

Self-Publishing 101--The Nuts and Bolts

Self publishing is as old as the printing press, and as new as the newest computer program designed to allow most anyone to get their story out. The biggest challenge? What's YOUR great idea?

❖ **Business vs. Family stories—Fiction vs Non-Fiction**

To further your business goals, you need an idea, and must work to develop it.

Who is your audience? Be clear about this so you can write an effective business book.

For family stories, your challenge is to tackle your attic or wherever your family records are, photos, letters, family trees, and get them organized and prioritized. From there, focus on the stories you are interested in passing on. Will this project be simply for family? Is there a compelling story in your family that you want to share with a wider audience?

For fiction writers, will this be a mystery? Romance? Young adult audience? Dystopian? Science Fiction? Each of these types of fiction have a certain style, and appeal to a certain audience. Be sure to read lots of books written in your desired style if you hope to successfully publish something in that genre.

❖ **Do you have experience writing? Are you willing to accept help?**

More people are writing these days—on-line blogs are plentiful. If this is your passion, go for it! If you need help, there are many ways of getting the help you want or need, to get your project past the finish line. On-line writing coaches are available, editors should be your best friend, and ghost writers are a viable option if you have neither the skill nor the time to undertake a written project, but have valuable experiences you wish to share.

❖ **Traditional vs. Self-publishing**

Traditional publishers are gate keepers; they may require a book agent to consider your manuscript. Most if not all will require the submission of a book proposal (which may require the assistance of a professional, which costs \$\$\$) and/or finished manuscript. If you are lucky enough to get a book contract, wonderful. It may still be years before your book is available to the public.

Print on Demand (POD)—write a book, then publish it!

(Well, there's a lot more to it)

❖ What is your budget?

Good, fast, cheap—choose two. Good and cheap, you'll have to wait (and wait) till other, better paying clients have been taken care of. Fast and cheap, expect an inferior product. Good and fast? Expect to pay top dollar.

Of course, there is DIY, if you have the time to invest, the willingness to tolerate a steep learning curve, and the patience to take on grappling with multiple forms of software.

❖ ISBN

ISBN is a confusing issue—basic point—each book sold through books stores, on-line, to libraries, and is intended for more than individual, private sales, must have an ISBN (Individual Standard Book Number). It is unique to each publication. Some POD companies offer free ISBNs. Otherwise, you must purchase each number (in the US—other countries off these for free). Multiple options exist to obtain the unique ISBN for your publication. It is not required for private sales or for use as a promotional product for your business.

❖ Print on Demand (POD)

Here are some of the most reputable organizations presently available to work with to create your book using POD software. Print on Demand means you do not have to order 500 books and find a place to keep them in your garage until you figure out how to sell them (typical of offset printing orders). Some permit ordering one and getting one copy. Order only what you think you need. Others require a small minimum (say, 25).

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Blurb: <http://www.blurb.com/about-blurb> Lots of choices of paper, hard and soft-bound, ebook options, helpful templates for lots of photos, more expensive than Createspace. Originally designed as a photo book option.

Lulu: <http://www.lulu.com/> Another print-on-demand company. Only email customer support.

❖ **You've written your book. Now you're ready to publish, right?**

Print on demand is workable for those with at least limited skill using on-line tools. Not there yet? Everything is available for a price. **But...not so fast.** Assuming you want readers to enjoy, and even share your book, there's a lot of work to be done. Most of writing is editing. That is, rewriting. Think you can do it all yourself? Think again. **Everyone deserves a good editor.**

❖ **Types of editing**

Developmental editing—you've written a story, but it's not quite right—something is missing. Or the organization is not what it should be. Or you aren't quite sure how to draw the connections between the important points of your book. You need a developmental editor.

Copy-editing—editing copy— sometimes called Line editing. You've gotten your book in good shape. Now you need someone to be sure you've got consistency of type, catching typos, insure consistency of phrasing, consistent use of specific terms or phrases.

Proof-reading—In publishing, this literally means "READING PROOFS," despite what you heard growing up in school. Final proofs—last details, no big changes without more \$\$\$.

Traditional publishing used to provide **ALL** these services, once you got through the gatekeepers who agreed to publish your book. **Self-publishing offers none of these services unless YOU pay for it!**

❖ **Book, cover design**

Most books are sold because of their covers. POD through both Createspace and IngramSpark have cover templates that are easy to use, with nice designs. The challenge is that the designs are limited, and you run the risk of using exactly the same cover design as someone else within your genre. For widest distribution of your book, utilizing both Createspace and Ingram/Spark, a unique cover design is necessary. Book designers are not cheap. Again, traditional publishing included this service as the package for publishing your great book. POD offers none of this unless you pay for it yourself.

Great overview of various publication options, pretty current info (about 1 year old)

<https://tragicbooks.com/2017/01/02/my-experience-self-publishing-with-createspace-blurb-kindle-lulu-smashwords-and-peecho/>

Ongoing, on-line info on book publishing and book promotion

<https://thebookshepherd.com/>

<https://publicityhound.com/>