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## Covers Sell Books

by Dan Poynter

Packaging is everything. Each year, corporations spend more than \$50 billion on product packaging and design. \$50 billion, not for the products themselves or for the wrapper but \$50 billion just for the *design* of the wrapper.

Everyone judges a book by its cover. No one reads the book before they make a buying decision. Consumers do not read it in the store. Sales reps only carry book covers and jackets to show bookstore owners/buyers while wholesalers and distributors say “just send us the cover copy.” All buying decisions are made on the illustration/design and the ad-sales copy on the outside of the book. Yes, packaging is everything.

The bookstore browser averages less than eight seconds looking at the front cover and fifteen seconds reading the back cover. You must hook them immediately and keep them reading the back cover or they will put the book back on the shelf.

Most of Lightbourne’s cover-design work is done long distance, so when the new client walked in wearing buckskin and natural cotton attire, Gaelyn and Bram Larrick knew that this project would be unique and fun. Matt Richards had written a book on taking raw deerskin and creating beautiful buckskin garments and useful goods, a process that was more of a lifestyle for him.

He had located the cover-design company as a result of reading Dan Poynter's *Self-Publishing Manual*, but was still nervous about spending his money on a professionally-designed cover.

Matt lived in the wilderness and his way of life didn't require him to earn much money. The cover would cost one-quarter of his entire annual income.

Six months later, Matt wrote that his book was selling so well in both his niche market and bookstores that his annual income had already

increased 4-5 times. His professionally-designed cover not only made him prouder of his book, it gave the contents more credibility and helped the book to sell. <http://www.lightbourne.com>

“Anyone who says ‘you can’t judge a book by its cover’ has never met the category buyer from Barnes & Noble.”  
— Terri Lonier, author, *Working Solo*.

Good packaging sells soap, breakfast food and pantyhose. It can also be used to sell books. Put your imagination into your title and your advertising money into your cover. Since everyone from the distributor, to wholesalers, to bookstore buyers, to the ultimate customer judges a book by its cover, give them what they need—a compelling cover with art and a sales message that will encourage a buying decision.

(Sidebar)

### **Book Cover Designers**

Robert Howard Graphic Design, Robert Howard, 631 Mansfield Drive, Fort Collins, CO 80525. Tel: (970) 225-0083; email: [rhoward@frii.com](mailto:rhoward@frii.com).  
<http://www.BookGraphics.com>.

Arrow Graphics, Inc., Alvert Badalian, PO Box 291, Cambridge, MA 02238. Tel: (617) 926-8585; Fax: (617) 926-0982; e-mail: [arrow@us1.channell.com](mailto:arrow@us1.channell.com).

Dunn + Associates, Mary Jo Jirik, PO Box 870, Hayward, WI 54843. Tel: (715) 634-4857; Fax: (715) [634-5617.info@Dunn-Design.com](mailto:634-5617.info@Dunn-Design.com),  
<http://www.Dunn-Design.com>..

Lightbourne, Gaelyn Larrick & Shannon Bodie, 258 A Street, #5, Ashland, OR 97520. Tel: (800) 697-9833; Tel: 541-488-3060; Fax: (541) 482-1730;  
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Quest Press, Pamela Terry, 1858 So. Crescent Heights Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90035. Tel: 323-935-6666; Fax: 323-934-2881;  
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Knockout Design, Peri Poloni, 3784 Archwood Road, Cameron Park, CA 95682. Tel: 530-676-2744; Fax: 530-676-2741; [peri@KnockOutBooks.com](mailto:peri@KnockOutBooks.com) ; <http://www.KnockOutBooks.com>.

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BookMasters, Inc., Sherry Ringler, 2541 Ashland Road, Mansfield, OH 44905. Tel: (800) 537-6727; tel: (419) 589-5100; fax: (419) 589-4040; [info@bookmaster.com](mailto:info@bookmaster.com); <http://www.BookMasters.com>.

Be It Now/Karen Ross Design, Karen Ross, 12516 Washington Place, Los Angeles, CA 90066. Tel: 310-915-0920; Fax: 310-390-0419; [Karoons@yahoo.com](mailto:Karoons@yahoo.com); <http://www.beitnow.com/publishingdesign.htm>

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