

TURNING YOUR IDEA INTO A BOOK

THE “FUN” PART

Write your book with your target audience in mind.

Who will buy your book? What makes other books irresistible to them and what can you include to make yours a book they “must” own? Where do they shop? What will make your book irresistible to those retailers? Even if your manuscript is already written, consider what you can weave in that might lead to a readers’ contest, great placement in the store, something that drives readers to your web site, sequel or product tie-in opportunities or even a future movie deal.

Get a professional editor!

Work with someone you don’t love! A well-written manuscript requires complete, objective honesty from someone outside your inner circle and is worth every penny. Similarly, invest in a professionally-done Index if your book requires one. An Indexer works with software most of us don’t have and also does peer reviews and extra checking to be sure the index is thorough and user-friendly. This can actually make or break a book with reviewers. The index you create yourself with Microsoft Word is actually a Concordance!

While writing your manuscript, think about how you want your book to look.

Visualize YOUR book on the bookstore shelf! Make notes, sketches, lists of things you like and don’t like. If you see something on another book that you think is just perfect for you, BUY IT so you can have it as a reference.

DO: Make your book EASY for booksellers to love!
Make it stand out from the crowd, yet fit within the category.

DONT: Make your book difficult to categorize or to display.
Be wary of odd shapes, bindings and additional items packaged with it.

REALITY CHECK: Take frequent breaks to visit your favorite bookstores

- Look at how store is organized, decide where your book would “live”
- Look at other books in your genre – this varies!
- How are they bound?
- How “big” are they? Measure them. There are standard sizes.
- Predominant colors on the shelf?
- Do they have photos, illustrations, charts?

“Do I really need a book designer?”

Can you really format it yourself in Microsoft Word? It depends on the kind of book you’re doing, where you plan to sell it and how you plan to have it printed. Take a look at the interiors of the other books in your category. If your formatting skills can match this standard, you “might” be fine. But make sure your cover is professionally done. This is your major sales tool for the book and needs to stand up to scrutiny on-shelf next to every other book your customer is considering. At the very least, take your cover design into a bookstore and set it on the shelf and think about it. Better yet, get the opinion of someone who sells books all day long. They can give you an objective opinion of whether it’s ready for prime time. Be sure to look at it in both large and small sizes against a white background, too. If it won’t look good on Amazon, make some adjustments!

REALITY CHECK: Get an objective opinion of your work next to a “professionally done” book in your category from someone outside your immediate circle of loved ones. If your book looks “homemade,” it’s unlikely to be stocked by bookstores. This applies to both your cover and its interior! If a book doesn’t look inviting and easy to read, people won’t buy it. Even if it’s a great story.

THE “BUSINESS” PART

Copyright registration

When you write it, it automatically carries a copyright, but you want to protect it, so take this important step and register your work.

VISIT: <http://www.copyright.gov>
for full details.

Establish a publishing company

If you’re publishing independently, set yourself up as any other small business would. Get a name, take time to research the best business setup for yourself, (Sole Proprietor, LLC or whatever) and get your Tax ID numbers in order. After all, you will want to SELL these books!

Buy some urls!

Buy your name right away. Just do it.
Then, buy a few more urls:

1. Your Publishing Company name
2. Your book title
3. Your book’s main topic
4. Your author’s name (also buy a common misspelling, if there is one)
5. Anything else you might want to use as a marketing hook

Get an International Standard Book Number (ISBN)

A book offered for sale at retail needs an ISBN. It’s like a Social Security number for a book and it’s the number most visible in the barcode on the back of a book. These are available for purchase from R.R. Bowker. Actually, their powerful database can do even more to help sell your books, than simply providing code numbers.

VISIT: <http://www.bowker.com>
for full details.

Assign a BISAC subject heading

This code helps bookstores and libraries know where your book should be located in the store. Don’t make up your own hybrid classification, use one of the industry standards. The full list is free online.

VISIT: http://www.bisg.org/standards/bisac_subject/index.html
for full details.

MORE “FUN”

How to spot a professionally-done cover:

- Title reads easily from a distance and fonts look well-designed (and not like default or PowerPoint fonts!)
- Cover is not too cluttered with images and information.
- Information on front and back cover is well-organized to communicate quickly.
- Cover stands out from others, yet feels appropriate for the genre.
- Spine makes the title as easy to read as possible and if there's room, adds some kind of visual “hook to lure you in.
- Back cover “sells” without looking like a sales tool, both in content and organization.

How to spot a professionally-done interior:

- Text size is consistent and easy to read.
- Headers and footers are placed appropriately.
- Pages have easy-on-the-eye margins.
- Visuals are reproduced clearly.
- Fonts do not look like an academic paper or business report. (No Times New Roman or Calibri!)
- Inside has some graphic continuity with the cover.

PRINTING BOOKS

Print on Demand (POD)

If you're planning on printing books only when people actually order them, you can produce your book POD, which means you send it off to a printer who prints and fulfills orders for you, one book at a time, on a digital printer that essentially looks like a really big office copier. The printing is done direct from your digital file and no film is made. You'll spend more “per book,” but you'll also have a very small initial cost.

Digital Presses

If you're planning on printing 25-500 books, you can still print your book digitally, which means you send it off to a printer who produces slightly larger quantities for you on a digital press. This is an economical way to produce a small quantity of books and a great way to test-market or create samples to send to reviewers.

Offset Printing

If your initial press run is going to be 1,000 or more, you should print your book with an Offset Printer. This means you will be supplying digital files to a printer who will prepare film to run on a high speed printing press. Your print quality will be better and your cost per book will be much lower. Of course, it still costs a lot more to print 2,000 books than it does 200, but you have a better product that you can sell at a better price.

REALITY CHECK: No matter how much you can do yourself, the project is going to cost you some money. Decide how much you are willing to spend before you begin, so you can invest your money in the support services that will help you produce the best book possible. Call in favors where you can, but be honest with yourself about areas that are not your strong points. That's where your money should go.

eBooks, Kindle and Audio books

Many authors produce their books as digital downloads to be sold from their web sites or by Amazon. This can be an additional source of revenue or your sole source. There's a lot more to explore on this topic and I'll post more info or links online soon as I have time. It's probably the next big thing.

MORE “BUSINESS”

Rights and Permissions

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Lulu

www.lulu.com

Digital Printers

360 Digital

www.360digitalbooks.com

Creative Imaging

www.creativeimaginginc.com

Mira Digital Printing

www.mirasmart.com

Offset Printers:

Corley Printing (St. Louis, MO)

www.corleyprinting.com

McNaughton & Gunn (Ann Arbor, MI)

www.bookprinters.com

King Printing

www.kingprinting.com

Your idea is precious.

Produce a quality book that represents your idea in the best possible way.

You deserve nothing less.

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