he didn't read the contract and inadvertently gave away all foreign rights to his book.

Molstad remembers the day she and her friends had had enough of these horror stories.

"I was sitting around with Pat and Linda, grumbling and complaining about people getting scammed because they don't understand the business of publishing," she recalled. "Then Pat said, 'Why don't we do something about it?' We started to think about how we could get to these new authors and help them make informed decisions."

The women got together for discussions over lunch many times last winter, and on April 1, they opened a bank account. Book Architects was born.

As far as the partners know, there is nothing like Book



**Book Architects partners** are, from left, Linda Strommer, a former art director and corporate creative director who develops customized marketing plans and works with web sites; Pat Morris, a professional editor for more than 25 years who's serving her second term as president of Midwest Independent Publishers Association; Dorothy Molstad, public relations-marketing expert with more than 30 years of experience, highlighted by the international publicity earned for Voyageur Press' Snowflake books, which resulted in a U.S. postage stamp.

Architects in the Twin Cities. And based on current statistics, their business should be a success. An estimated 8,000 to 11,000 new publishers enter the market each year, most of them self-publishers, according to the Web site [selfpublishingresources.com](http://selfpublishingresources.com).

Bowker, the company that keeps track of global information about books, announced that despite a decline in traditional book publishing, 2008 was "another extraordinary year of growth in the reported number of 'On Demand' and short-run books. Bowker projects that 285,394 On Demand books were produced last year, "a staggering 132 percent increase over the previous year's final total." (On Demand are books printed when orders come in, a method often used by writers who sell online. Short-run books are those printed in batches of less than a few thousand at a time.)

Minnesota is a hotbed of small-press publishing, blessed with plenty of reputable people and organizations that help authors. But many concentrate on just one aspect of writing and Advertisement publishing. You can sharpen your writing skills through classes at the Loft and other places, for instance, or hire a "book doctor" to smooth out your manuscript. There are dozens of printers and design businesses that will produce a finished book, as well as companies that specialize in co-publishing. The Internet also is filled with Web sites offering publishing advice.

But all this can be confusing to a beginning writer, and Book Architects aims to be a one-stop shop that helps authors cut through the sometimes conflicting advice floating around out there.

"Our philosophy is that there are all different ways to get published, and one will be the best for you," Molstad said. "We don't make a decision for you. We give information

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## Blueprint for new print, continued...

so that when you make a decision, you know what you are getting into."

The Book Architects will listen to an author's book concept and answer basic questions such as: I've started a book, but I'm stuck, and where do I go from here? I've written my book, but what do I do next? How do I find an agent? Should I self-publish, send my manuscript to a traditional publisher or sign with a co-publishing company? Should I do an e-book? How do I develop a Web site? What about pricing, ISBN numbers, contracts, working with designers and editors?

A one-hour consultation with Book Architects is \$150; a

written evaluation and private consultation for a completed manuscript is \$350.

"We look at the manuscript as a whole — not just grammar and punctuation, but freshness and marketing opportunities," Strommer said.

Molstad says, with a laugh, that "we wanted to call the company B—— Are Us. We try not to be harsh in our manuscript reviews, but we are honest. There are too many books out there that never should have seen the light of day. People wasted their money self-publishing 2,500 books when somebody should have been honest and told them to do 25 copies for friends and family."

## HE GOT THE 'POINT'

Did Book Architects help Paul Miller write a better book?

"Oh, my goodness, absolutely," says the Lake Elmo author who was Book Architects' first fiction client. His debut thriller, "Vantage Point," is due out in October.

"I believe there are many able writers milling around the Twin Cities who, like I was, are uncertain of the process, much less how to find the right vendors and what questions to ask them," Miller said.

A former technology sales executive, Miller left his job to write while he was a stay-at-home dad caring for daughter Sophie. He and his wife, Angie, also have 9-year-old twin sons, Nick and Joe. It was Angie who urged him to go for his dream of writing Advertisement a novel.

"I completed a manuscript, but I was embarrassed about it," Miller recalls. "I tried to find an editor, but Pat Morris was the only person who'd look at it. I sent her 30 pages, asking if she thought it was so terrible it should be thrown away, or terrible but fixable."

Morris read the whole manuscript and sent Miller 25 plot points to reconsider. He incorporated her suggestions, plus 10 more of his own, and he knew he had a better book.

"For one thing, 5,000 words were gone," he says with a laugh.

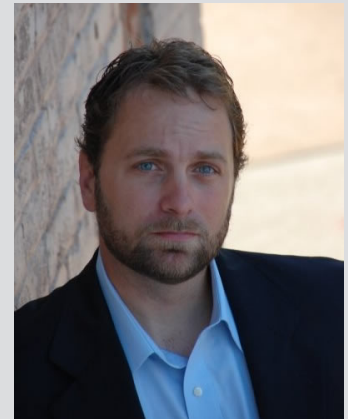
Miller sent his manuscript to a round of agents, with

no success, and finally decided to self-publish after working with Book Architects.

"Dorothy (Molstad) reviewed my book and told me which people to stay away from in the publishing process," he recalled. "Writers like me worry about creating good characters. But if you don't know the publishing business, it's useless to write well."

Miller still contacts Book Architects almost every week with questions. He plans a first printing of 1,000 copies of his trade paperback and estimates the whole process will cost him about \$14,000.

"Vantage Point," which involves a plot to murder thousands of people and cripple the U.S. economy, will sell for \$15.95 a copy. When Miller sells 1,600 books, he'll start making money, but at this point, he'll be happy to break even. He's just eager to finally get his book out to the public.



Paul Miller

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