

Self-Publishing 101

Part 3: Formatting & distribution

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A four-part series

- Part 1: Overview of the process and a discussion of goals.
- Part 2: Editing: Creating your best book.
- Part 3: Formatting and distribution.
- Part 4: Marketing: Finding your audience.

What is formatting?

- Formatting means applying style characteristics like font, line spacing, chapter headings, margins, headers and footers.
- Different formats for ebooks and print books.
- Ebooks: mobi (Amazon, Kindles) and EPUB (everything else.)
- Print: paperbacks, hardbacks in many different sizes.
- **Output:** a file that is ready to upload to the POD service or ebook distributor. Usually either a PDF (print, ebook) or docx (ebook.)

Formatting overview

- If you can perform a tedious task consistently for several hours, do it yourself to get exactly what you want.
 - Work through your book applying your style choices for font, line spacing, paragraph first line, chapter headings, margins, etc. Consistency is everything.
 - Headers and footers for print editions are the hardest for me. Ebooks are Easy.
 - Add front and back matter (next slide.)
- Or be happy with Draft2Digital's quite decent automated formatting.
- Otherwise, hire somebody (\$100-\$200. See books & links handout.)

Front & back matter

- Front matter: at least a title page; often also dedication, copyright page, Also By Author page, acknowledgements. Different styles for print & digital.
- Back matter: author's notes, sample of next book, list of other books, index, references... Different for fiction and non-fiction.
 - Be sure to add a link to sign up for your newsletter soon after THE END. (more in pt 4.)
- Look at books in both digital and print formats in your genre. Copy your role model authors. Be prepared to spend a day or two getting these right!
- <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/writing-front-and-back-matter-for-your-self-published-book/>

Formatting observations: ebooks

- Read some ebooks to see what you like & don't like. I don't like fancy doodads at the beginning of chapters, but some people love them.
- Font & font size don't matter - publisher and readers can change them.
 - I use Paragraph Normal, TNR, 12pt, indent 0.25", Spacing=Single. Define a Style, select the whole manuscript, and apply to all. THEN do chapter headings, front & back matter.
- Chapter headings in ebooks are usually plain and simple.
 - Mine are Heading 1, TNR 14 pt, bold, centered.
 - Chapters end with NO STRAY WHITESPACE and a single page break.

Formatting observations: print

- Trade paperbacks in the US are 6" x 9". Mass market pback is 4.3 x 7.
- Develop your style by looking at the books on your shelf. Then go to *The Book Designer* <http://www.thebookdesigner.com/> and browse around. Print pages of your manuscript in different fonts.
- Don't be too clever! Legibility is more important than anything else. Black type on cream paper.
- The Book Designer has a variety of templates for formatting compatible ebooks and pbooks, starting at \$59. A perfectly good choice!!
- CreateSpace will do it for you for \$599.

Print distributors

- Print On Demand (POD) outfits print a copy of your book when it's ordered.
- CreateSpace
 - Owned by Amazon, books sold through Amazon outlets worldwide.
 - No fees, nice interface, great proofing tool, great customer service.
 - Amazon has a new auto-formatting service to produce print books which is not quite ripe.
- Ingram Spark
 - Distributor for everything non-Amazon, meaning libraries & bookstores. (More below.)
 - \$49 set-up fees, clunky interface, irregular customer service.
 - Do NOT use IS for your ebooks; there's absolutely no point in it.

EBook distributors: Amazon

- Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP): a tool for distributing books through Amazon's global network of online retail outlets
- They call your sales receipts *royalties*, but that's a misnomer. They're receipts. Amazon takes a cut, like any retailer - typically 30%.
- Amazon is **NOT** your publisher. They're a distributor; a retail outlet. **YOU** are the publisher.
- The 800-pound gorilla. Even wide books sell 87% of copies at the Zon.
- Good reporting tools to track your sales on a daily, per-title basis.

Other ebook distributors 1

- Retailers sell books to readers; distributors upload books to retailers.
 - Distributors take ~10%; retailers take 25-30%. (Trad pubs take 75%+.)
- Retailers: B&N, Kobo, iBooks, Scribd, Smashwords, lots of smaller outlets. Also library outlets like Hoopla and Overdrive.
- Smashwords: early bird, old interface, verbose instructions. Use for a few of the smallest outlets or skip it. They also have a store. No print, no audio, weak reporting for small sales.

Other ebook distributors 2

- Draft2Digital: excellent service, great tools, dedicated to books & authors.
 - They'll take your docx and turn it into handsome mobi & epub & pdf.
 - Distribute to iBooks, Barnes & Noble, OverDrive (libraries), Playster, a couple more.
 - Expanding into print and audio: good news for authors!
- PublishDrive: opaque interface, so I don't use it.
 - They can distribute to GoogleBooks, which is some people want.
- I upload directly to Amazon, Kobo, and Smashwords and use D2D for the rest.

Amazon-exclusive vs wide distribution

- Kindle Unlimited: Amazon's subscription library. For \$9.99/month, you get free downloads of thousands of books.
- Authors are paid for each page read, through a complex formula that changes often. Many authors earn a living through KU alone.
 - I get 1,000-2,000 page reads a day. No idea how much money that is, but it ain't hay.
- Downside? Amazon could change its rules at any moment or go under. Many readers want to buy books elsewhere. People want more than one bookstore.
- Decision? Beginners should start with Amazon for simplicity. Give it a year or two, publish 2-3 books, then decide based on your tastes and your genres.

Print distributors: CreateSpace

- Print On Demand (POD): they print your book when someone orders it.
- Owned by Amazon, books sold through Amazon outlets worldwide.
- No fees, nice interface, great proofing tool, great customer service.
- Amazon has a new auto-formatting service which isn't quite ripe.
- Expanded distribution supposedly reaches bookstores & libraries, but I don't really think it does. Do NOT check this option if you plan to list your books with Ingram.

Print distributors: Ingram Spark

- Distributor for everything non-Amazon, meaning libraries & bookstores.
- \$49 set-up fees, clunky interface, variable customer service.
- Metadata aimed at pros, which makes it harder to understand.
- Do NOT use IS for your ebooks. There is no point in this.
- Their marketing services are also useless.
- You need an ISBN for this service (see below.)

Book Covers

- Educate your eye! Graze at Amazon, enjoy Joel Friedlander's award list
 - <https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2018/01/e-book-cover-design-awards-december-2017/>
- Make sure your covers look professional and reflect your genre. Look at many many covers in your genre. Study them!
- Try fiverr or premade covers to save money.
- Make sure they look good in tiny thumbnail size!!!

Put on your publisher hat

- Your book is done. It's proofed, it's formatted, it's printed or turned into an ebook. NO MORE EDITING ALLOWED.
- Now put on your publisher hat and pretend this book was written by someone you've never met.
- Don't wallow in those unique story details. Think broadly of how you can help readers find this book using their customary terms.
- Find some role model authors – successful indies in your genre. Do what they do! When you meet them, thank them.

Metadata 1

- You need your metadata over and over, so put it in a file, like a sell sheet.
- Metadata: information about your book.
 - Blurbs: main desc. 200-500 wds, also do <300 chars and <140 chars/1 sentence.
 - Blurb is ***ad copy***, not a synopsis. Be brief, be punchy. Get feedback & revise.
 - Bio: mine's about 70 words. I use it everywhere.
 - Get a nice headshot of yourself to use everywhere.

Metadata 2

- Categories: You get 2 from the BISAC (Book Industry Study Group) list.
 - <https://www.bisg.org/bisac-subject-headings-list-fiction>
 - Ex: FICTION / Mystery & Detective / Historical; FICTION / Historical
- Keywords: You get 7 comma-separated phrases.
 - <https://mlouisalocke.com/2011/10/24/categories-key-words-and-tags-oh-my-why-should-an-author-care/>
 - *Murder by Misrule*: elizabethan mysteries, tudor fiction, set in london, 16th century, humorous mysteries, mysteries with lawyers, amateur sleuth
 - Go to Amazon, go to the Kindle Store, and start searching for books like yours. Type words into the search box and see what it offers you. Use those terms as keywords.

ISBNs

- Associates a specific book in a specific format (eg mobi) with a publisher (eg you.)
- Many successful authors have never bought an ISBN! If you only want to publish a few books and/or will distribute only through Amazon & CreateSpace, use their ISBNs.
- If you want to publish many books through all possible vendors, get your own ISBNs at Bowker Identifier Services: <http://www.bowker.com/>
 - 1 for \$125; 10 for \$295; 100 for \$595. They also sell barcodes, which you don't need.
 - You need a different ISBN for each version/format of your book: digital, print, audio.

Metadata observations

- Don't stuff keywords into a subtitle, you'll look like an amateur.
 - Ex: "A Death in Cabot Cove: a gripping mystery thriller with a sexy sleuth."
- Don't try to game the system, stuffing keywords, naming bestselling authors in your description etc. Cheesy! Amateurish!
- Odds are good your book is not really so unique that it can't be listed under any BISAC categories.
- Do maintain series information, if relevant.
 - A Francis Bacon Mystery Number: 2

Print-specific metadata

- Mainly for IngramSpark; CS is pretty straightforward, aimed at Amazon.
- Trade discount: 55%. I can't explain this, but it's standard, so do it.
- Returnable: Bookstores expect to be able to return books they can't sell. I don't want to pay for returns, so I choose, "No."
- Price: You may have to raise your prices here to get above the trade discount. Amazon discounts at its discretion also. Just do what you must.
- <https://selfpublishingadvice.org/how-to-use-createspace-and-ingram-spark-together/>

Pricing

- Look at similar books in terms of genre and length – your role models.
- Every store will fiddle with your retail print prices, esp. Amazon.
- My 350-page historicals are \$4.99 ebook, \$15.95 print.
- My 300-page cozies are \$3.99 ebook, \$13.95 print.
- Short stories are usu. \$0.99. Novellas usu. \$1.99 – \$2.99.
- Let distributor convert currencies OR use OANDA to round up
<https://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

Ready, set, publish!

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- Use the online previewers and also download sample mobi, epub, and pdfs. Look at every page, skimming for things out of place.
- Fix the typos Amazon identifies. Fix page break etc. errors.
- Fix, upload a new version, proofread -- repeat until perfect.
- Please do not publish a poor quality book! You won't be happy with that experience.