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Printing Books Digitally

by Dan Poynter

In self-publishing, you are both the book creator and book producer; you are the author and the publisher. You will need creative writing talent to become a published author and money to become a publisher. Of course, that is an over simplification but the point is that writing is a creative act and publishing is a business.

Anyone can be a publisher. The right to publish is guaranteed to you by the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States. You do not have to get a license or register with anyone to publish a book. But it does cost money. In fact, one definition of “publisher” is the person or company that makes the book happen; the one who puts up the money. Until recently, book printing was expensive.

You may sell out to a publisher or publish yourself. Getting your book published is what is important. How you break into print is not.

A publisher will edit, design, typeset, layout, proofread, print and distribute your book. You may also perform these functions yourself or hire a book designer, deal with a book printer and use a booktrade distributor.

Design. Go to a bookstore and look on that shelf where your book will be. You will notice that each genre or category has a different design. For example, business books are usually in hardcover with a dust jacket and go for \$29.95 or \$34.95. Professional books—for doctors, lawyers and accountants—are often in hard cover without a dust jacket and sell for much more. Children’s books are over size, are in full color, have exactly 32 pages and if you put a dust jacket on them, they sell for five dollars more. And travel books are low-priced, on light-weight paper and are tall and narrow so they will slip into a pocket or pack. Your book must look like the rest on the shelf. Respect your category; This is not a time to be creative.

Select a design you like. Check the color of the paper, the size of the type, the design of the book and so on. Buy that book. Use it as a model for your book. Someone else has invested a good deal of time and money to design a book that you like. Adapt that design.

Typesetting. You can typeset your book yourself with *MS-Word* but your pages will look even better if you learn a page-layout program such as *PageMaker*, *In-Design* or *Quark*.

Once you are done with the typesetting, you can convert the text file into a graphic file with Adobe *Acrobat*. Most of the files received by book printers today are in Adobe *Acrobat* PDF.

Printing. Traditionally, the printing of the book has been most expensive part of the publishing procedure. Due to the setup costs, printing is a numbers game. It used to be necessary to print at least 3,000 copies to achieve a reasonable per-unit cost. That meant a large printing bill. For example, if you were printing a 144-page softcover book measuring 5¼ x 8¼, your 3,000 copies might produce a print bill of \$4,800. And, you could not print less without the unit price going up—way up.

(Sidebar)

Types of printing

POD, Print On Demand: Digital printing of one book at a time—after it is ordered by a customer. POD is more expensive per-unit because all the overhead must be charged to a single book.

PQN, Print Quantity Needed: Digital printing of a small number of books for stock and promotion.

Press: Traditional ink-based printing requiring a minimum of 3,000 books to be economical.

Now we have digital (Print Quantity Needed) printing: high-speed, computer controlled, toner-based production. These machines print both sides of the paper at the same time and do not require a period for the ink to dry. Press setup time is virtually eliminated. Excellent color covers are usually done with the same toner process.

The same 144-page book might cost out to 400 books for \$1,200. The per-unit price is higher but the invoice you have to write a check for is much lower.

The quality of the toner-based printing is actually better. There are no light and dark pages as in ink printing. The softcover or hardcover books look better than traditionally-printed books.

Delivery time for digitally-printed books is normally five days from press-proofs and reprints take three to four days.

Writers have benefited from offset printing, computers and the Internet. The next technological revolution is digital PQN printing. Digital book printing is faster, easier and cheaper.

Putting a lot of ink on paper is now just an option; a good one if there is large republication demand such as advanced sales to bookstores and/or a sale to a book club. There is no longer an automatic requirement to print 3,000 or more copies of your book on spec. Price is no longer an excuse for procrastinating on your book.

(Sidebar)

Here is a list of digital printers

DeHart's Printing Services
Tatiana Promessi
3265 Scott Blvd.
Santa Clara, CA 95054
Tel: 408-982-9118
Tatiana@DeHarts.com
<http://www.DeHarts.com>

Tri-State Litho
Kumar Persad
71-81 TenBroeck Avenue
Kingston, NY 12401
Tel: 914-331-7581
tristate@ulster.net
<http://www.TriStateLitho.com>

BookJustBooks.com
Ron Pramschufer
51 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10017
Tel: 800-621-2556
customerservice@rjc-llc.com
<http://BooksJustBooks.com>

TPC Graphics
Len Metz
518 Coles Mill Road
Haddonfield, NJ 08033
Tel: 856-429-2858
Fax: 856-429-0644
TPClen-Pat@erols.com.

Small run digital and conventional book manufacturing. Case, soft binding.

Fidlar Doubleday
Steve Rozewicz
6255 Technology Avenue
Kalamazoo, MI 49001
Tel: 800-632-2258
Tel: 248-761-9435, cell
Fax: 888-999-0655
SteveR@Fidlar.com
<http://www.fidlardoubleday.com>

Alexander's Digital Printing
Doyle Mortimer, Barry Merrell
245 South 1060 West
Lindon, UT 84042
Tel: 801-224-8666
Fax: 801-224-0446
<http://www.Alexanders.com>

Infinity Publishing
John Harnish
519 W. Lancaster Ave.
Haverford, PA 19041-1413
Tel: 610-520-2500
Fax: 610-519-0261
jHarnish@BuyBooksOnTheWeb.com
<http://www.infinitypublishing.com>

DigiNet Printing
Guillermo "William: Perego
5723 NW 159th Street
Miami Lakes, FL 33014
Tel: 305-825-9260
Fax: 305-825-9294
gPerego@DigiNetPrinting.com
<http://www.DigiNetPrinting.com>

Morgan Printing and Publishing
Terry Sherrell
900 Old Koenig Lane #135
Austin, TX 78756
Tel: 512-459-5194
Fax: 512-451-0755
mprinting@austin.rr.com

Sir Speedy-Whittier
Tim McCarthy
7240 Greenleaf Avenue
Whittier, CA 90602
Tel: 562-698-7513
tim@ssWhittier.com
<http://www.sswhittier.com>

Sir Speedy-Scottsdale
Sheri Statt Bercaw
7373 East Camelback Road
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
Tel: 480-947-7277, Ex 111
Fax: 480-946-3957
sstatt@SirSpeedy21120.com

Adibooks
Thomas G. Campbell
181 Industrial Avenue

Lowell, MA 01852
Tel: 978-458-2345
tcampbell@KingPrinting.com
<http://www.adibooks.com>

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