ALL ALONE AT ABA

Because he’s always perceived that getting coverage in major media is his most significant challenge, Dillman has stuck to that maxim about bringing his work with pressure points to the attention of writers and editors—in almost every way possible.

“I used that quote from Playboy in flyers that I handed out at my first American Booksellers Association show,” he says, “I took a chance, rented my own booth, and I was the only one in it, with only one book in print.”


Twenty years, seven books, and more than 50 DVDs later, this author/publisher says, “I always stay on the alert. I look at magazines and newspapers and think, ‘Will they mention my work?’” Many have: in fact, Playboy has referred to the books five times.

Dillman isn’t shy about promoting his books to booksellers, either. Call up and ask if you can do a signing, he advises other self-publishers. Of course some stores will say “No,” but there’s always the chance of a sellout, like the one Dillman experienced on a visit to a Chicago Barnes & Noble.

He’d called, saying he’d be in the city, and would like to do a signing. The staff put up a poster about his new book, announced his appearance in the store newsletter—and he walked in to find a crowd awaiting him. Hours later, Barnes & Noble had sold out its inventory, and he’d sold the extras he had in his car. Of course, it helped that Dillman didn’t rely on the bookstore to do all the publicity; he maintains a high profile on the Web and within the martial arts community.

What else is important? Get a domain name that makes sense and helps you promote yourself and your company’s books. Says Dillman: “All the Dillmans out there and I got dillman.com registered!”

Dillman also has high praise for IBPA promotional programs, including the monthly mailings and the joint ad in Publishers Weekly. “It all helps,” he says.