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Major Corporate Publishers

Today, the publishing industry is controlled by five major corporations: Penguin Random House, HarperCollins, Simon & Schuster, Hachette, and Macmillan. Together these five giants control about 80% of the market share, making it difficult for smaller companies to break through and be successful. However, some companies such as Amazon now provide platforms for authors to self-publish their work as ebooks, rather than going through one of the larger companies.

Penguin Random House, which was once two separate companies, Penguin and Random House, merged in 2013 to become the market leader with approximately 37% of the market today. Penguin was owned by Pearson, a public company, while Random House was owned by Bertelsmann, a private German company. Merging the companies initially caused a decline in revenue as the two companies went through the merging process, but now they are more efficient and continue to dominate the market. HarperCollins, the second larger publishing company with a market share of about 17.5%, is a subsidiary of New Corp, owned by Rupert Murdoch. According to their website, Harper Collins publishes about 10,000 new books a year. Simon & Schuster, owned by CBS, controls 11.7% of the publishing market. Annually, S&S publishes over 2,000 new titles. Hachette Book Group, the third largest publisher in the world with a share of 9%, is a smaller part of Hachette Livre, a French publishing company. Annually, Hachette publishes about 1400 titles. Finally, Macmillan, a private business owned by German company Georg von Holtzbrinck GmbH & Co., releases little financial information, so their exact market share is not known, but it is estimated to be about 5%.

Today, self-publishing platforms like Amazon are challenging the Big Five by allowing authors to publish their own works for free. They are then sold by Amazon, and the authors receive royalties. The self-publishing industry is growing every year as the process is much easier than hiring an agent and attempting to gain the attention of one of the traditional publishing companies.

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