



WRITERSWORLD Newsletter - Issue No. 70

THE UNLAWFUL ACTIVITIES OF LIGHTNING SOURCE UK LIMITED AND THREE OF ITS UK BASED CLIENTS FORCES THE SALE OF WRITERSWORLD

By Graham Cook

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If the use of the word 'unlawful' appears strong the Merriam-Webster dictionary's definition of 'unlawful' we are using is "not morally right or conventional" and if Mr Kirby Best, the Chief Executive of Lightning Source Inc (parent company of Lightning Source UK Limited), thinks the actions of that wholly owned subsidiary do not fall within the definition then frankly "God help us all." To be honest I have been appalled at the behaviour of Lightning Source which has so cruelly and despicably turned on such a loyal and courteous client as **WRITERSWORLD**. We try to operate under the highest standards we can in the United Kingdom independent print on demand industry. Now Lightning Source has ended up on the wrong end of a lawsuit in two countries and has created their own public relations disaster.

My own personal experience is that with exceptions, the independent, privately-owned print on demand publishing industry in the UK is morally bankrupt. This Newsletter shows that Lightning Source UK Limited is doing nothing to raise the bar - in fact in our case they lowered the bar. The common theme in the industry is that they are arrogant and do not listen. This attitude may be because they used to be one of the only two "real shows in town." Competitors to Lightning Source UK Limited are popping up everywhere evidenced by the fact that we have replicated all the services they provided for our clients with similar prices and services working with a local digital printer. All we had to do to get this service was contract to provide a minimum of 100 book titles per year.

For those authors whose books are working their way through our systems please do not worry about what is going on. We now have a choice of printers as we publish under the author's name using an ISBN number registered to them. Technically, we could still set up an account for our authors at Lightning Source but we will not.

To better understand this issue, for an author not to have an ISBN number in his or her own name is akin to buying a car and not having the log book (registration certificate) in your name. As to the idea that an author who has paid to have a book published but is not able to buy books direct from the printer at cost plus shipping! If you paid to have your house painted would you allow the painter to charge you money when people look at it? Of course you would not. One of the Lightning Source publishing companies mentioned in this Newsletter (Authoronline Ltd) charges authors 25% of the retail price for buying copies of their own book. By way of example, if the book retails at £10.00 and the author wants 100 copies the author will have to pay £250.00 for the privilege of buying copies of the book they have already paid to publish. We had a client this very week wishing to order 2,500 copies of his book which retail at £20.00. If operated under the Authoronline Ltd publishing policy, we would be gouging our client out of £12,500! Then there is the issue of deducting money from authors' royalties: assuming the author is even told the accurate number of copies sold, the policy of Authoronline Ltd would deduct 40% of the royalties - so on a book that retails for £10.00 the author may be left with as little as £0.49.

I have spent over six years building Writersworld from scratch and despite making every mistake in the book am proud of what I have achieved. I believe with all my heart that www.writersworld.co.uk is the best website of its type in the world. Of course I have left yet another bunch of tweaking requests for the website to make sure I leave "my baby" perfect! But when the soon-to-be-introduced free automated book sizing/page sizing system is in place along with an in-house affiliate programme, no print on demand book publishing company anywhere will be able to catch Writersworld or surpass

its services. Our website also has a page rank of 6 at Google. In short a page rank is a "vote" by all the other pages on the Web, about how important a page is and a link to a page counts as a vote of support. As an example of the importance of our page rank Lightning Source does not even have a page rank while MSN has a page rank of 2. Of the twenty major key words and phrases for our industry at Google we rank number one which is virtually unheard of in the web design industry and apart from there not being any grammatical mistakes or inconsistencies throughout the entire

www.writersworld.co.uk website, each of our web pages has the certification . This is matched by only one in two hundred thousand websites in the world. Along with that we believe we have the fairest contract and payment plans.

We are the only publishing company where a visually impaired or blind person can have text read back to them in a voice of their choosing as fast as they wish by simply dragging their mouse along the text. The Virtual Customer Service Representative on our Home Page provides concise answers to any one of thousands of questions about Writersworld and the print on demand process. We even come to the aid of the author if they are sued for libel as long as they comply with our policies and of course we offer numerous publishing packages to suit the type of book. Colour illustrations and photographs are loaded at 600 DPI and printed in the UK, there is a book reprint and Thesis Service and we have the best Newsletter in the industry! There is a free book sizing system will enable the author to choose a book size and his preferred font, enter their estimated word count and the system will generate an approximation of the page count. These can all be adjusted automatically until the author is satisfied. We also have in hand the production of a POD broadcast which, via interviews and other visual aids, details the production of a book from start to finish.

The Writersworld website did not get there by happenstance! It took a lot of hard work by a lot of people, including me, working seven days a week often for fifteen hours taking only four days vacation in six years! I hope you agree our website speaks for itself.

Underlying this, there is absolutely no doubt that the Writersworld methods of dealing with authors' rights are the best in the world:

- no long term contracts,
- payment plans to suit their budget as their books progress,
- authors are issued with the ISBN number in their own name,
- they are able to buy their books at print cost,
- setting their own retail price and,
- they receive 100% of their royalties,
- owning the copyright of their book cover and content,
- along with a host of publishing packages and free services.

AS TO LIGHTNING SOURCE

Writersworld used to be one of Lightning Source UK Limited's best paying, most courteous and respected privately-owned book publishing clients with regard to both the quality of its books and also its ethical trading standards. In fact, on one occasion Writersworld sent every Lightning Source female member of staff with whom we dealt on both sides of the Atlantic a beautiful flower/plant arrangement, and the men an alternative gift. We never once ranted or raved at their staff if a book went wrong as apparently some book publishers and authors do.

In the early part of 2005, Writersworld came to two conclusions. On July 4, 2005, I wrote to Lightning Source UK Limited expressing my concerns that they were permitting certain print on demand book publishers *defacto* to operate a scam by publishing poorly written or edited books from which the author had very little chance of recovering their money. I also pointed out that in my opinion they were abrogating their responsibilities by not allowing authors to have their own independent accounts - that the way they were operating was "a time bomb waiting to go off."

1. Lightning Source's accounting methods were so archaic as to leave authors wide open to be defrauded by some independent print on demand book publishers, and as a consequence, Writersworld advised Lightning Source that we intended to set an example to their other publishing clients. Instead of putting all its authors' books through one account, we would open up separate and individual accounts for our authors, which was perfectly achievable within Lightning Source's business, and would not cost them a penny more. Lightning Source's antiquated accounts system is such that the more book titles published by the publisher, the higher the cost to the publisher of administering the royalty payments to the author.

2. That Lightning Source was not monitoring the trading activities of their independent print on demand book publishers and was allowing the activities described above to continue. Among the instances here, Writersworld published a book and then discovered that the author's claims to a PhD from a certain University and that he was a Bishop in a certain church were false, as no such university or church existed. It was also discovered that other parts of the author's biography were false and parts of the book plagiarised. We pulled the book, returned the digital book file to the author and advised Lightning Source as to why the book had been withdrawn for publication. What did the author do? He simply tried to open up an account with Lightning Source - until we put a stop to it. Lightning Source Limited do not adequately vet publishers or monitor their conduct. The four Lightning Source book publishers mentioned in this Newsletter must surely demonstrate what trading and moral standards Lightning Source are prepared to tolerate or condone. The publishers were not only permitted by Lightning Source to operate as they did but also given the responsibility of administering the authors' ISBN numbers, supplying books to the authors and paying royalties. The system is wrong, especially as authors have paid good money to have their book published and as a consequence should be allowed to be in control of their book and derive all the profits.

DIDN'T WRITERSWORLD SET THE CAT AMONGST THE PIGEONS WHEN IT MADE A STAND OVER AUTHORS' RIGHTS?

Fearing that Writersworld would expose Lightning Source's trading methods with certain independent print on demand book publishers, a wholesale attack was launched on the credibility of Writersworld and its founder and owner Graham Cook, the intent being to put Writersworld out of business.

Lightning Source's activities ranged from plain immoral to Kafka-esque as might be found in the Basil Fawlty School of Management. Writersworld authors were told that they would not print books that were produced by us or used a Writersworld ISBN number and Lightning Source brought down all the book titles that we had paid to load on its databases, which meant the public could not buy any book published by Writersworld. For over nine months they refused repeated requests to return the digital book titles belonging to Writersworld so they could be printed elsewhere. It was only when a Judge chastised Lightning Source in a legal action brought by us that they were returned. In many instances Lightning Source had permitted the digital book files, which were the property of Writersworld, to be used by other print on demand book publishing clients of theirs. It emerged they were releasing the files and printing books direct for the authors. These actions are subject of further claims for damages by us against Lightning Source UK Limited.

As recently as the morning of May 8, 2006, by happenstance, Writersworld discovered direct from one of its authors that while Lightning Source had been refusing to return the digital book files of his book to us, they had been printing off hundreds of copies for the author direct, and one can only presume using our imprint page and ISBN number. If the imprint page and ISBN number was changed that simply makes matters worse. It is a cardinal rule in the publishing industry that a printer does not print unless the publisher tells the printer to do so. Since we were the publisher in this case, could they be doing this extra curricular printing with other publishers' books too?

While all of the foregoing was going on, we also had to contend with the actions of three of Lightning Source's print on demand book publishing clients Authorsonline Ltd, Perfectpublishers Ltd and BestBooksOnline. The activities of a fourth are detailed below. Authorsonline Limited and Perfect Publishers Limited can be read about at a website we brought up to try to protect our reputation on the internet - www.ourdotcom.co.uk. They enlisted the aid of a woman in Canada named Rose DeRochers; a woman whose postings are so appalling that many forums and chat rooms have

banned her. The third print on demand book publisher client of Lightning Source, BestBooksOnline, is owned by Graham Smith. The following was written by him:-

"So, when Mr Cook informs you dear reader, that he will be getting on a jet this afternoon with his legal team, picture in your mind a drunken down-at-heel paranoid schizophrenic derelict, beaver away at his laptop, at the kitchen table of his pokey gated-flat, rented from West Oxfordshire Council, you will then have some idea of what the landscape looks like."

May I state for the record that none of these people has ever been in my home, which is not rented from West Oxfordshire Council. I do not live in a gated-flat, let alone work from a kitchen table; I am lucky enough to live and work in a beautiful English village, which appears to have little or no crime. My landscape, as I work each day looking through my triple-glazed windows, overlooks beautiful Cotswold countryside with fields that have pheasant, partridges and cows in them. I do not have to deal with traffic congestion, parking problems, fumes, toll charges and breathe country air all day. What is so wrong with that? Most people would give their hind teeth to work like this.

I have never met Graham Smith, nor has Writersworld ever had any business dealings with him. I have also not sought treatment for or been diagnosed as having those mental health problems. I understand "derelict" to refer to a homeless or jobless person - a vagrant. Yet I have a nice home, a full time job, own Writersworld and have a new car parked outside. As I do not live on the streets and constitute a public nuisance, I hope I do not fit that description either. However, more worryingly, he has sent me emails in which he claims to have contacted my neighbours, was going to send someone to my home and his obsession with me may have extended to visiting my village all the way from Yorkshire just to see how I live.

The point here is that Lightning Source entrusted Graham Smith to publish books for authors, to be the guardian of their ISBN numbers, administer their royalty payments, and supply authors with copies of their books. I have never even met the man, yet he has waged a campaign against me for over a year - what on earth could happen if one of his authors upsets him?

At this juncture it should be noted that an Amazon search of these "expert book publishers" shows the following information.

On Shahida Rahman of Perfect Publishers Limited: she has published the sum total of four books, three of which we originally had contracts to publish and she has published no books in 2006. She was operating from a plagiarised version of the Writersworld website in violation of our protected intellectual property rights. She even poached some of our Sub contractors but still apparently could not make it. More of her antics are related in www.ourdotcom.co.uk.

Richard Fitt of Authorsonline Limited has published seventeen books in 2006 of which eight have been since the end of January. Writersworld originally had contracts with the authors for two of these. One wonders how many of these books came about because Richard Fitt committed "the cardinal sin" of the Web design industry by cutting and pasting our specially crafted keywords and trading name from our website to divert internet traffic towards Authorsonline Ltd in violation of our protected intellectual property rights. These deeds and others are related in www.ourdotcom.co.uk.

Graham Smith of Mediaworld PR Limited and BestBooksOnline have published a total of three books in 2006, two of which show no book covers and are listed as out of print.

I referred above to a fourth print on demand book publishing company which was "established" last year. It published a total of five books, three of which were using our digital book files (the same ones Lightning Source had refused to return to us) and one was written by an author who was induced to switch from Writersworld to this new publisher, Swanstone Wynot. This Lightning Source publisher has brought out only one book this year, which may in part be due to us catching them trawling through our author data base with an e-mail that states, "It has come to our attention that Writerworld, the publisher of one of your current titles, has either ceased to trade or may be about to do so unless it can be sold as a going concern." I am sure that in our lawsuit against Lightning Source we will discover for a fact where they got their contact information and how they felt able to make to make

such a statement, never mind why they felt the need to resort to such an underhanded way of procuring business!

Please note that performing the same Amazon search on our books will not accurately reflect our numbers as we now publish under the authors' names using ISBN numbers registered to them.

Never once did Lightning Source contact Writersworld to pass on publishing enquiries received from the general public; I was never favoured by a visit from their Account Manager, even though he is based not far from where I live. However, Lightning Source knew they were publishing and printing books as a result of clients of Writersworld being induced to break their contracts by Authorsonline Limited and Perfect Publishers Limited, in some instances using digital book and title files belonging to us and which they were refusing to return. The Account Manager did not even ask if the authors concerned had been released from their contracts with us. He not only knew Writersworld had been involved with the original publication of the book titles, that we had been charged for loading the books onto the Lightning Source data base, but also that by allowing such practices Writersworld was losing income from these books' titles and also prestige. Time and again I sent e-mails to Lightning Source telling them about this. They not only ignored each and every communication, but supported what was going on. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure out that it was because I had made a stand on behalf of authors to try and protect them against unscrupulous print on demand book publishers. Because they refuse to adapt their defective trading methods as they relate to certain authors, perhaps Lightning Source wanted Writersworld and me out of the way. Well, their plan has backfired.

In my opinion, there was a systematic plan by these Lightning Source print on demand book publishing clients to try to destroy Writersworld and me both by reputation and financially. Here is a cut and past from the last page of the "infamous e-mail" circulated by Richard Fitt of Authorsonline Limited sent to our clients, suppliers, sub contractors and all and sundry which makes their purpose utterly clear:

"We the People are rather pissed off at the foregoing state of affairs, and would politely suggest that if you are considering publishing your book with WritersWorld that you think again. In August 2005, in response to popular demand, the disgruntled people of the publishing community established the WritersWorld Fanclub and this campaigning body has four aims:

- 1. To force WritersWorld Limited into liquidation*
- 2. The removal of Graham Cook from any involvement in the publishing industry, by widely publicising his activities and choking off the supply of authors and editors.*
- 3. The disqualification of Graham Cook from holding the post of company director in the United Kingdom.*
- 4. Returning Mr Cook to his original vocation in the household plumbing industry."*

I will brush over the misspelling of my company's name as "WritersWorld". And I emphasise that Writersworld Limited has not been forced into liquidation. I have not been investigated or disbarred as a Company Director. And finally, much as I admire the skills and knowledge of many plumbers, I was never one of their number, so can hardly return to that industry.

Reverting back to Lightning Source in our lawsuit against them I am at a loss to understand why they are claiming that at no time did Writersworld request the return of its digital book files when there is a plethora of e-mails asking, begging, pleading and threatening to try and get them back inclusive of more than one to the Managing Director of Lightning Source UK Limited, one to their Press Relations department in the US and one to Mr Kirby Best the President and Chief Executive Officer of their US parent company Lightning Source Inc , which is even more remarkable seeing as our files were returned out of the blue shortly after this latter e-mail was sent. They then denied they had tried to dissuade the clients of Writersworld from publishing with us when we produced just four separate e-mails on this topic to prove the point. The most remarkable denial was that they did not have in their possession the "infamous e-mail" and there were no documents in existence in their possession to and from any third parties, excluding their lawyers and if you believe that as they say in California " what are you smoking."

However as the title of this Newsletter suggests, it's time to face the inevitable and do my duty by putting my company, its authors and sub contractors first by disposing of Writersworld, resigning my Directorship and distancing myself from the company. I am handing over to an exceedingly capable and skilled person, who has not only more than enough of the requisite skills to run Writersworld on a daily basis but he is much better at what he does than I ever was. The identity of the new owner will be made clear in the near future after we have made our choice. I am currently reviewing bids from several suitors for what I believe wholeheartedly is the "Jewel in the Crown" of the UK independent print on demand book publishing industry. Through the current sale process, I am realising it is a very valuable company, and following the sale, I will be more influential in the UK publishing industry. I shall now be freed to pursue through the courts these persons bent on mischief.

I will go further here: any author whose book title was withdrawn from sale to the public through Writersworld as a result of the activities of Lightning Source and who did not publish with a competitor, make disparaging public remarks about our company or me and whose book we did not manage to bring live in a timely manner, I hereby undertake not only to get your title live but also pay you each £1,500.00 from my personal resources when I collect financial damages from any of these "scoundrels". Writersworld Limited may also wish to join in with this because as a company it is entitled to substantial damages.

Metaphorically speaking, imagine what it would have been like if for over a year you awoke each day to find the tyres on your car slashed; because as a result of these persons' and entities' activities that is what my business and private life has been like: simply intolerable.

In the meantime, I should like to thank our authors and sub-contractors for your belief and support over a long period. I wish you all every success.

Graham Cook

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EPISODE TWO

In the next Newsletter we will provide a detailed guide as to why the Lightning Source method of publishing books for authors that pay to publish through Lightning Source print on demand book publishers that Lightning Source exerts no controls over their trading methods, leaves the author not in control of their book, at risk of being exploited by the publisher with the author never knowing for a fact at any given time what their sales are and always at risk of being defrauded out of their royalties. As a common courtesy we will forward the text of this newsletter to Lightning Source for their comment prior to publication.

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