Self-publishing Made Simple

A How-to Guide for the Non-tech-savvy Among Us

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, a huge thank you to writer, artist, and editor

Note: This book, now free, has not been edited since the 2019 revision. Any mistakes that make it through are solely my own.

Chapter 1: Self-publishing for the Non-tech-savvy Among Us

MAYBE YOU'RE HERE because you've finally written that family history your mother spent years begging you to write. Or maybe after querying dozens of agents without a nibble, you've decided to go it alone. Perhaps, like me, you've terminated contracts with a publisher and are eager to have your works republished even though you've not a clue how to do it. Whatever the reason, you now find yourself at the precipice of an exciting adventure, the first step just a mere tap of the fingers away.

And that's where you're stuck.

If, like me, you grew up with sporadic access to a rusty old Royal typewriter (with an *e* that always typed midway up the line) and a gummy bottle of Liquid Paper, the online world of choices, directions, templates, and opportunities can seem overwhelming.

While there are many guides available to address the various aspects of self-publishing, my experience has been that the majority of them start a good three steps ahead of my level of comprehension. *Create a TOC by bookmarking* is only helpful if first, you know what bookmarking *is*, and second, you know how to *do* it.

As I schlepped my way through pamphlets, websites, books, blogs, and discussion boards (all while quietly cursing at my computer late into the night) I took copious notes, translating, if you will, techy-speak into language even I could understand.

After a couple of blog posts of my own and a plethora of questions from other writers struggling with some of the same issues, I decided to pull my notes and information together in order to help those who, again like me, were born well before the age of *online* anything. Know upfront this is not a writing guide, nor is it a marketing guide or a promotional recipe.

Instead, it's a plainspoken, nuts and bolts instruction booklet to help guide learning, non-tech-savvy authors through the maze of confusing information. While tech-savvy folks may find much of the information useful, the simplified instructions provided in the chapters on formatting will likely irritate anyone with an above-middle-grade working knowledge of technology. I can say this because I have a below-middle-grade working knowledge of technology.

The information provided within is based on the steps I took as I transitioned from having a publisher to self-publishing, and it includes everything from avoiding questionable publishers to registering for an Employee Identification Number, choosing publishing and distribution venues, registering copyrights, and formatting the previously mentioned TOC (table of contents, for those unfamiliar with the acronym).

I provide specific manuscript formatting instructions for Kindle Direct Publishing and Draft2Digital, and provide tips, clarification, and links to free templates to use in preparing your manuscript for KDP Print and/or IngramSpark. I'm working in Microsoft Word 2016, so my formatting instructions are specific to that program. If you're working in an earlier version of Word the terms and commands will be the same, but the locations on the toolbar may be different. If you're working in HTML code or using a Mac, the chapters on formatting your document may not be very helpful to you.

Finally, links to the websites and resources discussed in this booklet are embedded into clickable words or phrases and also available on the "Helpful Resources" page in the back of the book. The world of self-publishing is rapidly changing and growing, and although I update the

information presented here fairly often (most recently in 2023), links contained within this booklet could change at any time. For that reason, I provide ample information in my discussion to help you navigate to the site in question in spite of a broken link.

Chapter 2: Scams Abound: Research, Research, Research

IF YOU'RE STILL undecided about your preferred route to publishing, know that in addition to the "Big 5" publishing companies, there are many independent mid-sized and small publishing houses with stellar reputations and years of proven experience.

Know, too, that every so often, an independent publisher will end up on a "scam" list. Google "publishing scams" and you'll uncover pages and pages of warnings against publishers who mislead and steal from hopeful authors. Writer Beware, and Absolute Write, are must-read sites for any aspiring author.

Hopefully by now it goes without saying that in a *traditional* publishing relationship, money should flow *to* the author, not *from* the author. (**Note:** There are "hybrid" companies out there that charge fees for services such as editing, cover design, formatting, etc., before publishing your book. Don't mistake those companies for traditional publishing companies. I'll discuss hybrid companies in more detail in Chapter 8, but know that traditional publishers do not make money by charging authors for those services; they make money from the sale of the book.)

Sometimes companies claiming to operate on the traditional model ultimately don't. Some set out with a goal of scamming authors, while others (and I believe this number to be far higher) seem to have been established with the right ideas in mind, but failed for a number of reasons and ended up on the "scam" list just the same. A love of books does not a businessperson make.

The following is a list of some of the signs to watch out for when querying smaller publishers who operate on the traditional model but are not affiliated with the five big New York publishing houses. None of these warning signs should be taken as gospel, but when lumped together should be viewed as enough of a concern to warrant more research. I've divided potential concerns into three categories: External, Internal, and Personal.

External: Signs on the web

1. It goes without saying in any business one should do some research before signing a contract. Do an internet search and ask yourself the following: How long has the business existed? Are there complaints against it?

There are many sites designed to protect authors, including the aforementioned Absolute Write and Writer Beware. Is the publishing company listed or discussed on any of those sites?

2. Are they listed anywhere (such as a state database) as a registered business? If so, what type? A sole proprietor (SP)? A limited liability company (LLC) or partnership (LLP)? Are they "doing business as" (DBA)?

The registration of a company (or lack thereof) can be a good indicator of business knowledge. A company that throws up a website without registering as a legitimate business isn't necessarily out to scam anyone, but it would raise a red flag for me and I'd certainly question their business acumen. For example, a business registered as a DBA or SP has left not only business assets but personal assets at risk in the event of a lawsuit. I want a company that knows to separate personal interests from business interests on all levels.

Internal: Signs on the company front

     1. The website: Are there misspelled words or broken links on the site? If so, this could indicate a lack of professionalism, a lack of skill, or a lack of time.

     2. Books and authors: There are several things to look for here. First, how long has the company been in business and how many books have they published? This is important, because getting a book ready for publication takes both time and money. If you're thinking of signing on with a small press that churns books out on a weekly or monthly basis, this could be a warning sign. Are they financially sound? Are they spending money more quickly than they're earning it? Are they taking time to ensure the book is properly edited and formatted? Are they taking time to find quality, relevant covers? Are they taking time to send books out for review or to market before publication? All of those services cost money, and all of them impact sales.

     3. Book descriptions, previews, and excerpts: If you're thinking of going with a small publishing house, check out their book descriptions, previews, and excerpts on Amazon, Goodreads, Smashwords, etc. Have the books been properly edited? Are they riddled with misspelled words and grammatical errors? Is the writing clunky? Does the cover look homemade? If so, this is another red flag.

     4. Is the book's copyright registered? I don't mean does the book have a copyright notice; I mean is it registered in the [U.S. Copyright Office](#)? Again, some small presses are upfront about letting their authors know they don't register copyrights. I have a friend whose publisher informs authors they won't be registering copyright, but the author can pay the $45.00 to file if they so choose. That's fine, if that's known upfront. But it's something to know before signing. Common belief is that as soon as you create the work, it's automatically protected, but that's not necessarily the case. According to the U.S. Copyright office, courts [will not automatically recognize your claim](#) if your copyright isn't registered with the U.S. Copyright Office. More on this later.

     5. Are their books listed in the [Library of Congress](#) (LOC)? As with filing copyrights, some small presses are upfront about not listing with the LOC. But again, it's something to know before signing because it affects where your books might be listed. For example, some public libraries and schools won't stock books that aren't registered with the Library of Congress. More on this later, too.

Personal: Signs noticed—hopefully before, but more likely after—signing

     1. Does your contract match the statements made on the website? A friend originally agreed to a contract with her previous publisher partially because their site stated they would put books on local shelves and would send copies out for review. She had found information during previous searches to support that claim. She had also been pleased to find that some of their authors had placed in various contests and competitions. Those were all good signs.

     Unfortunately, those policies changed just as she signed. She was told books would no longer be sold in brick-and-mortar stores because the return fees were too high. She never received

any official word regarding reviews, contests, or copyright registration, but could only assume those fees were also too high as these things were also not done.

Two red flags here: one for not following through with previously promised/advertised services, another for the subtle (or not so subtle) indication that the company was struggling financially.

She also discovered her books weren't listed with the Library of Congress, although prior to her signing, books through that publisher had been. This is a free service for publishers who've published the work of at least three authors and been accepted into the Cataloging in Publication Program (CIP), so it's difficult to understand why that changed, but because of the change, her books were not eligible for placement on the shelves of her own hometown library.

Had she known these policies would change, she'd never have signed on. Unfortunately, she didn't make sure those items were specified in her contract. Lesson learned. Make sure your contract specifies all the promises made.

2. Royalties: It's expected (and accepted) in the writing world that royalties will arrive late. There's a lag between when the book sells, when payment is made to the publisher, and when the publisher pays the author. That said, the date of payment in your contract should be specific, and payment should arrive on that date accompanied by a detailed statement. If even one pay period passes in which you don't receive a statement (even if you haven't sold enough to make payout, you should still receive a statement), that's a red flag.

I can't emphasize this point enough. If your payment is late and/or isn't accompanied by a statement, that's a problem. It's amazing how many excuses we can both accept and make for late/missing payments or statements.

Bottom line: It doesn't matter if the publisher fell ill, had a computer crash, misplaced the checkbook, is moving homes, had to open a new bank account, got hacked, lost the mail, or any other number of excuses. Your contract with your publisher is a business agreement. It doesn't make you heartless to expect payment when payment is due. It makes the publisher unprofessional and/or manipulative (not to mention criminal) to avoid paying you by plying you with excuses.

As stated above, I think the majority of small presses who fail start out with the right intentions, but due to mismanagement end up on scam lists. In the end, the reasons don't really matter, and your choice is clear: Either continue querying reputable agents and publishers, or strike out on your own. This booklet is for the latter category.

Chapter 3: Self-publishing: Business Odds and Ends

WHEN I FIRST decided to republish my books, I made a list of the basics, a very specific, literal list of steps I needed to take. While the majority of that list consisted of information specific to publishing, there were some business-oriented tasks that had to be completed. Self-publishing is, after all, a business, even if that business consists of only the author.

Disclaimer: These are the steps I took, but they may not be the appropriate steps for you. I am not an attorney. My goal isn't to steer in one direction or another, but to provide a point of reference from which others may start. Keep in mind it's always a good idea for any self-employed person or new business owner to contact the appropriate professionals to discuss options.

Business information

1. Setting up as a business: If you're simply self-publishing with no plans to expand, this first step may not be necessary for you. If, however, you think you might eventually want to publish the work of other authors, you'll need to contact a professional to discuss options that will best protect your legal interests.

After weighing my options, I chose to establish a Limited Liability Company (LLC). I went with this option because my family and I chose to form a small publishing company in order to republish our work after terminating various contracts. At this time, I have no immediate plans to expand and publish the work of other authors, but if I ever change my mind, I want my personal assets to be protected. **Edit 2014: We now publish the work of several other authors.**

I could have approached my attorney to help with this process, as I did many years ago when establishing my psychotherapy practice, but after learning my attorney would charge $3,000.00 to fill out the paperwork, I decided to explore other options. There are several reputable legal sites online, and I chose to go with NOLO.

Again, this is the option that worked best for me, but it may not for you. It's always advisable when forming a business to consult with the proper professionals (one of whom I am not) before acting.

2. No matter which avenue you choose for publishing and selling your books—Amazon, Smashwords, KDP Print, or any of the others—you'll be required to provide information such as would be found on a W-9. After all, any company paying you has to report to the Internal Revenue Service, who in turn will expect you to pay taxes on income earned. If you've earned $10.00 or more from a particular distribution platform, you should receive a 1099-MISC towards the end of January. It's often stated you must earn $600 before you receive a 1099, and this is true for certain types of income, but royalties are handled differently. Even if you don't receive a 1099-MISC, you still need to report that income.

If you aren't comfortable sharing your social security number with various distribution platforms, one option is to obtain an Employee Identification Number (EIN) to use instead. It's quick, free and easy, and can be done through the Internal Revenue Service.

With those first essential steps out of the way, I was ready to focus on publishing.

Chapter 4: Ebooks: What Are the Options?

THERE ARE THREE main ways to get your ebooks into online stores. The first is to distribute directly through each storefront. The second is to use an aggregator to distribute for you. Ebook aggregators serve as the interface between the author and multiple storefronts. The third is to use a hybrid publisher or assisted service, both of which often charge large upfront fees.

1. Direct-to-storefront distribution: The only direct-to-storefront platform I discuss in detail in this guide is Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP). There are two reasons for this:

> 1. First, it's undeniably where most self-published authors see the most sales.

> 2. Second, while all of the well-known aggregators distribute to the other most popular storefronts, not all of them distribute to Amazon because Amazon has historically resisted working with aggregators.

If you think you may be interested in distributing directly through some of the more well-known storefronts such as Apple, Kobo, Barnes & Noble, and Google Play, simply click on the embedded links to see directions on each site. I'll provide a detailed discussion of KDP in Chapter 5.

2. Ebook aggregators: Draft2Digital (D2D) and Smashwords are arguably the two most well-known ebook aggregators. **Important 2023 update:** In 2022, Draft2Digital and Smashwords began the process of merging. From D2D: "As of March 1, 2022, if you're an author or publisher with either Draft2Digital or Smashwords, there's nothing you need to do; it will be business as usual. Over time, publishing and distribution systems for both Smashwords and Draft2Digital will be integrated onto the Draft2Digital website."

As of March 2023, users of D2D can click to also add their books to Smashwords, but the websites remain separate. Until the platforms have merged into one, I'll continue to discuss each separately because formatting and uploading instructions are somewhat different for each.

There are other aggregators, too, of course, but I want to focus on the two most popular for the following reasons:

> 1. While other aggregators have come and gone over the years, Draft2Digital and Smashwords have a proven track record for providing quality services.

> 2. Although both Draft2Digital and Smashwords offer perks to authors (such as free templates from Draft2Digital and free coupon codes from Smashwords) they function strictly as aggregators and charge authors no upfront fees. Many hybrid publishers and assisted services will also distribute for you, but they charge fees to do so. We'll talk more about that below.

For a detailed discussion of D2D, see Chapter 6. For a detailed discussion of Smashwords, see Chapter 7.

3. Hybrid publishers and assisted services: There are quite a few of these, and while I'm not going to discuss any specific ones by name, I will discuss hybrid publishers and assisted services in general in Chapter 8 so that readers have an understanding of what they are and aren't and will proceed with caution.

Our discussion of KDP, D2D, and Smashwords will include pros, cons, royalty structures, and payment options. Our discussion of hybrid publishers and assisted services will include an example of the fees you can expect should you decide go this route.

Chapter 5: Kindle Direct Publishing: Pros, Cons, Royalties and Payments

Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) is often considered the premier place for publishing ebooks. KDP is an extension of Amazon, after all, a company often cited as cornering the market on books.

Pros:

1. KDP offers a free downloadable application to use to check your manuscript once you've submitted but before you've published. Check for formatting errors, typos, alignment, correct display of graphics, etc., before publishing. If errors are found, simply correct them on your manuscript and resubmit.

2. Publishing ebooks on KDP does not require that you provide your own International Standard Book Number (ISBN). We'll discuss ISBNs in more detail in Chapter 12, but as you'll see, free ISBNs are a big deal. Instead, of an ISBN, Kindle assigns your book Amazon's own (free) specific identifier, the ASIN, a series of letters and numbers used to identify your book in the Amazon system.

3. Directions for uploading your manuscript and book cover on KDP are straightforward and easy. Your manuscript can be uploaded as a Microsoft Word document (more on formatting requirements in Chapter 9), and your cover as a JPEG. Once you upload your Word document, KDP will convert it to an EPUB file. (**Note**: Although it's not necessary, some more tech-savvy authors prefer to convert to an EPUB *before* upload. If you prefer to do this, Calibre is free downloadable software that can be used for the conversion.) When you hit "publish," your ebook typically shows up on Amazon within twenty-four hours (and often much sooner).

4. You can make changes to your cover and/or manuscript at any time. Simply resubmit the new version when ready. Although your new version will show as "in process" for twenty-four hours or so, your previous version will still be available for purchase on Amazon until your newer edition goes live.

5. You can change your prices at any time, but unless you've joined the KDP Select program (more on that below) you cannot set your price to "free," at least not without some help. Some authors have had luck messaging KDP directly and asking the price to be set to zero, but it's not something you can do on your own.

6. If you own the rights to your work in all territories, you have the potential to sell in the following countries (this changes every so often, so may quickly be outdated):

US Kindle Store
UK Kindle Store: United Kingdom (including Guernsey, Isle of Man, and Jersey)
AU Kindle Store
DE Kindle Store: Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, and Switzerland
FR Kindle Store: France, Monaco, Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg

ES Kindle Store: Andorra, Spain
IT Kindle Store: Italy, San Marino, Vatican City, and Switzerland
Japan Kindle Store: Japan
BR Kindle Store: Brazil
MX Kindle Store: Mexico
CA Kindle Store: Canada

7. **Kindle Direct Publishing** *Select* (not to be confused with plain old KDP): Several years ago, KDP began offering **KDP Select**, an **optional** ninety-day program that provides additional benefits for those enrolled. While the program has changed some over the years, authors who've currently chosen to enroll in KDP Select benefit in several ways:

Kindle Unlimited
Kindle Countdown Deals
Kindle Free Promotions
Kindle Owners' Lending Library
Increased royalties for sales in select countries

Instead of attempting to explain each of the benefits here, I'll direct you instead to the KDP Select information page.

Know, though, that while there are benefits, there are also drawbacks. When you use plain old KDP, you can also choose to distribute your ebook anywhere else you'd like. But if you choose to enroll in KDP *Select*, your ebook cannot be made available anywhere other than Amazon. Debates have continued for years regarding the costs/benefits of KDP Select. At the end of the day, each author has to weigh the options and make the decision that best meets their individual needs.

Cons:

1. When it comes to self-publishing, there really are no apparent cons to publishing through KDP.

Royalties and payments:

1. Although royalties are somewhat complicated, in the majority of cases KDP pays 70 percent royalties in most countries for books priced between $2.99 and $9.99. Books priced below $2.99 or above $9.99 may only earn a 35 percent royalty, and some countries have a royalty rate of only 35 percent regardless of price. Details can be found on the website.

2. Payment occurs monthly, typically at the end of the month, 60 days after the sale is made. For example, if you sell a book in January, you'll receive payment for the sale at the end of March.

Now let's take a look at Draft2Digital and Smashwords, two of the most popular ebook aggregators.

Chapter 6: Draft2Digital: Pros, Cons, Royalties and Payments

Draft2Digital (D2D) is an online ebook distribution site that distributes ebooks to Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, Kobo (including Kobo Plus), Tolino, OverDrive, Bibliotheca, Scribd, 24Symbols, and Playster. They're constantly adding stores, so this information will quickly be outdated.

Pros:

1. D2D accepts the same manuscript Kindle Direct Publishing wants, so there's no need to format it differently (again, more on formatting in Chapter 9).

2. D2D will convert your manuscript into an EPUB, and you can download the file to your computer to use anywhere you'd like, even if you decide not to distribute through D2D. D2D also has a variety of nice templates you can choose from to use for your conversion.

3. D2D assigns an ISBN to your ebook for free.

4. As with KDP, directions for uploading your manuscript and book cover on D2D are simple and direct. You can upload a Word file for your manuscript and a JPEG for your cover.

5. As with KDP, you can revise your covers or manuscripts as needed. Simply upload the new version when ready. D2D pushes the revised edition out to stores very quickly (within a few hours for most stores).

6. Like KDP, D2D allows you to change your prices at any time. Unlike KDP, you're allowed to set your price to "free" for all stores except Amazon. If you set your price to "free" and choose to use D2D to distribute to Amazon instead of using KDP directly, Amazon will price your book at $0.99.

Cons:

1. If you decide to distribute your book though D2D, you're ineligible for KDP *Select* (remember, Select is an optional program offered by KDP that requires exclusivity).

Royalties and payments:

1. D2D can pay by check, direct deposit, Paypal, or Payoneer. There is a $100 minimum threshold if you decide you want to be paid by check, a $20 minimum threshold for Payoneer, and a $20 minimum threshold for international direct deposit. D2D pays monthly (if the minimum threshold is met for methods requiring one).

2. D2D keeps approximately 10% of the retail price for each sale you make, but individual stores also take a cut, typically 30%. This means you'll receive approximately 60% of the retail price of each book sold.

Chapter 7: Smashwords: Pros, Cons, Royalties and Payments

Smashwords, an online ebook publishing and selling site created by British author Mark Coker, started out as a place to sell ebooks compatible with virtually any platform, but has quickly evolved to offer even more.

Pros:

      1. Smashwords offers the opportunity to sell your ebooks directly from the Smashwords site in a format compatible with virtually any e-reader.

      2. If your ebook qualifies for inclusion in the Smashwords Premium Catalogue, you'll have the opportunity to sell your ebooks in a variety of places: Sony, Apple, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Diesel, Page Foundry, Baker and Taylor, Baker-Taylor Axis360, Flipcart, Oyster, and Library Direct. Smashwords adds stores every so often, so this list may quickly be outdated.

Mr. Coker has even published a free Smashwords Style Guide to assist with formatting your manuscript in order to obtain Premium Catalogue status (more on this below).

      3. Smashwords assigns an ISBN to your ebook for free.

      4. As with KDP, directions for uploading your manuscript and book cover on Smashwords are simple and direct. Your manuscript can be uploaded as a Microsoft Word document, and your cover as a JPEG. As soon as you publish on Smashwords your ebook will be available for purchase on the Smashwords site. It will automatically be submitted for review to determine eligibility for inclusion in the Premium Catalogue. The review process for the Premium Catalogue can take several days. If approved, your ebook will then be shipped to the previously discussed Smashwords affiliates.

      5. As with KDP, you have the ability to revise your covers or manuscripts as needed. Simply upload the new version when ready. Your revised version will be available immediately for purchase on Smashwords; however, it will have to go through the Premium Catalogue approval process again before Smashwords affiliates receive the new version.

      6. Like KDP, Smashwords allows you to change your prices at any time. Unlike KDP, you're allowed to set your price to "free."

      7. Smashwords provides the opportunity to create coupons for each of your books. The discount can be as much as 100 percent. This can be helpful when querying book reviewers, because you can generate a coupon for a free download of that specific book and email it to the reviewer who's agreed to review your book. They'll be able to conveniently download a free review copy onto the e-reader of their choice.

Cons:

1. The major drawback of Smashwords is the "meatgrinder." The "meatgrinder" is what Smashwords calls its manuscript conversion-to-EPUB process. It's quite picky, especially if you format in Word. Word is known to have hidden HTML code scattered throughout, and this code can throw off formatting when the manuscript is converted to an ebook. Although they provide a free formatting guide, many authors still struggle to get their manuscripts safely through the meatgrinder.

2. Just as with Draft2Digital, if your ebook is available through Smashwords, it isn't eligible for KDP *Select*.

Royalties and payments:

1. When you sell directly from Smashwords you'll receive 85 percent in royalties. If you make it into the Smashwords Premium Catalogue and make a sale through one of their affiliates, the affiliate will, of course, take a cut of the profit. Instead of 85 percent, you'll typically earn 60 percent (though they do clarify some retailers may vary).

2. Smashwords pays monthly, typically at the end of the month, thirty days after the sale. Payment is via PayPal.

Next, I'll discuss hybrid publishers and assisted services.

Chapter 8: Hybrid Publishers and Assisted Services

Before we begin, know that some hybrid publishers and assisted services providers have a good reputation and offer quality services at a reasonable price.

The problem is, many don't, and without thorough research, it's hard to know which is which.

Hybrid publishers and assisted services offer services for an upfront fee. Services may be offered individually, or they may be bundled into a "package." They may include editing, cover design, file formatting, distribution, marketing, and more. Prices typically begin in the hundreds but can quickly go into the thousands, even the tens of thousands.

We've just discussed ebooks, and we'll discuss print distribution later, but my discussion here of hybrid publishers and assisted services will include both.

You can also find an excellent discussion on hybrid publishers from publishing guru Jane Friedman here: "IMHO: A Nuanced Look at Hybrid Publishers."

First, let's take a look at one of the more popular hybrid publishers:

During my research, I came across one popular hybrid publisher (which won't be named) that offers an all-inclusive package that includes cover design, interior formatting, conversion to an EPUB file, proofreading, filing of copyright, obtaining a Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN), warehousing of short-run printed books, fulfillment of short-run print orders (the author or customer must pay for shipping), support and management of metadata, ongoing project management, and high-level support for getting your book into stores.

This package costs $9,500.00. Believe it or not, that's fairly cheap for a package deal, but is it worth it?

Let's break it down a bit so you can better determine if the services they offer are worth $9,500.00 to you:

- As previously discussed, Smashwords provides a free guide for formatting your ebook in Word, and in Chapter 9, I'll walk you through formatting for KDP and D2D. When it comes to print, KDP Print offers free downloadable templates that can be used for both paperbacks and hardbacks (more on that in Chapter 11). If you're not comfortable formatting for yourself, many places, such as The Creative Penn, have a list of formatters who charge reasonable prices. At the time of this revision (2023) listed formatters charge anywhere from $35 - $250, depending on what you want.

- As noted earlier, both D2D and Smashwords will convert your Word document to an EPUB for free upon upload, and D2D will even let you download it to use wherever you'd like.

Or, if you'd prefer, you can use free software such as [Calibre](#) to convert your Word document into an ebook.

- You can easily file your copyright yourself directly through the [U.S. Copyright Office](#). As of this writing, the cost of filing for single author, same claimant, not for hire, one book is $45.00. More on that in Chapter 12.

- You can also request your LCCN straight from the [Library of Congress](#), and that's free. More on that in Chapter 12, as well.

- Print on Demand services such as KDP Print allow you to order up to 999 copies at a time for the cost of printing and shipping. IngramSpark will allow you to order 1000+. You could store them in a warehouse, I suppose. Or, like me, you could store them for free in your office or closet.

- Your "metadata" is the information you enter, for free, when you upload your ebook or print book into KDP, D2D, Smashwords, etc. It includes your title, jacket copy (often called a "blurb" in the world of self-publishing), the categories you choose (typically provided in a drop-down menu), your author bio, ISBN, etc.

- "Ongoing project management" is what I'm doing right now, at my desk, in my pajamas, as I drink coffee and type this. If we need an ebook price change, cover change, interior change, etc., we can easily do that for free through any of our direct ebook storefronts and/or aggregators, with one exception: As I discuss in Chapter 11, after the first 60 days, there is a $25.00 fee for file changes (cover and interior) at IngramSpark.

- Their high-level support for getting your books into stores means they're distributing print copies through Ingram, which, as we'll discuss in Chapter 11, you can do yourself for ~~$49.00~~. **2023 update: Uploading to IngramSpark is now free. Note**: Making a book *available* to stores does not mean stores will actually *order* it.

I could go on, but you get the idea. Many self-published authors do need help with cover design and editing, but that costs far less than $9,500.00.

Something to consider: Hybrid publishers such as this one have already made $9,500.00 directly from the author. Why, then, would they be particularly motivated to work to sell your book?

Now let's take a look at one of the more popular assisted services:

My research into one of the better-known assisted services shows that EPUB conversion and distribution of a 242-page ebook will cost me $348.00.

If I only want conversion, with no distribution, the cost is $148.00. Again, D2D and Smashwords convert your Word document into an EPUB for free when you upload, and D2D will let you download it to use anywhere you'd like, or you can download free software such as Calibre to use for the conversion if you prefer to do it on your own.

If I want file formatting before conversion, I can expect to pay $847. Again, Smashwords provides a free formatting guide, as do I in this book.

File formatting, conversion, distribution, and the creation of an ebook cover will cost me $1,246.00. Editing will increase the cost anywhere from $3.00 per page to $10.00 per page, depending on the type of editing I want.

Again, you get the idea.

Some authors may prefer to hand everything over to one assisted services provider who can get it all done for them. Other authors like the idea of having a publisher, even if that publisher doesn't operate in the traditional sense.

The choice is, of course, up to each individual author. My goal here is to provide information so that should you choose to use a hybrid publisher or assisted service, you have the information you need to make an informed decision.

Chapter 9: Formatting in Microsoft Word for Kindle Direct Publishing and Draft2Digital

NOW WE GET to the fun stuff (although believe me, I wasn't calling it that my first time through). The good news is, once you get the hang of it it's really not that difficult.

As I mentioned earlier, Mark Coker, founder of Smashwords, has a [free publishing guide](#) available for download on Smashwords. It contains detailed instructions for formatting your ebook manuscript for Smashwords, so I won't cover that here. This section will help you ready your ebook manuscript for upload to both KDP and D2D.

It's not unusual, if you frequent author discussion fora, to encounter members insisting that an ebook can't be formatted in Word and result in an attractive product. While they have a point when it comes to graphic-heavy books, they're wrong when it comes to novels. And they're usually trying to sell you formatting services. A standard novel can absolutely be formatted in Word and convert very nicely into an EPUB, if done correctly.

I'm working in Microsoft Word 2016, so as mentioned previously, all my instructions are specific to that program. If you're working in an earlier version of Word, the terms and commands will be the same, but the toolbar may be designed differently. If you're working in HTML code or on a Mac, these instructions may not be as helpful for you.

Before we begin, it's important to remember ebooks aren't print books and can't be formatted like print books. Print books have page numbers and headers; ebooks don't, because they flow. The "page" isn't static; it depends on the font style and size chosen by the reader. If you try to use a header or page number with an ebook, you may end up with random page numbers and headers scattered throughout the book.

Print books tend to start chapters midway down a page. You don't want to do this when formatting an ebook manuscript in Word because once converted, this will cause the reader to have to scroll through unattractive and unnecessary "white space" to reach the beginning of the chapter. We'll start at the top of the page.

Finally, if you try to adjust space in an ebook manuscript by hitting "Return/Enter" repeatedly, or if you indent by using tabs, it won't convert correctly. Instead, we'll use Word's built-in styles along with page breaks to ensure the manuscript converts correctly.

1. Using Word styles: The easiest way to ensure your manuscript is free of unwanted HTML and ready for conversion to EPUB is to set your styles before you ever begin typing. To access Word's styles, click on the tiny, nearly invisible little arrow underneath the row of styles up on your toolbar (see red arrow below). This should bring up a Styles menu on the right side of your screen (see blue arrow below).
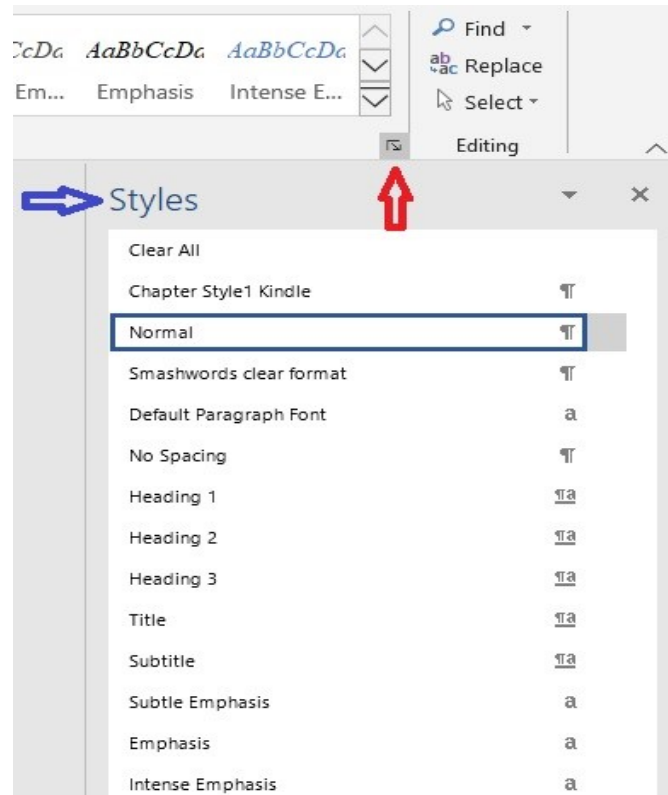
On that menu:

a) Hover your mouse over "Normal" until you see a dropdown arrow to the right.

b) Click on that, and select "Modify." This will take you to a pop up that lets you select your font size, style, and color. Ebooks convert best when we keep things simple.

c) Font should be Times New Roman because it's closest to KDP's proprietary font, which is the default font for Kindles. You can use another font, but remember, the reader gets to choose the font they prefer, so if you use another one, it's likely to either default to KDP's proprietary font or be overridden by the user.

d) Make sure color is set to "Automatic" and size is set at 12. Again, readers can override your choices, and keeping them simple decreases the chance of something going wrong during conversion.

e) At the bottom left of your popup you'll see a button that says "Format." Click it, and choose "Paragraph." You'll be presented with another popup that lets you select paragraph settings.

f) Next to "Alignment," choose "Justified" if you want a nice, uniform look.

g) Under "Special" select "First line," and under "By," set your indent to 0.3. Anything over 0.3 will look huge in an ereader. **Important**: Remember, you want to use these Word settings to create your indent. Don't use tabs when formatting an ebook.

h) Make sure "Before" and "After" are both set to 0. Have you ever seen a paper that had extra space between paragraphs? We don't want that, and we get rid of it by making sure "Before" and "After" are on 0.

i) Under "Line Spacing," select "Single."

j) When you're finished, click "OK." This is the style our entire manuscript will be based on.

Helpful hint: You'll notice that many books, whether ebooks or print, begin the first sentence of every chapter flush left. This isn't necessary; it's simply a stylistic preference. If you're formatting for KDP and try to set your first sentence flush left, you'll notice that it doesn't convert. KDP will automatically indent your first sentence in the EPUB file whether you have an indent set or not. To trick the system and get your sentence flush left, set your indent for the first sentence of each chapter at 0.01. Readers won't be able to detect the indent, but it will trick KDP's conversion process into not inserting the standard indent.

The easiest way to do this is to, again, use Word's built-in styles. If your Styles menu is still open, look at the bottom of the panel where you should see a row of three white boxes followed by an "Option" box. Click on the far-left white box, and a box will pop up that allows you to create a new style (see red arrow below).
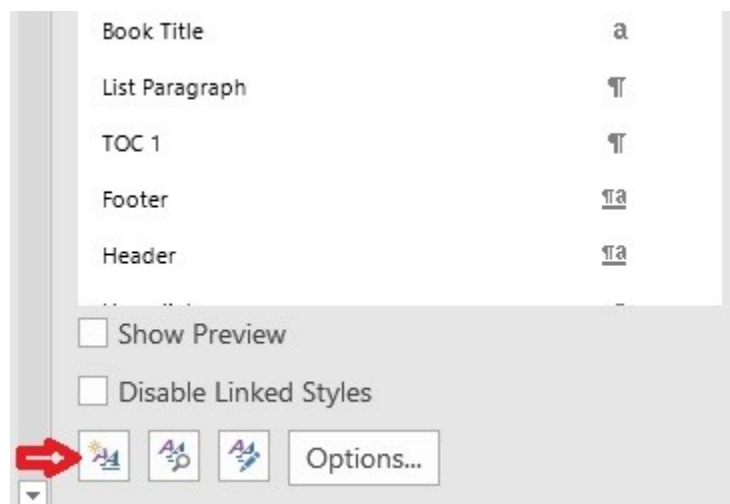
 I name my style "First chapter sentence," and then set everything just as we did for our "Normal" style above, except that for the indent I set it to 0.01. Now, when I come to the first sentence of a chapter, I can go over to my Styles menu, click my "First chapter sentence" style, and it'll set the indent for that first sentence to 0.01.

Important: You'll need to set the indent back to "0" for D2D; otherwise, their conversion process *will* show a tiny indent. That's easy enough to do. Save your KDP copy, then save another copy

named D2D. On the D2D copy, go back to your "First chapter sentence" style and instead of setting it to 0.01, simply set it to 0. All of your first chapter sentences will automatically move flush left.

2. Chapter titles: Hover your mouse over "Heading 1" on your Styles menu, and when the dropdown appears, click to "Modify." We want to use "Heading 1" for our chapter titles, because that will allow us to use Word's "Insert TOC" function to create our table of contents. Ebooks have to have a clickable table of contents, and this is how we'll get it.

When you click "Modify" you'll get the same popup you got last time, but this time your settings will be different.

Again, choose Times New Roman and select "Automatic" for your color. For size, we'll choose 14, which looks quite big on an ereader. Click the bold "B" to make your chapter titles bold.

When you've finished that, click the "Format" button on the bottom left and select "Paragraph." This time, we want to choose "Centered" instead of "Justified." Under "Special," select "None." We don't want our chapter titles to be indented. Have you ever seen a title that looked off-center? That's because the person typing told the title to "center," but didn't remove the indent first.

We can use "After" to preset any space we want to have between our chapter title and the body of our manuscript. For example, if I set "After" to 12, a blank line will automatically be inserted after my chapter title. I like to have at least 1.5 lines between my chapter title and the body, so I set "After" to 18.

Leave "Line Spacing" at single.

Now your chapter titles are set. Some of my books have two-part chapter titles. For example:

Chapter 2: Tabby

December 12, 2012

When I have a two-part chapter title, I use Heading 2 for the second part. I set it up the same way I set up Heading 1, but I decrease the font size to 12.

3. Typing the body of the manuscript: As mentioned previously, hitting "Return/Enter" repeatedly will result in white space the reader has to scroll to get where they want to go. We'll avoid all that by using page breaks instead.

At the end of each chapter, hit "Return/Enter" one time. Then go up to your toolbar and click on "Layout." Click the dropdown arrow beside "Breaks." Under "Section Breaks" click "Next Page" (see red arrow below).
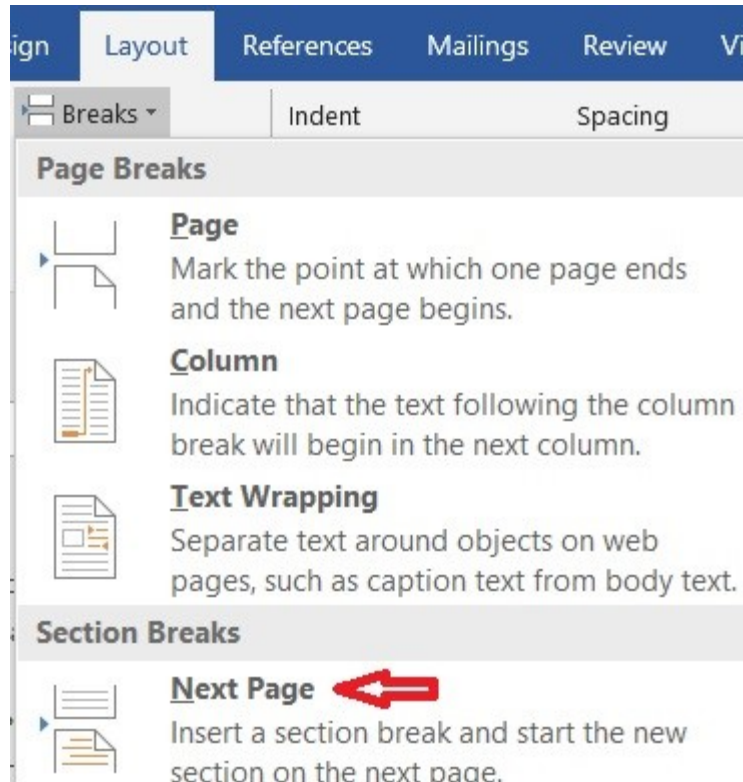
You'll be automagically transported to the next page. Hit "Return/Enter" again, and type the title of your next chapter, going over to the Styles menu to set it to Heading 1.

It may seem strange that I'm advising you to space both before the page break on the last page and before the chapter title on the next page. The reason I'm suggesting this is that for whatever reason, the conversion on KDP every so often gets confused without these spaces before and after the page break. For example, I've seen cases in which the page break itself becomes Heading 1 instead of the chapter title, which means our inserted TOC won't format correctly. Adding the space before and after the page break alleviates that issue.

Something else to note: If your chapter ends at the bottom of the page, spacing down before the page break means your break will fall on a blank page. When you space down again before the next chapter title, you'll end up on the page after, leaving a blank page between the end of your previous chapter and the beginning of your next one. If that happens, that's fine; the blank page won't show in the final Kindle conversion to EPUB.

4. From the beginning: As you've probably noticed, books all have what's called "front matter." This includes the title page, copyright page, dedications, acknowledgements, table of contents—everything that comes before the book starts.

Here's one of mine:

Appalachian Justice

Cedar Hollow Series, Book 1

Melinda Clayton

As you can see, my book title is Heading 1. I typed it, then went over to my Styles menu, where I clicked on Heading 1. That caused my book title to format exactly as I'd previously told Heading 1 to format it. My series title is Heading 2, as discussed above, so after I typed it, I again went to my Styles menu, but this time I clicked on Heading 2.

Remember when centering your name to go up to your Paragraph settings and remove the indent. Otherwise, it'll be off-center.

After I typed my name, I hit "Return/Enter" once, then inserted a page break. That took me to the top of the next page, where I hit "Return/Enter" again, and then typed:

I want my copyright page centered, so I had to highlight that information and then go back up to my Paragraph settings to remove the indent.

When I finished with my copyright page, I hit "Return/Enter" once, inserted a page break, and was taken to the next page, where I hit "Return/Enter" again and dedicated my novel to my family. After that, I hit "Return/Enter," inserted a page break, and was taken to the next page.

If you have no other front matter, leave this page for your table of contents (TOC). Both KDP and D2D require a linked table of contents. We'll come back to it later. For now, just leave it as a blank page, spacing down once and inserting a page break.

Now you're ready to type the title of your first chapter. Once you type it, go over to your Styles menu, where you'll click on Heading 1. After that, it's time to start typing your story.

At the end of your chapter, hit "Return/Enter" once, insert a page break, space down, and begin your second chapter.

Now you're on your way.

5. Table of Contents: When your manuscript is complete, go back to the blank page we left for your TOC and place your cursor where you want the TOC to be inserted. From the "Home" toolbar, click on "References." This will bring up a new toolbar. On the far left, you'll see a "Table of Contents" tab (see red arrow below). Click on that, and a drop-down will appear. On that drop-down, click "Custom Table of Contents" (see blue arrow below).
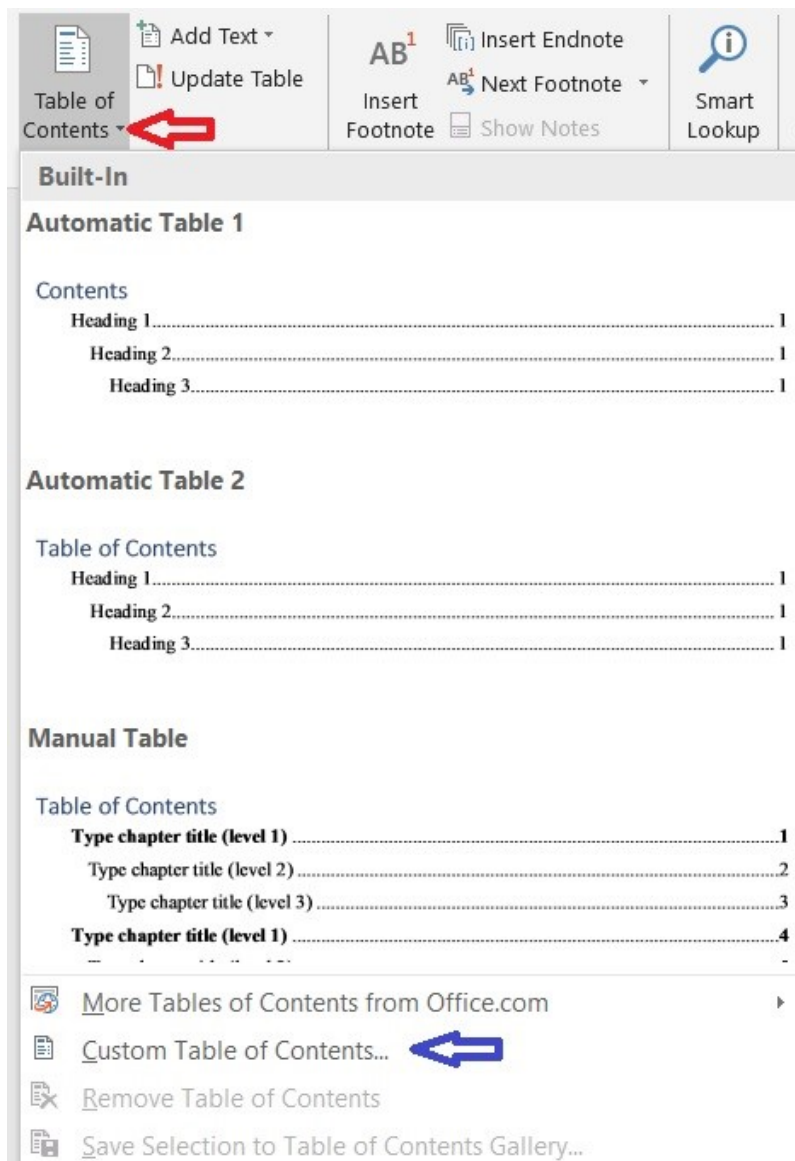
You'll get a pop-up box with options. Because I only want my main Heading 1 entries to show up in my TOC, I select "1" under the "Show Level" option (see red arrow below). Next—and very important—uncheck the "Show Page Numbers" box (see blue arrow below). Ebooks do not use page numbers; therefore, the TOC shouldn't have them.

You do, however, want your TOC to be linked to your chapter headings, so check the box to "Use hyperlinks instead of page numbers" (see green arrow below). When you're finished, click "OK" (see black arrow below).
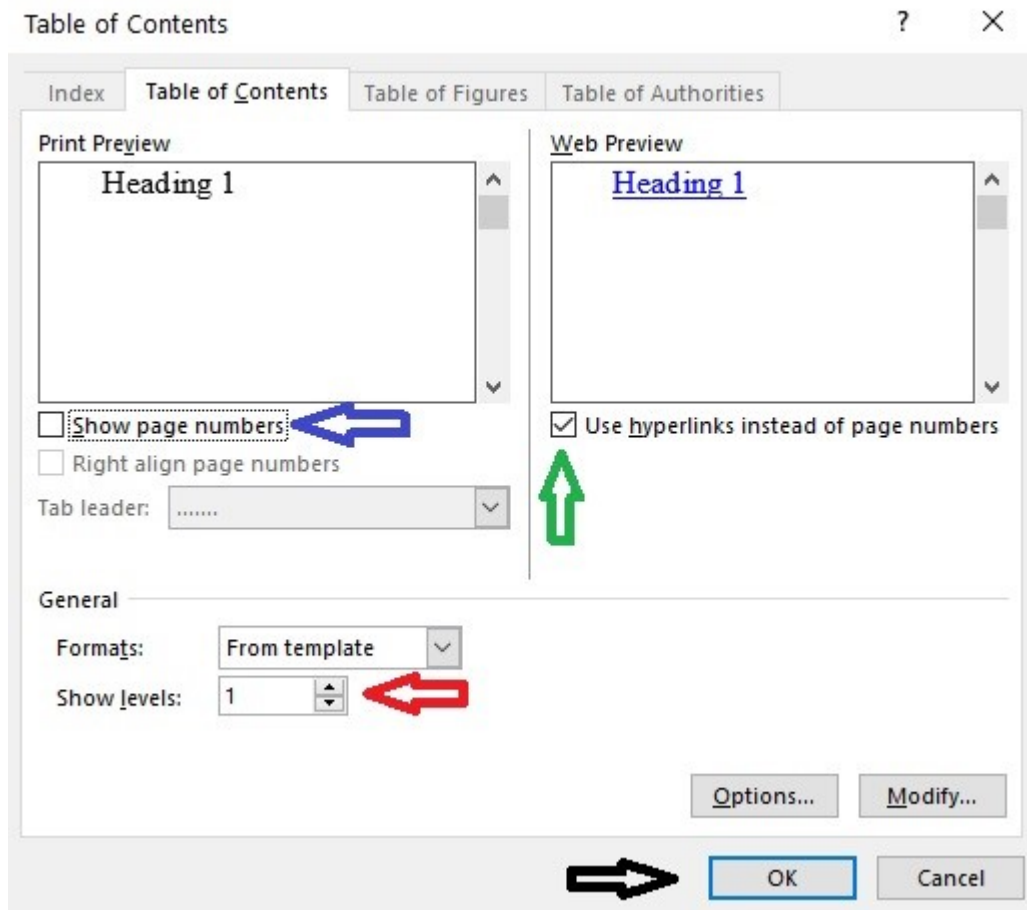
Your "Table of Contents" page should now show a linked, working table of contents created by Word's "Insert TOC" feature. If there are entries included that you don't want in your TOC, simply backspace over that entry to remove it.

If you've followed the directions above, you can upload this file directly to KDP or D2D without issues.

Chapter 10: Paperbacks: What Are the Options?

THE ADVENT OF ebooks in conjunction with self-publishing has given authors an amazing opportunity to publish and have their work seen by people who otherwise might never have been afforded the opportunity. For many, the publishing of ebooks is the perfect platform: a way to reach potentially thousands, if not millions, of readers without the expenses often incurred by the publication of print books.

For some readers, however (such as this writer), print books are still the preferred method of reading. Luckily, the ever-evolving world of self-publishing now offers several choices for publishing print books, as well. In the following chapter we'll discuss the two most popular distributors of print books for self-published authors: KDP Print and IngramSpark.

Chapter 11: KDP Print (formerly CreateSpace) vs. IngramSpark

AS WITH EBOOKS, there are certainly more paperback and/or hardback printers/distributors than the ones with which I'm familiar. The two we'll cover here, however, are two of the most well-known: KDP Print and IngramSpark, a subsidiary of Ingram. Why only discuss these two? Because in the vast majority of cases, those other print distributors simply use Ingram to distribute your book, so why not just leave out the middleperson and go straight to IngramSpark?

KDP Print pros:

KDP Print is Amazon's do-it-yourself paperback distribution platform. With easy-to-follow directions and distribution to other countries in which Amazon has a market, KDP Print is possibly the most popular U. S. site for distributing self-published paperback books.

1. Publishing through KDP Print is free.

2. Staff are quick to reply to requests for information and assistance.

3. The publication process is outlined in several easy-to-follow steps.

4. KDP Print offers tools to help you create your cover. They also offer free cover templates.

5. Paper choices are either cream or white, and paperback cover finishes are either matte or glossy.

6. KDP Print provides free downloadable templates to ensure your manuscript is properly formatted for printing. (**Note**: This template also works for IngramSpark.)

7. KDP Print offers the option of using your own purchased ISBN or using a free one they provide. The downside to using a KDP Print generated ISBN is that you cannot use this ISBN with any other distributor, and your book will be listed as published by KDP Print. As much as we may not like to admit it, the sad truth is that listing KDP Print as your publisher may, in some cases, cause stores, libraries, and schools to think twice before purchasing your book. The world of self-publishing has come a long way in a few short years, but unfortunately there are still stereotypes to overcome.

If you provide your own ISBN, purchased from Bowker for U.S. authors, your imprint (or your name) will be listed as the publisher. More about ISBNs in Chapter 12.

8. KDP Print offers the option of free Expanded Distribution. Expanded Distribution means your book will be available not only on Amazon, but in widely-known book distribution catalogues such as NACSCORP. It will also be available in other online stores such as Barnes & Noble and

Books-A-Million. Ironically, if you choose KDP Print Expanded Distribution, they, too, simply list the book in Ingram in order to reach those catalogues and stores.

9. KDP Print will provide a free barcode. Just make sure, if you hire a graphic artist to design your cover, that they leave the back bottom right corner vacant (no important graphics or text) to accommodate the barcode. More about barcodes in Chapter 12.

10. KDP Print allows you to order books, including a proof copy, for the cost of printing and shipping.

11. You can make changes to your cover or interior and re-upload the new editions for free at any time.

KDP Print cons:

1. KDP Print does not allow bookstores to return unsold books. This has historically been one of the markers that sets self-published and small-press books apart from books published through bigger houses. Stores are reluctant to stock books that cannot be returned if they don't sell.

3. KDP Print Expanded Distribution does get your book listed in Ingram, but with a wholesale discount of only 25 percent, most bookstores will not be interested. A standard wholesale discount is widely considered to be 55 percent.

4. KDP Print only allows for the publishing and printing of paperbacks; it does not provide resources for publishing or printing hardback books. **Edit 2021**: KDP does now offer a hardback option. I haven't used it so am unable to provide specifics on how it works, but at this time, it's only case laminate; no dust jacket is included.

KDP Print royalties and payments:

KDP Print pays electronically sixty days after a book sells. Royalties are complicated, but the general explanation is that the author receives 60 percent net of retail after printing costs are deducted if the book is sold through Amazon U.S. If the book is sold through Expanded Distribution, the author receives 40 percent net of retail after printing costs are deducted. While royalties may accrue in separate currencies, payments will be issued in the author's bank currency.

IngramSpark pros:

IngramSpark is a subsidiary of Ingram Content Group Inc.; yes, that's the same Ingram that, according to their website, provides "books, music, and media content to over 38,000 retailers, libraries, schools and distribution partners in 195 countries."

1. Like books entered into the KDP Print Expanded Distribution program, books printed through IngramSpark will obviously be listed in catalogues such as Ingram and NACSCORP and will be available for order through all major retailers.

2. IngramSpark has historically had a reputation for providing better quality books then KDP Print, crafted of higher quality materials with a wider range of choices. (**Note**: As of 2018, the final product of each is virtually indistinguishable.)

3. Like KDP Print, IngramSpark paper choices are either cream or white, and paperback cover finishes are either matte or glossy. IngramSpark also offers the option to print hardback books. These covers may be case laminate or fabric-covered, and can include a dust jacket if you so choose.

4. IngramSpark will also provide a free cover template.

5. IngramSpark will also provide a free barcode. It comes attached to their free cover template and must be added to the back cover before uploading the cover file to IngramSpark.

6. IngramSpark gives the author/publisher the option of accepting returns or having unsold books destroyed. This is important, because most stores will not stock unreturnable books.

7. While KDP Print sets wholesale discounts for the publisher/author at 25 percent, IngramSpark allows the publisher to set the wholesale discount (or, in some cases, to bypass setting a discount altogether). The standard is usually considered to be 55 percent, a number that pleases bookstores and makes placement on shelves more likely.

8. IngramSpark doesn't offer proof copies per se, but they will allow you to set your novel so that only you can order it. Once you're satisfied it's ready for publication, you can adjust your settings accordingly.

IngramSpark cons:

1. Publishing through IngramSpark is not free, not even for the do-it-yourself author. At the time of this printing, the price for uploading both your cover and interior on IngramSpark is $49.00. However, they sometimes email coupon codes that allow for a free upload. **Edit 2023: In May of 2023 IngramSpark announced there will no longer be set-up fees charged for new books.**

2. Although you can upload revised files at any time, there is a $25.00 charge to change either your cover or interior with IngramSpark after the book has been published. **Edit 2023: In May of 2023 IngramSpark announced that there will be no fee for revisions made within the first 60 days of publication.**

3. ~~They do not provide a free ISBN. Authors in the U.S. must purchase their own ISBNs from Bowker, which is prohibitively expensive~~. **Edit 2021:** IngramSpark does now offer free ISBNs for U.S. authors. If you use IngramSpark's free ISBN, you cannot use this ISBN with any other distributor, and your book will be listed as published by IngramSpark. More on ISBNs in Chapter 12.

4. The interface isn't as easy to navigate as that of KDP. It's doable, and it gets easier with practice, but it isn't quite as user-friendly.

5. IngramSpark customer service is ... well ... terrible. Unfortunately, it's not unusual to never hear back if you message through their internal system. Oddly enough, messaging through Facebook tends to garner a quick response, so there's that.

IngramSpark royalties and payments:

1. Payment is via direct deposit or Paypal and is made ninety days after the initial report date.

2. It is very difficult to get a "royalty rate," because IngramSpark allows the publisher to set the wholesale discount. A standard wholesale discount of 55 percent will obviously mean a lower profit margin, but also makes it more likely bookstores will be willing to stock the book. Printing costs are also higher through IngramSpark. According to their calculator, my $12.99 book, which cost $3.94 to print through KDP Print, will cost $4.22 through IngramSpark. That's money that comes directly from the author's profit.

Using KDP Print in conjunction with IngramSpark:

Some authors choose to purchase their own ISBN(s) from Bowker and use both KDP Print and IngramSpark for distribution. Because initial publication on KDP Print is free—as are revisions—some authors feel it's better to begin with KDP Print until the author is familiar enough and experienced enough to have quality products without having to pay for each revision needed. They simply upload the cover and interior on KDP Print, check a proof copy, and make revisions as needed. Once the manuscript is in perfect order and no further revisions are needed, they then publish on KDP Print without choosing Expanded Distribution, and also publish through IngramSpark.

Note: While the interior template provided by KDP also works on IngramSpark, the cover templates offered by each are slightly different, so the cover file for KDP won't work on IngramSpark and the cover will need to be redone with an IngramSpark template.

By using both distributors, the book is available on KDP Print for Amazon as well as on IngramSpark for inclusion in Ingram, Baker and Taylor, and NACSCORP and a better chance of being sold in brick-and-mortar stores. Leaving the book on KDP Print also has the added benefit of providing lower printing costs should the author need print copies for book signings, etc.

Chapter 12: ISBNs, Barcodes, Copyright, Library of Congress, and Alexa Rankings

FORMATTING YOUR MANUSCRIPT for publication might be one of the most challenging things you'll have to do before publishing, but there are still other matters to consider.

ISBNs:

An International Standard Book Number (ISBN) is a 13-digit-long group of numbers that serves to identify five specific elements describing your book: prefix, country/region/language, publisher, edition/format, and a check digit (which is used to validate the number). The purpose of the ISBN is to make sure the customer receives the right format and edition of a book. If you want to sell your paperback/hardback in stores, you need an ISBN.

While ISBNs are free in some countries, in the U.S. and territories, ISBNs are expensive. At the time of this printing, you can buy one ISBN for $125, ten for $295, 100 for $575, or 1,000 for $1,500.

Although ISBNs are a critical part of publishing, there's a lot of really bad information out there regarding both the purchase and the use of ISBNs, so I want to clear up a couple of those points.

1. I often see people ask which site they should use to purchase their ISBNs. The truth is, there's only one official ISBN agency in the U.S., and that's Bowker.

"If you are located in the United States, or a territory of the USA (Puerto Rico, Guam, US Virgin Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, America Samoa, as well as military bases and embassies), Bowker is the official registration agency of the ISBN." You can see more [on Bowker's site](). (If you aren't in the United States, you'll need to find out who the official, authorized agency for your country is. The [International ISBN Agency]() can help you get started.)

"But wait a minute," you say. "I saw a site on the internet selling really cheap ISBNs. Why can't I buy one of those?"

You can, but you shouldn't. While Bowker does have a very few legitimate "Channel Partners" with whom they work, such as Amazon, Ingram, D2D, and Smashwords, those fly-by-night companies you see all over the internet selling cheap ISBNs are almost certainly not affiliated with Bowker, and thus are not authorized to sell you an ISBN. So why do they do it?

Let's take a look. Company X buys a block of 100 ISBNs from Bowker for $575.00. They then set up a website and tell authors they can purchase one ISBN from Company X for only $25. The author thinks, "Wow, that's so much cheaper than Bowker, where one ISBN cost $125!" Once Company X has sold all 100 ISBNs at $25 each, they've made $2,500, which is a $1,925 profit. Not bad for Company X, but not good for the authors.

The problem is that all of those authors who think they now own their ISBNs don't own their ISBNs. Company X does, because they're the ones who bought directly from Bowker, and that makes them the publisher of record. The person or company who buys the ISBN controls the

information associated with the ISBN record—your metadata. Along all the distribution chains, "your" ISBN is really forever assigned to Company X.

From Bowker's ISBN FAQs: "A publisher with one of these re-assigned ISBNs will not be correctly identified as the publisher of record in Books In Print or any of the industry databases such as Barnes and Noble or Amazon or those of wholesalers such as Ingram. If you have questions, contact the US ISBN Agency for further advice."

It's also important to know that even in the case of Channel Partners, the purchaser of the ISBN is the publisher of record. For example, if you bought your ISBN from KDP, Amazon (or their imprint) is the publisher of record. The difference is that 1) Amazon isn't trying to trick you, and 2) you can rest assured that Amazon bought the ISBN directly from Bowker, so it's a legitimate, active, working ISBN.

These companies can be sneaky. Company X might even say you can manage your ISBNs on site, and you can! But it'll be on Company X's site, not Bowker's, because Company X is the only one who can manage their ISBNs on Bowker's site.

"Uh-oh," you say. "I bought a $10 ISBN from a place just last week. What can I do?"

You can enter that ISBN here at Bowker's "My Identifiers" to find out who the owner is.

If you enter your ISBN and find out it's not assigned to you, Bowker suggests that you give them a call at (877) 310-7333.

2. I also often come across blog posts or questions on discussion boards in which authors are confused regarding when to assign a new ISBN. Some authors mistakenly believe a different ISBN must be used for each different distributor, but this simply isn't true.

Remember from our discussion above, if *you* bought your ISBN from your country's ISBN agency (Bowker, for the U.S. and territories) *you're* the publisher of record, and that information is indicated within the ISBN itself. The ISBN is tied to the publisher, not the printer or distributor. If you're using different distributors to distribute the same book, you use the same ISBN. For example, I'm using Ingram to distribute to stores other than Amazon, and I'm using KDP Print to distribute to Amazon. But the book is the same: same binding, same size, same format, same edition. For this reason, it uses the same ISBN. To do otherwise simply confuses the system: Why would the very same book be available under two different ISBNs? And which one should stores order?

Now, there *are* specific times you *will* need a new ISBN. From the International ISBN Agency Users' Manual:

a) If you've made significant changes to the publication, including text, title, subtitle, trim size, or form (hardback vs. paperback, etc.)

b) If the publisher has changed.

There are also times when you *don't* need a new ISBN:

a) If you've made small corrections, such as correcting typos or other proofing errors.

b) If you've changed your cover art.

c) If you've made *minor* adjustments to trim size or spine width to accommodate different printers. [Italics theirs] For example, as mentioned earlier, the cover templates for IngramSpark and KDP, for the same sized book, are slightly different. But the book is the same size, so they don't require different ISBNs.

d) When you're using multiple distributors, because remember, the ISBN is tied to the publisher, not the distributor.

Once you've assigned an ISBN to your book it should be reported to R.R. Bowker as the database of record for the U.S. ISBN Agency. If your ISBNs are not reported, your books won't be listed in some of the databases used by stores and libraries.

Barcodes:

KDP Print will assign you a free barcode for your books, as will IngramSpark if you use the IngramSpark cover template. Bowker also sells barcodes (I believe for $25 at the time of this printing), but there's no need to buy one. You can also create one for free at Bookow to download to your computer.

Registering Copyright:

While it's often stated that publishing your work serves as a "poor man's copyright," courts will not defend your copyright claim if you haven't registered with the U.S. Copyright Office. Upon registration, by law you have three months to submit a Mandatory Deposit of your work. If your work has been previously published, your Mandatory Deposit will consist of two hardcopies of the copyrighted works. If your work has not been previously published, an electronic copy may suffice. At the time of this printing, the fee for registering your copyright for one work by one author is $45.00. Easy-to-follow directions are on the website.

Note: You'll see companies online offering to do this for you; of course, they charge more than $45. There's no reason to use one of those services since you can easily navigate the U.S. Copyright Office website on your own.

Library of Congress:

According to their website, "The Library serves as the research arm of Congress and is recognized as the national library of the United States. Its collections comprise the world's most comprehensive record of human creativity and knowledge. Open to those ages 16 and older without charge or special permission, it is the world's largest library and a great resource for scholars and researchers."

In conjunction with registering the copyright, publishers (those who have published the work of at least three different authors) may apply for acceptance into the Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication (CIP) program. If accepted, prior to publication the publisher will request a Library of Congress Control Number to be included on the copyright page of the book.

Once the book is published, a copy must be sent to the Library of Congress. This is *in addition to* the Mandatory Deposit sent to the U.S. Copyright Office after registering copyrights.

As of this printing, self-published authors are not eligible for the CIP program, but they can still obtain a Library of Congress Control Number through the Library of Congress's Pre-Assigned Control Number (PCN) program. IndiesUnlimited explains the process.

Alexa rankings:

Although this booklet is not intended as a marketing guide, this is one helpful hint all self-published authors need to know. As a new author starting out, you want to get your book out into the world. There are a multitude of sites willing to help you do just that, some free, but many for a fee. Some of those sites—the most effective, in my opinion—send out newsletters to subscribers who want to receive emails alerting them to books for sale in their favorite genres.

Others charge a fee to list your book on their site. Before shelling out money to list a book on a site, it's always wise to check the Alexa Traffic Rank of the site you're considering. **2023 update:** The Alexa site is currently under construction.

In everyday language, the Alexa Rank is a measurement of the global traffic a website receives relative to other websites over the span of a month. Given that there are millions of websites, you'll want to know if spending money to have your book listed on a specific site is a wise move. Are they listed as #4,567,890? Or as #67,000?

In general, an Alexa ranking of 100,000 or less is considered good—a site that receives quite a bit of traffic. Remember, there are literally millions of sites on the web. A ranking over 100,000 is considered not-so-good.

I recently saw a post on Facebook regarding a fellow author who'd spent $50.00 to advertise his book on a site that claimed to have tons of traffic and many avenues for promotion.

I went to Alexa to check out their ranking. You don't have to subscribe; just type/paste the domain name of the website. A quick search showed that my friend had paid $50.00 to list his book on a site that held a rank of nearly five million, an indication that it gets very, very little traffic, and that his money could have been better spent.

Chapter 13: How Not to Sell a Book

I STATED IN the Introduction that this booklet isn't a guide on marketing, and it isn't. I'm a long way from being a marketing expert (truth be told, I hate it), and there are so many marketing blogs, websites, books and services available to tell authors what to do to market books there's nothing I could possibly add.

What I've realized, however, is that what we *don't* do to market is just as important as what we *do*. As self-published and small-press authors, we're often left on our own to stumble through and try to get our books noticed and listed in as many places as possible. Unfortunately, the way we do this frequently hurts us more than it helps.

Here's the thing. The rules are really quite simple for authors and publishing companies alike. Be polite. Be honest. Be professional. And don't do the following.

1. Don't offer to swap reviews. It's unethical.

There will undoubtedly be times when, in the social network of authors with whom you connect, you'll love another author's work. I certainly have, and sometimes, if I'm particularly moved, I'll leave a review (although these days I'm much more likely to just leave stars, having discovered I'm not a great—or even good—reviewer).

But for the few I've done, I've learned if I know the author (via social networking, shared publisher, etc.), I should preface those reviews with "In the interest of self-disclosure" because transparency matters. When all is said and done, the goal of a review isn't to boost the sales of the book (something that's often forgotten by authors); it's to let readers know what other readers thought of the book.

There will be times when an author you love also loves your book. They may also leave a review. If you write in a similar genre and have similar interests, that's not unusual. In those instances, transparency is crucial.

"Swapping" is a different matter. "Swap" arrangements are a deliberate "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" relationship. Threads offering these arrangements pop up with some frequency.

Consider this: During the summer months my (now grown) children and I used to visit our local farmer's market. Several years ago, we passed a table selling phone chargers (our farmer's market is sometimes less "farm" and more "market"). Since we needed chargers and they were advertised at a great price, we stopped to look.

The vendor went on and on about the quality until a neighboring vendor piped in also, telling us how great the chargers were. In return, the phone charger vendor praised the neighboring vendor's lighters. So, we bought them, both the chargers and the lighters.

Nothing worked after three days.

They weren't interested in giving an honest appraisal; they were interested in helping each other boost sales regardless of the quality of the product. Now I won't buy from either vendor no matter what they're selling.

That's what "swap" arrangements can do.

2. Don't beg family members and friends for reviews.

As with #1 above, it's unethical. The point of reviews is to provide customers with honest information. Our family members and friends aren't likely to post a genuine critique of our book, for obvious reasons. In addition to it being unethical, it's also [explicitly against Amazon's Terms of Service](). If Amazon discovers, through their otherworldly technology, that your friends and family members have left reviews, they'll remove them. If it happens repeatedly, they'll boot you off of their platform. And let's be honest; it's not hard to tell how authentic a review is. Most readers are savvy enough to know the warning signs.

3. Don't comment on reviews.

When I was first published, I made a habit of thanking each and every person who reviewed my first book. Back then, Amazon allowed comments on reviews, but they no longer do, with good reason. Goodreads, however, still does. As I learned, commenting on reviews makes readers uncomfortable. After all, they just want to read and discuss books. What they don't want is to feel uncomfortable because the author is obsessively following reviews.

This is true for both positive and negative reviews. Notice I didn't use the words "good" and "bad," because a negative review isn't a bad review. Some negative reviews offer the best information. But if it's uncomfortable as a reader to realize the author read the review and even offered a thank you, imagine how uncomfortable it is to realize the author read the review and responded with anger.

Once you've released the book, you have to let it go. Not everyone is going to love it. Some reviewers will be polite about it; some won't. Some will be downright ugly. But it doesn't matter, because the review isn't about *you*. It's about letting other potential buyers know what the reviewer thought about the *book*. As authors, we get so caught up in our work we say, "I got a negative review today." No, you didn't; your *book* did. For the sake of our mental health, it's best to recognize the difference.

If you *must* read reviews, learn from them. Some will discuss plot, formatting, or grammatical errors. These are all helpful things to know. Some might take issue with the content. In those cases, leaving a negative review helps not only other readers—by warning them of potentially upsetting or disturbing content—it also helps *you*. After all, it's much better to have a reader not purchase your book based on a negative review than it is to have a reader purchase it only to hate the content and leave another negative review.

4. Don't barge into discussion threads and fora that have nothing to do with your books and start marketing your book.

Years ago, before my sons' soccer schedules took over my life and my night vision became dangerous, I belonged to a real-life book club. One evening a month we met to discuss our latest read, always over dinner at a cozy bar and grill or similar place.

Imagine you're sitting with friends discussing a book you've all just read. Someone wanders over and expresses interest. Maybe they say, "Oh, I loved that book!" Or maybe they say, "Was it really good? I've been meaning to read it." You'd probably invite them into the conversation without hesitation, right? After all, they've added positively to the discussion at hand.

Now imagine that Thelma, who's been listening from the bar, wanders over. "If you liked that book," she says, "you should read mine."

Thelma hasn't added to the conversation; she's detracted from it. Instead of assimilating, she derailed the discussion and took it over. Her welcome isn't likely to be as warm. If she continues along that vein, someone in the group is likely to ask her to leave. At the very least, the group will avoid her from that point on and find somewhere else to meet. It goes without saying they probably won't be buying her book.

Don't be like Thelma.

5. For the love of all that is sacred, if you're on Twitter, please don't auto-tweet "Buy my book!" pleas.

You're a writer! You're creative! Can you imagine starting up a conversation this way in person? Strike up a conversation that isn't about your book. Ask how your follower is doing. Ask what they're interested in. Find out what you have in common. Form a connection. Be interested in them, which will make them more interested in you.

Several years ago, someone somewhere decided that auto-tweeting "cute" responses such as "Don't make me have to drink bleach; buy my book!" was a good idea (I'm not making this up). It may have been, in that it caused people to unfollow in droves and clean out their followers, but I'm guessing that's not what the author intended.

The internet is full of stories of "badly behaving authors," always followed with a story about "bully reviewers." The truth is, self-published and small-press authors don't always have the luxury of a public relations department, a marketing department, or a spokesperson. There isn't anyone looking over our shoulders, warning us to step back, take a deep breath, and let things go.

We're excited about our book, thrilled to be published, and eager to spread the word. Because we don't have the luxury of a team of experts around us, we make mistakes. If you find yourself in a situation in which you misspoke, reacted with anger, or became defensive, the best course of action is probably to apologize and disengage.

Chapter 14: A Final Word

THE ABOVE-MENTIONED printers and distributors, in conjunction with tenacious, talented authors, editors, beta-readers, graphic artists, formatters, and bloggers, have been instrumental in forcing change in an industry that for too long had forgotten the beauty of individual art and settled comfortably into the role of big business.

With change very often comes discomfort. As the literary world grows and adapts to the new landscape, there will be those who rebel, those who surrender, and those who approach this new ecosystem with excitement.

Which will you be? Only you can decide.

Helpful Resources

Absolute Write: http://www.absolutewrite.com/forums/forumdisplay.php?f=22

Alexa Traffic Rank: http://www.alexa.com/help/traffic-learn-more

Amazon TOS Regarding Customer Reviews: https://www.amazon.com/gp/community-help/customer-review-guidelines-faqs-from-authors

Apple: https://authors.apple.com/

Barnes & Noble Press: https://press.barnesandnoble.com/

Book Industry Study Group: http://www.bisg.org/what-we-do-0-136-bisac-subject-headings-list-major-subjects.php

Bookow Resources: https://www.bookow.com/resources.php#cs-cover-template-generator

Bowker: https://www.myidentifiers.com/

Draft2Digital: https://www.draft2digital.com/

GetTextBooks.com: http://www.gettextbooks.com/

Google Play: https://support.google.com/books/partner/answer/1079107?hl=en

IndiesUnlimited.com Indie Authors Might Want to Try for Library of Congress Cataloging: https://www.indiesunlimited.com/2016/01/25/self-publishers-may-want-to-try-for-library-of-congress-cataloging/

Ingram: http://www.ingramcontent.com/pages/company.aspx

IngramSpark: https://www.ingramspark.com/how-it-works

Internal Revenue Service: http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&-Self-Employed/Apply-for-an-Employer-Identification-Number-(EIN)-Online

KDP Print Resources: https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G201834210

Kindle Direct Publishing: https://kdp.amazon.com/self-publishing/signin

Kindle Direct Publishing Cover Creator: https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G201113520

Kindle Direct Publishing Royalties and Payments: https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G200644210

Kindle Direct Publishing Select: https://kdp.amazon.com/self-publishing/KDPSelect

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Language (ISO 639-2/B) Code Listings: http://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/code_list.php

Library of Congress: http://www.loc.gov/publish/cip/about/index.html

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication: http://www.loc.gov/publish/cip/about/index.html

Lulu: http://www.lulu.com/

NOLO: http://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/llc-basics-30163.html

Smashwords: https://www.smashwords.com/

Smashwords Style Guide: https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/52

U.S. Copyright Office: http://cocatalog.loc.gov/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?DB=local&PAGE=First

U.S. Copyright Office FAQs: http://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/faq-general.html

U.S. Copyright Office Mandatory Deposit FAQs:
http://www.copyright.gov/help/faq/mandatory_deposit.html

Writer Beware: http://www.sfwa.org/other-resources/for-authors/writer-beware/about/

About the Author

Melinda Clayton is the author of two series: The Cedar Hollow Series, which includes novels *Appalachian Justice*, *Return to Crutcher Mountain*, *Entangled Thorns*, and *Shadow Days*, and The Tennessee Delta Series, which includes *Blessed Are the Wholly Broken*, *A Woman Misunderstood*, and *Child of Sorrow*. Clayton also authored *Making Amends*, a novel of psychological suspense. She's written numerous short stories and/or creative nonfiction pieces that can be found by a simple Google search, should anyone be so inclined.

Her nonfiction works include *Clayton Family History: From England to Virginia, the Carolinas, Kentucky, Missouri, and Beyond*, and *Hayner Family History: From Weinheim, Kurpfalz, Germany to Madison, West Virginia, U.S.A.*

Clayton is also co-owner of Thomas-Jacob Publishing, LLC, a small, family-owned publishing company based out of Deltona, Florida.

In addition to writing and publishing, Clayton is a licensed psychotherapist in the states of Florida and Colorado (now on retired status), a writing tutor, and an instructor for Southern New Hampshire University's COCE MFA program.