

How to Happily Self-Publish



ACFW At-Home Conference

September 5-8, 2024

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ACFW Virtual Conference
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www.amydeardon.blog

HOW TO HAPPILY SELF-PUBLISH

Traditional publishing is a long uncertain process, and with the technological advances today many authors decide to DIY.

This can be a great option, but there are minefields along the way, from premature publication, to identifying companies that charge thousands of dollars for services you can do yourself for pennies, to knowing how to market your work.

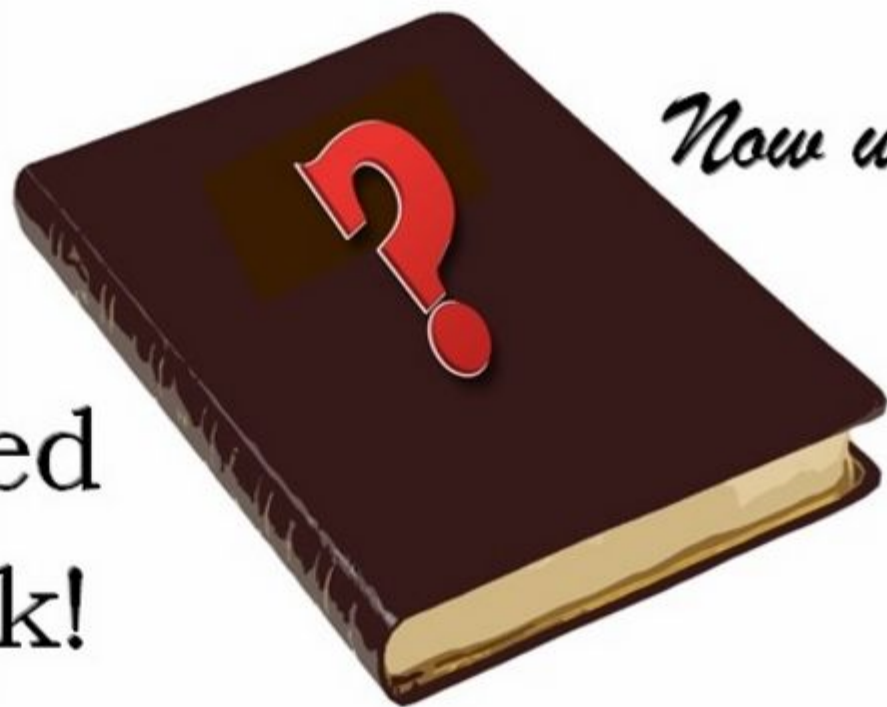
This talk covers options for self-publishing and how to navigate the process to become happily self-published.

Congratulations!!!



You've finished your book!

I finished
my book!



Now what?

Publishing

Turn your work into a published piece.



Outline for This Talk:

- How do I know if I want to traditionally or self publish?
- How do I avoid ~~SHARKS~~ subsidy publishing?
- How do I make sure my manuscript is good enough?
- How do I format?
- How do I get a cover?
- How do I get an ISBN and other official stuff?
- How do I sell my book online?

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Traditional or Self?



You'll need to do some research to decide which avenue you prefer to pursue. To start you out I have posted a PDF on my website www.amydeardon.blog that explains the details of publishing types and includes several quizzes to help point you in the right direction. If you'd like a copy check out the "free downloads" section or write to me at amydeardon@gmail.com.

Also don't forget to subscribe to my newsletter! I have some fun things I send out from time to time and promise to not be a pest 😊

Traditional Publishing



- Gold Standard for publishing
- Companies like Tyndale, Simon and Schuster, or Random House.
- Often a literary agent is involved.
- Process is selective, slow, and uncertain.

Traditional Publishing

Typical Author Route:

- Write a marketable book of excellent quality.
- Find a literary agent.
- Literary agent shops manuscript to publishing companies.
- Acquiring editor presents manuscript to committee.
- Contract signed.
- Manuscript is edited, designed and produced.
- Book appears online and in brick-and-mortar stores.
- Excellent company marketing and author efforts promote book sales.
- Author writes more books.

Traditional Publishing

Advantages

- Prestigious.
- Author receives advance money.
- Experts control the book development process.
- Usually strong marketing machine behind the author.
- Usually wide book distribution.
- Author is free to write more (best-selling) books.

Disadvantages

- Extremely long, uncertain, and frustrating process to find a literary agent and acquisitions editor.
- Author loses rights to book.
- Author loses control of book.
- Author's reputation is on the line if he/she can't make back the advance.



Self-Publishing



- The author does the work or hires work-for-hire contractors to get the book ready to publish.
- Author has flexibility to create a lucrative book-selling environment.

Characteristics of a Self-Publisher



- Entrepreneurial model.
- All rights and profits at all times remain with the author.
- Author funds and markets books, and reaps the rewards.

Self-Publishing

Advantages

- Author totally in charge of book (development, pricing, and distribution).
- Publish for free or low cost.
- Author can easily make changes even after book is published.
- Author keeps all rights and all profits.
- Author can use books to create a strong marketing platform and generate passive income.

Disadvantages

- Learning Curve.
- Gaining marketing traction can be challenging.

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There is a Third Type of Publishing...



- Traditional
- Self
- Subsidy

What is Subsidy Publishing?



A Subsidy Publisher is a company that you pay money to for them to publish your book. Subsidy Publishing goes by many names including:

- Hybrid Publishing
- Subsidy Publishing
- Author-Assisted Publishing
- Independent Publishing
- Partnership Publishing
- Co-Publishing
- Entrepreneurial Publishing
- Vanity Publishing
- Etc. Etc.

Masquerade



Some subsidy publishers even advertise as “Self-Publishers!”

Make Sure You Can Tell the
Difference

SIMILAR
but **NOT** the **SAME**


Subsidy Publishing looks like Self-Publishing, but it isn't.

Single Question to Determine if this is Subsidy or Self-Publishing



In whose name was the ISBN acquired?

ISBN = CONTROL OF THE BOOK

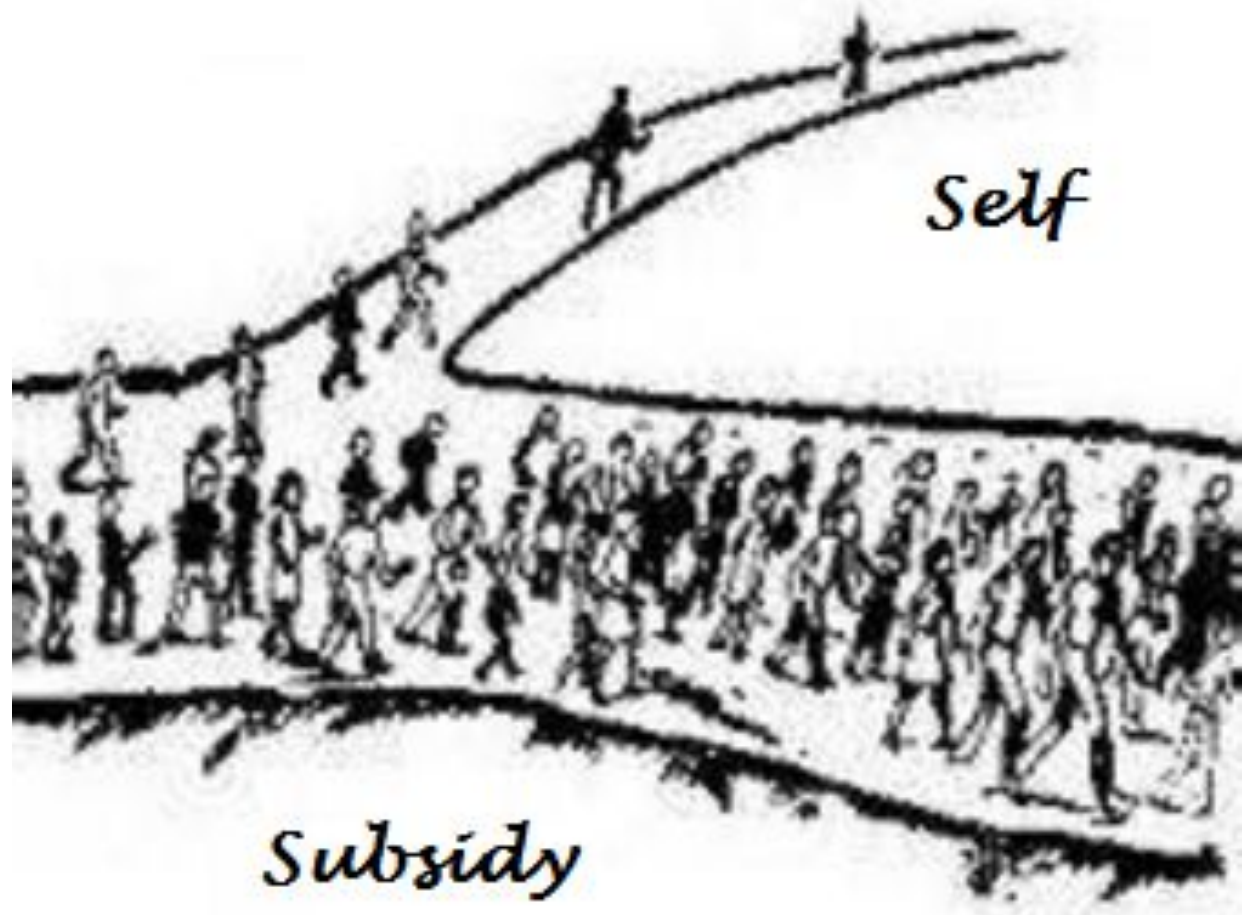
- Subsidy: If you publish with a subsidy publisher they acquire the ISBN and publish your book under the subsidy company's imprint and name. **THEY HAVE CONTROL**. They are the publisher.
- Self: If you self-publish you purchase your own ISBN from Bowker, create your own company, and publish your book under your own imprint and name. **YOU HAVE CONTROL**. You are the publisher.

Caution



The subsidy publisher will often tell you that you have “bought” the ISBN from them or that they have “transferred” or “registered” the ISBN to you.

It doesn't matter. If the subsidy publisher originally acquired that ISBN in their name from the national ISBN agency of that country (Bowker in the USA) then any book bearing that ISBN will be registered to that subsidy publisher in perpetuity.



One-Stop Shopping



Subsidy Publishers do everything for you to publish your book. You don't have to worry about anything once you sign the contract:

- editing
- formatting
- cover
- printing
- some marketing ideas

You Pay For Convenience



Subsidy Publishers generally charge more (sometimes MUCH more) than it would cost you to get the individual services yourself.

Offset Printing rather than POD



Subsidy Publishers often (although not always) want to print your book using offset printing rather than print on demand (POD).

In offset publishing you purchase many books at once, usually 500 or more.

The Subsidy Publisher will tell you each individual book is cheaper with offset printing. TRUE. POD books are *slightly* more expensive per book.

However with POD you pay for one book at a time rather than purchasing 1000 books at once. Buying 1000 books is quite costly, plus it's really hard to store and sell those 1000 books.

POD book quality is virtually indistinguishable from offset, meaning you won't be cutting any corners with POD.

Marketing



Subsidy Publishers generally offer only a limited range of marketing tactics that are expensive and usually are ineffective.

If you are working with a Subsidy Publisher please ASK for statistics and information showing effectiveness before purchasing anything more from them.

Caution...



Subsidy Publishers DO fulfill all their contractual obligations and usually deliver a beautiful book. However **in my opinion you will find it just about impossible to become a selling author going this route of subsidy publishing because you pay too much for books and you can't control the marketing process.**

Sell Your Book



The reason is that you can't control marketing tactics for your book such as book listing, SEO, distribution channels of book and ebook, purchase copies of your book at cost, online giveaways or price breaks, and other bonus ideas.

You also will probably not be able to make changes to your book and ebook such as modifying the retail price, posting an award citation on the cover, changing the listing to reflect endorsements, correcting errors in the text etc.

In the unlikely event you CAN make changes, they will almost certainly be costly and of limited scope.

A Piece of the Whole



Furthermore the Subsidy Publisher pays you only a fraction of the money your book makes as “royalties” rather than your being able to recoup 100% of the profits from book sales.

Worst of Both Worlds



In my opinion Subsidy Publishing gives you the worst of both worlds:

- You lose rights and control of your book (like traditional publishing).
- You have to pay for everything and take all the risk (like self-publishing).

Subsidy publishers DO general create a beautiful book. I recommend them for authors who have a limited circulation for their book such as a family history for your parents and cousins or a specialty book for church members of a single church. (NOTE: insist on POD not offset printing).

Otherwise, though, I believe you can do better by self-publishing.

Subsidy Publishing



There are a (very) few Subsidy Publishers who flex to work well with the author for book creation and marketing. These companies tend to be small without heavy advertisement.

Rule of Thumb



Don't be dazzled by sales pitches for book production or marketing. Do the research. Ask company for names of others who have published with them *and talk to these authors*.

Don't be taken in by names such as the self-publishing arm of a well-known company. DO YOUR HOMEWORK.

Check out the latest edition of Mark Levine's *The Fine Print of Self-Publishing* to gain insight into practices of a few selected subsidy companies.



Back to Self-Publishing!

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Never Publish a First Draft – Always Edit!



There are three types of editing:

- Self-editing.
- Writing and Critique groups.
- Professional editing.

Self-Editing: Things to Catch

Watch out for:

- Repetition – words, phrases, or ideas. Say it once, clearly, then get out.
- Using passive voice (adjectives and adverbs) rather than active voice (nouns and verbs).
- Words that are not adding to your ideas. Challenge yourself to cut at least one word from every sentence in your manuscript.
- Jargon or million-dollar words. You want to communicate, not show off.
- Hidden ideas and unclear connections. The reader can't read your mind so be clear. Spell out points or if you don't want to make a statement on the nose use vivid images to show not tell.
- Not having a point. Why are you telling the reader this? What is the point you want to make in each paragraph? Don't just blather on.

Writing or Critique Groups Can Be Gold



Things to keep in mind:

- When offered feedback simply say “Thank you.” Even if you don’t agree you won’t change the reader’s mind by arguing, so don’t.
- Be open, not defensive. Consider if the reader could possibly be right.
- Remember that it’s easier to pick up that something is not working than it is to diagnose what the problem is. Recognize that “fixes” offered by the reader may not be correct, but the fact that there is a problem probably is.
- Be careful when offering your own critiques. Your words can penetrate deeply. Be gentle and kind.

Professional Editing is Expensive and Often Premature



Before you spend hundreds or a few thousand dollars for editing, consider:

- Have you fixed your manuscript on your own as much as you can?
- What do you need? Restructuring? Just grammar? Be clear before you hire anyone.

Finding an Editor



To find an editor:

- Ask fellow writers for recommendations.
- Check out ACFW Resources.
- Check out Editorial Freelancers Association www.the-efa.org.
- Remember that **editing is an art, not a science**. Different editors have different styles. Once you find several names, ask for references and/or a sample edit of a few pages to make sure you get what you want to get.

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Formatting is a Careful Business



Guidelines for formatting both e-books and print books are specific.

For One-Stop Easy Formatting...



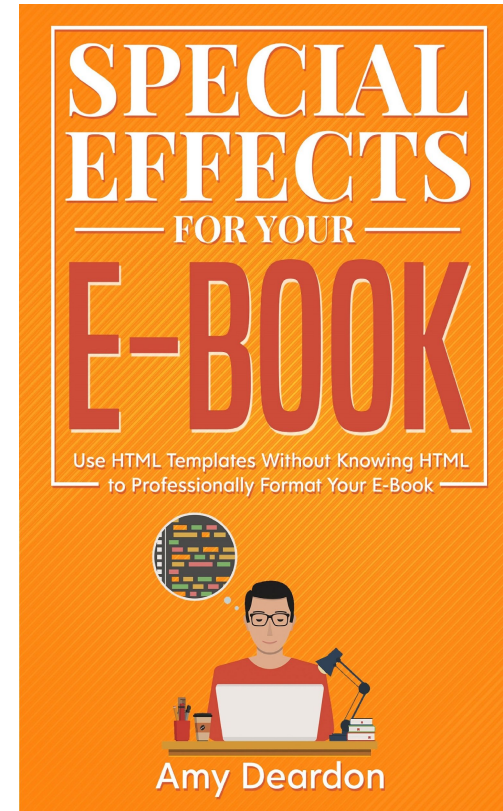
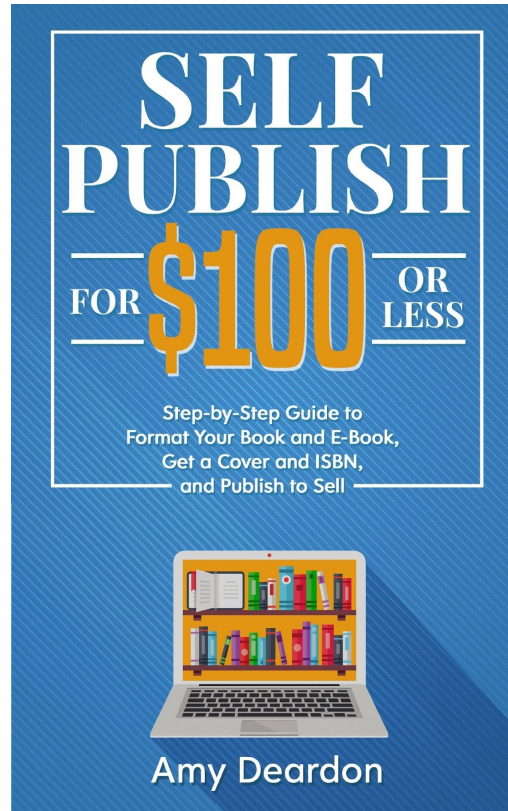
Kindle Create

Kindle Create does all the work to format both ebooks and print books from a Word document.

Download the FREE app to your computer.

Look up “download Kindle Create” on your browser or go to this website: <https://tinyurl.com/27wv5z24>

Formatting Guidelines



You may also want to check out my step-by-step guides for formatting print books and e-books. I like to think they're pretty good.

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Ponder the Message You Want to Give in the Book Cover



Ask Yourself:

- What genre of story or nonfiction book is this?
- What is this book about?
- What emotions and/or thoughts do I want to convey?

Your Book Cover Tells a Story



- Study your genre's book cover "tropes" or recurring themes.
- Notice the covers that really catch your eye, and analyze them to find why (color, subject, font style etc.).
- Use your preferences and knowledge to get (or create) a cover that looks "the same, yet different."

LITTLE SPINES

THE ARCHITECTURE OF CONTEMPORARY
LITERATURE

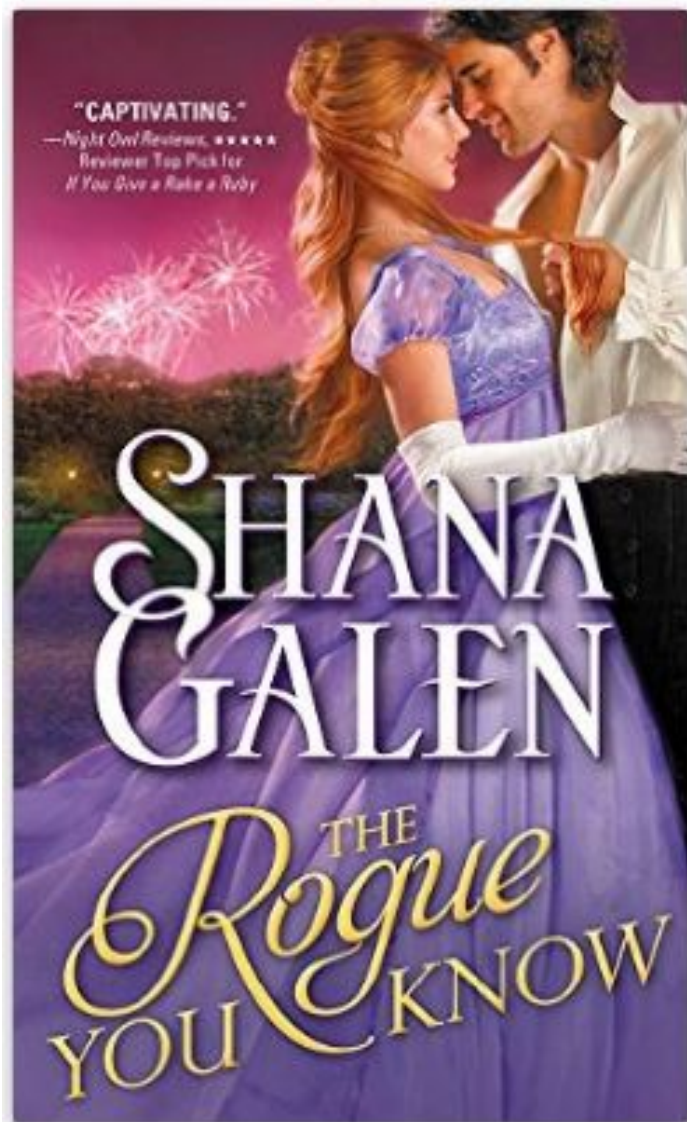


A JOE TIPLADY THRILLER



COLD

JOHN SWEENEY



"CAPTIVATING."

—Night Owl Reviews, ★★★★★
Reviewer Top Pick for
If You Give a Rogue a Rudy

SHANA
& GALEN

THE
Rogue
YOU KNOW



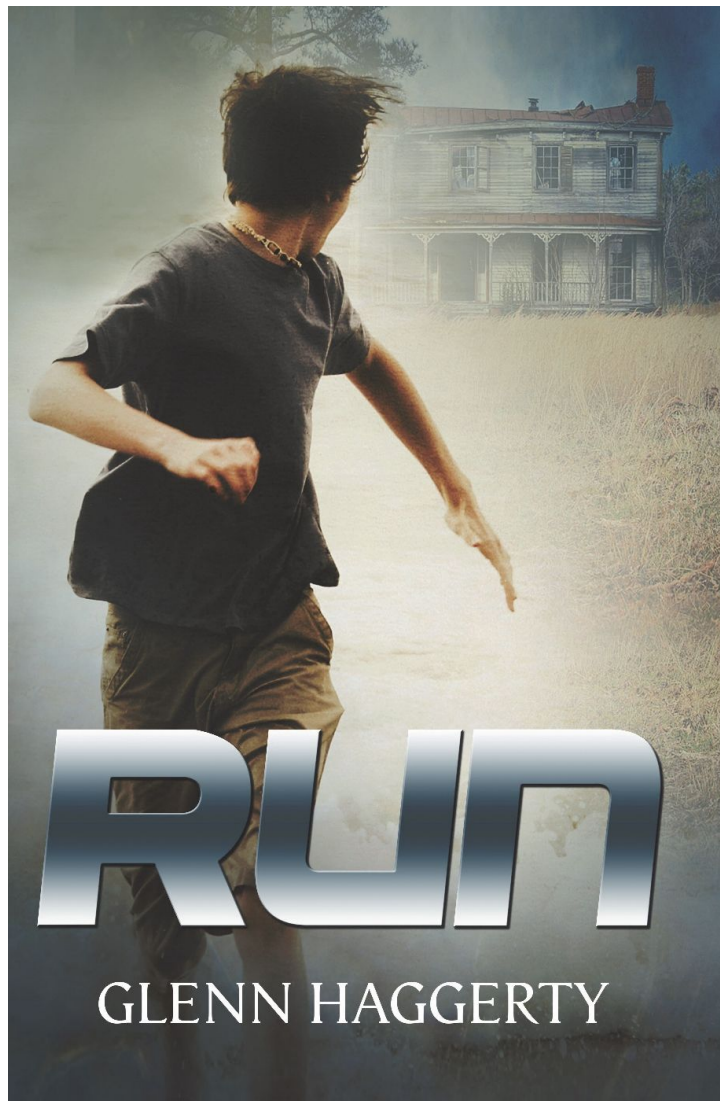
Douglas Axe

Undeniable

How Biology Confirms Our Intuition

That Life Is Designed





RUN

GLENN HAGGERTY

How Do I Get a Book Cover?



There are four basic ways to get a book cover:

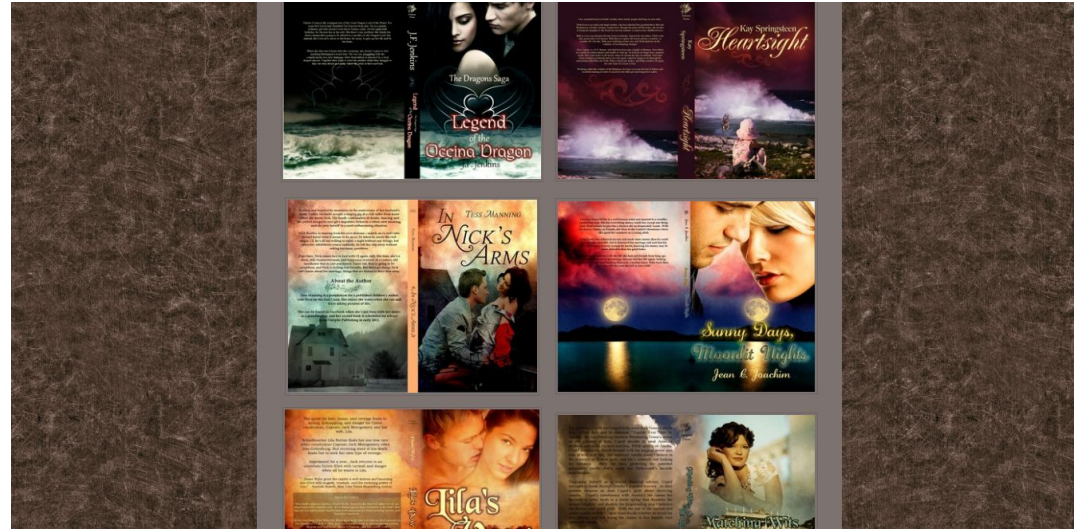
- Pre-made Book Covers
- Hire Someone
- Do It Yourself DIY
- Use Amazon's Create-A-Cover

Method #1: Pre-Made Book Covers



- These covers are already designed and waiting for someone (you!) to purchase them.
- The artist takes the image off the market then inserts your name and title to give you a unique cover.
- These run between about \$50-\$200.

Pre-Made Book Covers



You can do a google search for “Pre-Made Book Covers.”

Some websites that do pre-made covers are:

- www.GoOnWrite.com
- www.ForTheMuseDesign.com
- www.thecovercollection.com/
- <https://thebookcoverdesigner.com/product-category/premade-book-covers/>

Method #2: Hire Someone to Create a Book Cover



- www.fiverr.com – (about \$10-\$25). For best results you'll need to provide one or more images.
- www.99designs.com – (about \$300). This is the premiere site for spectacular designs and **my personal favorite way to get book covers.**

Method #3: Create Your Own Book Cover



If you're good with graphics you may want to design your own cover. The simplest cover is just text with a colored background. More complex covers use one or more images with text.

www.canva.com is a GREAT site to help you create something beautiful.

Finding Images



DO NOT just copy an image you like from the internet. **You don't want to steal.** Always investigate rights.

Here are some low-cost stock and free photo sites:

- bigstockphoto.com
- clipart.com
- dreamstime.com
- fotolia.com
- freedigitalphotos.net
- freefoto.com
- istockphoto.com
- photobucket.com
- photoshopsupport.com/resources/stock-photos.html
- Pixabay.com (**free images**)
- sxc.hu

Method #4: Use Amazon's Resources



Amazon offers free cover design options on KDP (print and ebook), with royalty-free images and cover color/layout ideas.



Formatting Book Covers



You'll need to format your book covers for publication. Notice that a kindle cover is taller than a print cover. Kindle ratio is 1.6 (height is 1.6 times as great as width), while a print ratio is 1.5 (height is 1 ½ times as great as width).

E-Book Cover Formatting



If you have a cover for print book, you can stretch the front image using Paint program to fit the e-book format.

Or else go to www.fiverr.com to hire someone to do this for you for a few dollars.

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ISBN

International Standard Book Number (ISBN)



- The ISBN is like a book's Social Security Number: a unique identifier that is necessary to put your print book up for sale.
- An ISBN is not needed for an e-book if you just list it on Amazon. However you can certainly use an ISBN if you wish.
- If you want both your print book and e-book to have an ISBN, you need two—one for each format type.

ISBN Ownership



- The only place you can acquire ISBNs in the USA so that they belong to you-the-publisher is Bowker (www.myidentifiers.com).
- ISBNs are not cheap. At this time 1 ISBN is \$125, 10 ISBNs are \$295, and 100 ISBNs are \$575.
- ISBNs trace back to the person/publisher who bought them. This means that if you purchase an ISBN from a third party (such as a Subsidy Publisher), the ISBN will show the company is the publisher, not you.

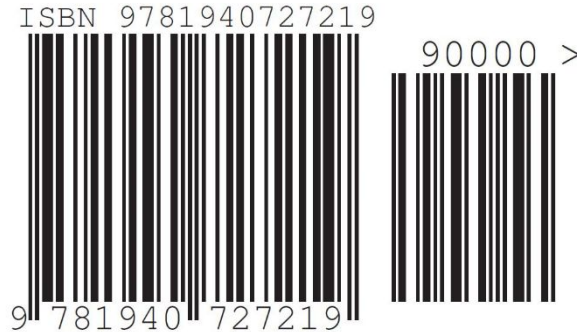
KDP ISBNs



- Amazon's KDP aims to be the go-to place for self-publishing print books and e-books.
- Amazon is an *authorized reseller* of ISBNs from Bowker meaning you can purchase an ISBN from them that registers to you. IngramSpark also has this option. (ie **buying ISBNs from Amazon or IngramSpark has my seal of approval 😊**)
- KDP also offers a second type of ISBN, a **free ISBN**. Remember though that if you take this free ISBN your publisher will be KDP, not your own company. This isn't necessarily a bad thing but know that you can sell your book just on Amazon.

Bar Code

Where Do I Find Bar Codes?



- When you buy ISBNs from Bowker, they offer bar codes for an additional price. However you don't need to buy the bar code so save your money!
- You can create bar codes using free tools on the net. Do a web search for "create book bar code."
- My favorite site is:

www.creativindiecovers.com/free-online-isbn-barcode-generator/#submit.

You can put in "90000" rather than a price if you want flexibility, or leave the price barcode off completely.

Library of Congress

Library of Congress



- You may want your book to be registered in the Library of Congress and eligible for library use across the country.
- If so, you need to take care of this BEFORE you publish.

The Preassigned Control Number: PCN



- The PCN is the Library of Congress' way to open the library to self- and small publishers.
- You can get a number by going to <http://www.loc.gov/publish/pcn>.
- **YOU MUST MAIL** a print copy of your book to the Library of Congress once it is published.

Library Cataloguing Data (CIP Data)



- If you have a PCN, you will also need to compile your book's cataloguing information.
- This data is used by libraries to enter your book appropriately into the system and catalogue it into its correct space.
- This is called the *CIP data* or *Cataloguing in Publishing data*.
- To create the CIP data I've worked with Adrienne at www.cipblock.com for several years, and she is great! She charges \$85 per book and has fast turnaround.

Copyright

Copyright Registration

©opyright

- Your manuscript/book is automatically copyrighted to you as soon as you have put your ideas in “fixed form.” i.e. you have written them down.
- However, you can also file an official copyright registration with the U.S. government by going to www.copyright.gov and following the directions.
- Copyright costs \$65 to register.

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- **How do I sell my book online?**

My Strategy

I like to start by putting my book and e-book up on **KDP only** for two reasons:

1. Amazon is the major online book and e-book vendor and offers tools and helps to push sales. You can concentrate on one venue to get the word out.
2. KDP's (Amazon's) platform is free to load and reload files. This means you can catch errors in your book and e-book and make changes without penalty.

Once your book and ebook have a good foothold of online sales you can widen to other distributors such as Ingram Spark.

Check out www.draft2digital.com for some help with distribution of books and ebooks if you don't want to do it all yourself. They are well worth it!

KDP Rules



- KDP offers a comprehensive and free platform from which to sell your print book and e-book on Amazon.
- KDP links to your regular Amazon account.
- Enter your titles by going to kdp.amazon.com.

The Keys to the Kingdom



- When you list your book, you will be asked for three categories and up to seven keywords that describe your book's contents.
- These are way helpful for Amazon to make recommendations to readers and for readers to find your book in the first place.

An Effective Marketing Tool: Amazon Author Central

Promote your books for free with Author Central



Reach More Readers

At Author Central, you can share the most up-to-date information about yourself and your works with millions of readers. [Learn more](#)

Add your biography, photos, blog, video, and tour events to the Author Page, your homepage on Amazon.com.

[Reach More Readers](#) [Track Your Sales](#) [Get Author Help](#)

The image shows a woman with her arms crossed standing in front of a computer monitor displaying the Amazon Author Central page for Marybeth Whalen. The page includes a profile picture, a bio, and a list of books. The woman is wearing a yellow sweater and has a colorful patterned bag over her shoulder.

Amazon set up a free place for your book listing in which you can promote yourself and your book(s). This is a great opportunity for you.

Join at <https://author.amazon.com>.

Expanded Distribution



- Ingram Spark is the publishing arm of book distributor Ingram.
- You can publish here for wider distribution of your titles.
- They charge \$50 for every upload so make sure your files are perfect before loading.
- Go to www.ingramspark.com.

If You Would Like a Little Help...



- Draft2Digital is a great platform for both print books and e-books.
- They help you with formatting, book distribution to Amazon and other sites, and marketing tools.
- You pay a percent of the sale of each book so no money up front.
- Works really well! Go to www.draft2digital.com for more information.

More Information



**Christian
Indie Publishing
Association**

If you want more information and resources for self-publishing, check out Christian Indie Publishing Association at <https://cipa.podia.com>.

They are well worth the membership price of \$90/year.

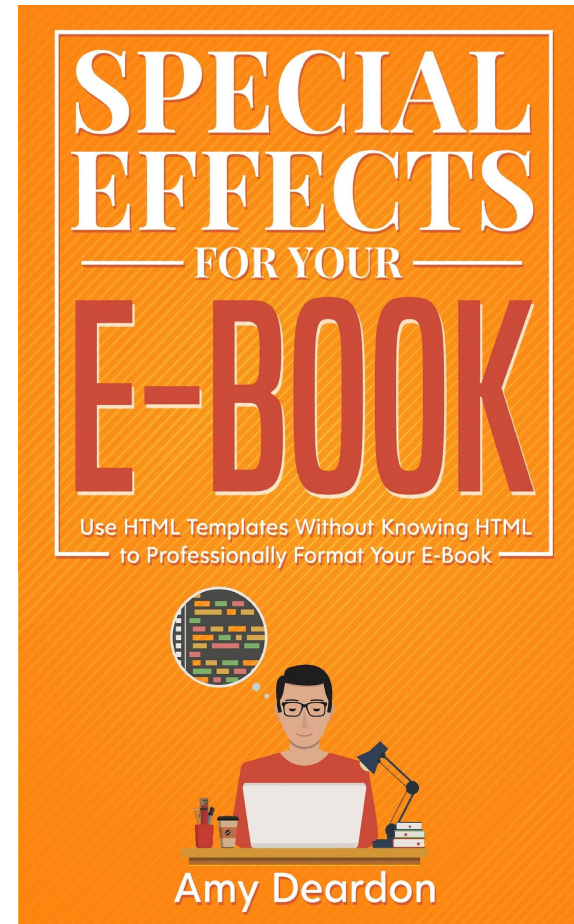
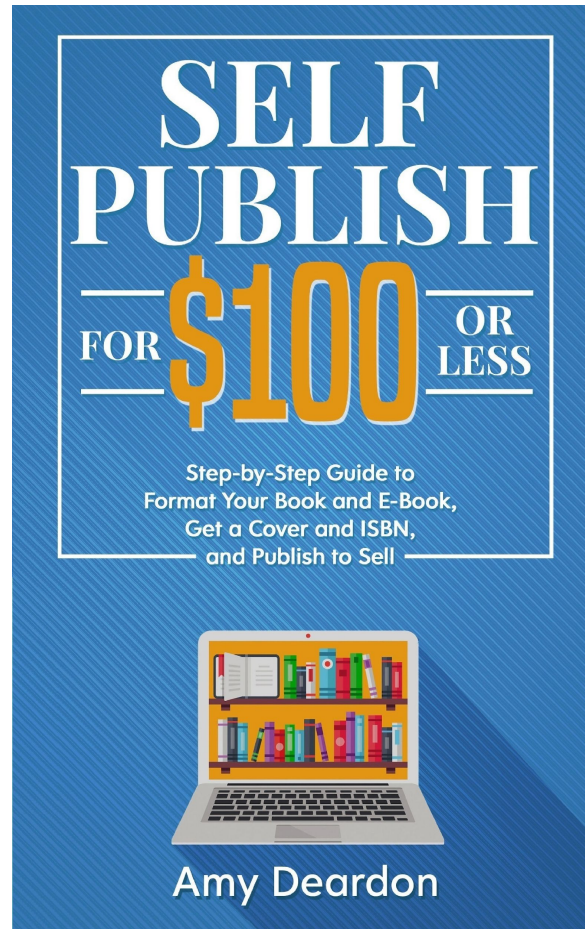
See also my lecture on Marketing in this ACFW virtual conference.

It's Time to Move Ahead!



- Decide to publish your book!
- If you have questions feel free to email me at amydeardon@gmail.com.
- Don't forget to sign up for fun articles and free downloads at www.amydeardon.blog.

If You Need Step by Step Guidance...



If You are Truly Overwhelmed...



Check out my company EBook Listing Services
(www.ebooklistingservices.com).

This company is an independent contractor you hire to SELF publish your book. This company is NOT a Subsidy Publisher.

That's All, Folks!



Amy Deardon

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