

Book
Design
and
Production
A Guide for
Authors and Publishers

Pete Masterson

Æonix Publishing Group
El Sobrante, California

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It is not the purpose of this guide to reprint all the information that is otherwise available to authors and/or publishers, but to complement, amplify, and supplement other texts and resources. You are urged to read all the available material and learn as much as you can about self-publishing and to tailor the information to your specific circumstances.

Every effort has been made to make this guide as complete and as accurate as possible. However *there may be mistakes*, both typographical and in content. Therefore, this text should be used only as a general guide and not as the ultimate source of writing and publishing information. Furthermore, this guide contains information on writing and publishing that is current only up to the printing date.

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Foreword

This is an exciting time to be in the book business. Book writing, production, printing, and promoting are changing—for the better. Computers, desktop publishing software, digital printing equipment, and the Internet have reached a level of sophistication that allows an author (with a little training) to write, edit, and produce books that are fully competitive with the offerings of the major publishers.

In publishing books, such as *The Self Publishing Manual*, I have been an early adopter, preparing camera ready copy with a laser printer as early as 1981. Over the years, I have seen the professional tools of printing and publishing escape from the private sanctum of professional craftsmen and become readily available to anyone with the desire to purchase and use them. The current generation of page layout software is now able to achieve the quality once reserved to expensive, dedicated typesetting equipment. Digital printing technology is able to quickly produce books with such good quality that it takes an expert to tell them from those that were printed with the traditional offset press.

This book, *Book Design and Production: A Guide for Authors and Publishers*, covers the critical production aspects that are too easily overlooked when preparing to self-publish. While the tools are available to produce a professional-quality book, all too often, self-publishers will skimp on the production of their book with the mistaken assumption that “readers want to read what I have to say and aren’t interested in what it looks like.” Sadly, this attitude can result in a book failing to reach its audience.

Despite the old saying “don’t judge a book by its cover,” people who buy books do, indeed, judge them by their looks. All too often, the professional buyers with distributors and booksellers will reject a book based on poor production. Assuming a book does reach store shelves, a retail buyer, put off by the appearance, will never buy and read the book. Or, if they do buy the book, the message may fail to be communicated due to poor book design that limits comprehension or actually hurts the credibility of the author. Good book design supports the author’s message by ensuring higher levels of comprehension and helps to communicate it effectively to the reader.

Humans have been communicating through graphic images and written words for thousands of years. As a result, there is a rich history in written communication, and experienced and talented craftspeople have learned the most effective ways to create readable books that have a high degree of comprehension. And that have, as well, a sensitivity to the style and message of the words within the book. These skills can be learned—and they are ignored at the peril of the author’s message.

In this book, Pete Masterson, who has worked in the world of graphic arts and book production for nearly twenty years, has shared his research and knowledge of effective communication through typography and book design. The whole process of physically producing a book is covered from editing, through design, typesetting, and selecting a printer.

Whether you do it yourself or decide to hire a book designer, your understanding of the physical process will allow you to make more informed decisions, control your costs, and ultimately end up with a book you can be proud to sell.

*Dan Poynter
Santa Barbara
February 2005*

Preface

ONE DAY, SEVERAL YEARS AGO, while looking at books in a small bookstore in Stinson Beach (Marin County, California), I came across a little book with historical discussions, route descriptions and hiking maps of the local coastal area. As I looked through the book, I was horrified by the poor production values, the many basic design errors, and the truly ugly typesetting. It was obviously a self-published product. It did appear that it might have valuable and useful information (and helpful maps). It was probably in the store because the manager felt its value exceeded the many visible problems in the general design and layout of the book. (Or the author was a friend of the bookstore owner.)

I put it back on the shelf—I simply couldn't bring myself to buy it—as I felt the many obvious flaws overwhelmed the text. I simply didn't have confidence that the content would be well researched and accurate if the author-publisher couldn't bother to make the book look even close to being professional. While this book may have delivered far more than its humble appearance suggested, I didn't want to take the chance to trust that this book would serve me well as I navigated the various coastal trails. It also occurred to me that this author-publisher might have produced a much more professional and credible publication for not much more cost (but perhaps a bit more effort) if he had some means to understand how a book *ought* to look.

Then, I started looking around for a book on book design that was focused toward authors and publishers. While there are many books on typography (which includes many aspects of book design) and there are many books on graphic design (of a more general nature), these books all share a viewpoint in that they were written for experienced (or student) designers. To make matters more difficult, the portions specifically on book design were usually only a small part of the overall tome. You had to understand enough about design and typography to pick out the parts that applied to a book project and ignore those that applied to other purposes.

After reaching the realization that there were no current books on book design for authors and publishers (although I did find one book for self-publishers that is now both out of date and out of print), I decided that this was a topic that I might be able to beneficially address.

This book has been in development for over five years. It is not the book that I thought it would be when I began gathering information to put it together. Along the way, I have received input from many beginning self-publishers and, through my involvement with the (San Francisco) Bay Area Independent Publishers Association, I have learned the questions that are most frequently of concern to those just starting on the path of self-publishing. I appreciate the questions, discussions, and ideas generated more than any who I have encountered may ever realize.

I only hope that the readers can enjoy using this book as much as I did in making it a reality.

*Pete Masterson
El Sobrante
February, 2005*

Introduction

IT ALL STARTS WITH A DREAM: I will write a great book. It will sell millions of copies. I will become rich and famous and then retire to Tahiti (or whatever your definition of paradise might be).

This dream is rather far fetched and is highly unlikely. The reality is more like a nightmare of having a garage full of unsold books. (Leave 'em to the kids—if they want an inheritance, *they* can sell the books!) However, if an author-publisher does a good job at publishing, a successful project may result in the dream becoming fulfilled at a more modest level.

Why do authors decide to self publish?

1. The author has been unable to find a satisfactory publisher; or
2. The author wants to retain greater control over the way the finished book looks.
3. Profit may play a role, but more often it does not. (When profit motive is involved, the author may feel that his “share” (royalty) is not enough or that a publisher won't do the right marketing job).
4. Usually there is a strong desire to tell a particular story or to communicate some particular ideas, no matter what the opinion of a publisher might be with respect to finding a market for the book.

Some industry statistics: Books in Print reports that about 70,000 publishers delivered 140,000 new titles in 2002 (the most recent figure I had available). About 80% or some 56,000 of those publishers are independents who publish fewer than 10 titles.

Large and medium sized publishers do not have their egos wrapped around a particular project, but an author-publisher can't help closely identifying with their “child”—the manuscript they've written. This ego involvement and desire to control every detail of the project may lead an author-publisher into serious problems. But ultimately, it's a major strength as a motivated author-publisher, who truly believes in the project, is more likely to make it a success.

Who will buy your book?

Well, everyone would want my book! (You say.) *Wrong answer*—even if it is true. The major publishers and other large consumer products corporations spend billions to reach the mass market. An author-publisher can not possibly obtain enough free publicity (initially) or to pay for enough advertising to be noticed on a large scale. (And it is a rare situation indeed, where advertising for a book will prove cost effective.)

The author-publisher must focus on market segments or small parts of a market segment (a niche market) to build awareness of the title. A small market allows a publisher of modest means to be noticed and make an impact.

One of my clients wrote a family history about his parents who immigrated to the United States at the beginning of the 20th century. Rather than writing a very personal family history, the author generalized and fictionalized it (slightly) to make a better story. The book, *Carved In Stone: The Greek Heritage* by Basil Douros, tells the story of how his family name was established by his great grandfather. Then it describes the conditions in Greece at the end of the 19th century that led many to desire to emigrate. Finally, he describes how his parents came to the U.S. and established themselves here. This story has broad parallels to the stories of many other Greek immigrant families. The author was able to focus his marketing on Greek-American organizations, Greek Orthodox churches, and even Greek restaurants. In about 18 months, he sold some 2,000 copies.

Subsequently, Mr. Douros wrote a similar treatment describing his wife's family's immigration from Ireland; *Roots of the Blackthorn Tree: The Irish Heritage*. This has been selling well through various Irish-American connections and through local museums in New Hampshire, where the family settled along with many other Irish. And the author has had a great time and has enjoyed the attention that the projects have created for him. So much the better that both projects have been modestly profitable as well.

You've decided to publish your manuscript, now what?

This book is designed to help you take your raw manuscript and turn it into an electronic file ready for a printer (either digital or offset). Or, to help you understand the book production process so you can hire the appropriate service providers to get the job done.

This book is not a general "self publishing" book. There are already a number of books on that topic. I can recommend both Dan Poynter's *The Self Publishing Manual* and Tom and Marilyn Ross' *The Complete Guide to Self Publishing*. (See the bibliography for the complete references.) Either of these books provides an excellent background on the overall questions you'll have about self publishing. Both books, in my opinion, are a bit vague when they describe the process of turning a manuscript into a ready-to-print book—and that is why I wrote *this* book.

Basic definitions

BOOK EDITING: The preparation of a manuscript necessary to make it ready for publication. This is discussed at length in chapter 2.

BOOK DESIGN: The plan and specifications for the physical structure and visual look of the book.

BOOK PRODUCTION: The execution of the design (typesetting) and arranging for the manufacturing and physical distribution of the book.

BOOKMAKING: Book editing, design, and production are all parts of a process: that of allowing an author to communicate a message to a reader in the best possible way. This includes creation of a book (or other media format) that can be marketed profitably in addition to satisfying the needs of both the author and the readers. The term *bookmaking* is sometimes used to refer to this process. Unfortunately, that term is also used to refer to illegal gambling practices, so it will not be further used here.

A book can be one of several different products. In general, when we refer to a book we will be discussing a tradebook. That is, a hard or soft cover book sold to the general public through bookstores and other retail outlets. Our discussion can be applied to many other kinds of books (ebooks, textbooks, reference, mass market, etc.) as well, but those will not be our primary focus.

A WELL-DESIGNED BOOK: One that is appropriate to its content and intended use; is practical and economical; and is satisfying to the senses. Its visual design enables the reader to achieve understanding of the author's message with the least effort (considering the material presented) and the physical properties are such that the credibility of the author is maintained.

A note about computers and software

There are a number of sections where we endeavor to describe using certain software programs on a computer. First, we assume that you have a solid general understanding of your computer system. You should know how to start the computer, operate various programs, know how to save, copy, and back up files, make disks or CDs, and otherwise operate the computer with a reasonable level of competence.

We will assume that you have a moderate understanding of the programs we discuss. If, for example, you have recently bought InDesign, you should work through all tutorials and sample projects that came with the product to gain a basic understanding of the operation, capabilities, and features available. You may wish to obtain books or videos intended to teach you the basics of the program or, if you can, either take a basic desktop publishing course through a community college/adult education system or work with someone who's fairly experienced while you 'get the hang' of the program.

This book is not a basic tutorial. Book design using page layout software uses the features of that software at a fairly high level. While we will do our best to guide you through the process, we can not provide beginner level instructions.

For those who are more advanced, please bear with us as we do give fairly detailed instructions for locating menus, etc. We do not describe any keyboard short cuts, although there are many useful shortcuts that we regularly use.

Finally, instructions are based on programs running on a Macintosh using Mac OS X 10.2.8 or on a Macintosh running Mac OS 9.2.x. We understand that the menus and operation of most programs discussed are quite similar under most versions of Microsoft Windows, however we do not have a Windows computer available to us to check for variations. In that regard, there may be some differences in the locations of some menus or commands.

Beyond the user manual that comes with the software, we can suggest that you select one or more of the following InDesign books: *Adobe InDesign CS Classroom in a Book*, by Adobe Creative Team, Adobe Press, ISBN 0321193776; *Adobe InDesign CS One-on-One* by Deke McClelland, Deke Press (in association with O'Reilly), ISBN 0596007361; or *InDesign CS for Macintosh and Windows: Visual Quick Start Guide* by Sandee Cohen, Peachpit Press, ISBN 0321213483. For more advanced users, *Real World Adobe InDesign CS* by Olav Martin Kvern and David Blatner, Peachpit Press, ISBN 032121921x.



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