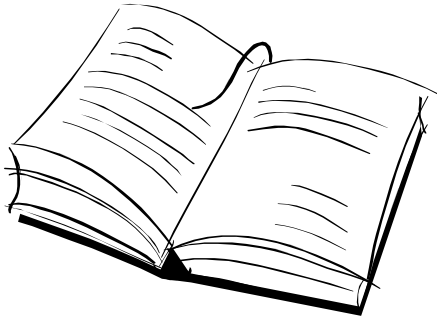
Self-Publishing On a Budget

A Do-It-All-Yourself Guide



Gloria Hander Lyons

Blue Sage Press

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48 Borondo Pines
La Marque, TX 77568
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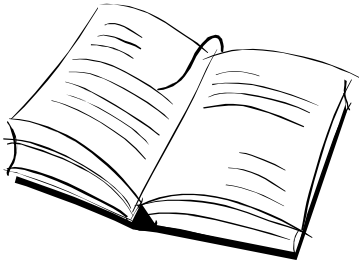
The time to begin writing an article is when you have finished it to your satisfaction. By that time you begin to clearly and logically perceive what it is you really want to say.

~Mark Twain

(A Self-Published Author)



Introduction

Self-Publishing On a Budget

Do you long to be a published author but think it's an impossible dream? This book will show you how to turn that dream into reality. Self publishing is easy, affordable and fun.

Whether you want to preserve a collection of cherished recipes for family members or write a marketable how-to manual, you'll learn how to gather the information and put it together into a properly formatted book.

Anyone can accomplish this task, and on a reasonable budget. All it takes is a bit of guidance and a lot of hard work, but the satisfaction of holding that finished book in your hands is well worth the effort.

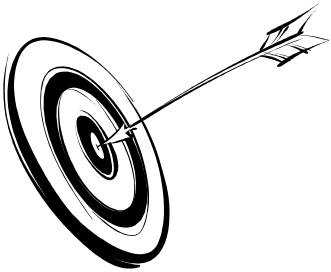
Self-publishing can encompass a wide range of literature, from a 24-page booklet that you print on your own computer to a 300-page hardback novel that's typeset by a professional printer. It's whatever your vision and budget will allow.

All you need to do is pick a subject and starting writing. What information have you acquired during your lifetime that you can share with others? Write about what you know—your life experiences, hobbies, travels or career expertise. Find a need and fill it.

The information presented in this guide is focused on publishing non-fiction books, which offer how-to instructions to readers in a clear and easy to follow format.

Writing fiction, on the other hand, requires more than just the ability to provide clear instructions for the reader. It involves writing skills that keep the reader entertained from beginning to end, and this book does not cover creative writing. But if you feel your masterpiece will get the job done, then by all means, go for it. The self publishing process is the same for both non-fiction and fiction.

Obviously you've already given some thought to the idea of writing and publishing a book or you wouldn't be reading this guide. So if you're ready to roll up your sleeves and get to work, let's get started!



Defining Your Target Market

The first decision you'll need to make as a self-publisher is: What is your purpose for publishing your book?

- Do you merely want to record your family history or preserve a collection of favorite recipes to share with family members?

- Are you a financial planner who wants to produce a booklet to give to your clients to help clarify investment terms?

- Do you envision writing a how-to guide to sell to the general public and generate a source of income?

The answer to this question will determine most of the choices you make regarding your book, from the number of copies you'll print, to the cover style and production cost per copy.

Finding Your Market

If your goal is to make a profit from self-publishing, then the first task on your publishing journey is to determine your sales market.

A good way to do this is by drafting a book proposal or marketing plan. Even if you're the only person who will ever read it, this proposal will help you clearly define what information you want to include in your book and how to present that information.

You should be able to write in just a short paragraph or two what your book is about, what you hope to accomplish by writing it, who will buy it and how you can reach your buyers.

A good model to follow for your proposal is the "sales pitch" found on the backs of books on book store shelves—especially those in the same category as the one you plan to publish. Compare several of these to get ideas for writing your "back copy".

The sales pitch you create will help you get a clear focus for writing your book. Do your homework to make sure that the information you include is concise, accurate, well written and right on target for the market you want to reach.

Promote Your Sales From the Start

Clearly defining your target audience before beginning to write your book can help you build in promotion (which equals sales) from the start. Learn everything you can about them:

- Where they shop. You'll want to sell your books at these locations.
- Their income level. This information will help you price your book competitively.
- What clubs or organizations they join. Approach these groups about advertising your book.

Your book's topic might suggest other means of promotion. Are there numerous clubs or associations affiliated with your topic, such as camping, stamp collecting or quilting that might promote it to their members? Would specialty stores, like sporting goods stores or gift shops be interested in selling your book?

Inviting other experts to contribute to your project, and mentioning their names in the text, is also a great way to boost sales. These contributors and their friends and families will usually purchase several copies.

Mentioning the brand names of the materials and supplies you use in your how-to book is another way to promote sales. These companies might buy it as promotional material to give to their customers.

Check Out Your Competition

If you hope to make a profit from your sales, you'll also need to find out what other titles have already been published on your topic. How will yours be different or better?

People who buy how-to books want answers to questions or solutions for problems. What will make a reader choose to buy your version instead of someone else's? Make sure you're not just presenting the same old information in the same old format as hundreds of other authors. Your book needs a fresh new approach to stand out from the crowd.

Another important consideration: just because there are no other titles currently on the market about your topic doesn't mean it's an open field. Maybe there's a good reason why there are none available on that subject.

Do your research and conduct a broad survey of friends and co-workers before committing hundreds of hours to a project that no one wants to buy. Checking for titles on Amazon.com is another way to find out how many other books have been written on your topic.

Defining your self-publishing goals before writing your book will help keep your project on track. You'll know exactly what target you're working toward, without wasting unnecessary time, effort and money to achieve your publishing success.

Helpful Resources about Self-Publishing:

- Small Publishers Association of North America: **www.spannet.org**
- Small Publishers, Artists & Writers Network: **www.spawn.org**
- **www.selfpublishing.com**
- Well-known self-publishing author, Dan Poynter's website: **www.parapub.com**