



SELF-PUBLISHING, THE INDIE BOOKSTORE & ME

1. The Death of Print: An Exaggeration?
2. Print & Distribution: CreateSpace, Ingram Spark and the Espresso Book Machine
3. Selling Your Book at Indies: How Consignment Works
4. Formatting Your Book's Exterior: Going Beyond the Basics
5. Interior Formatting and Design: Do's and Dont's

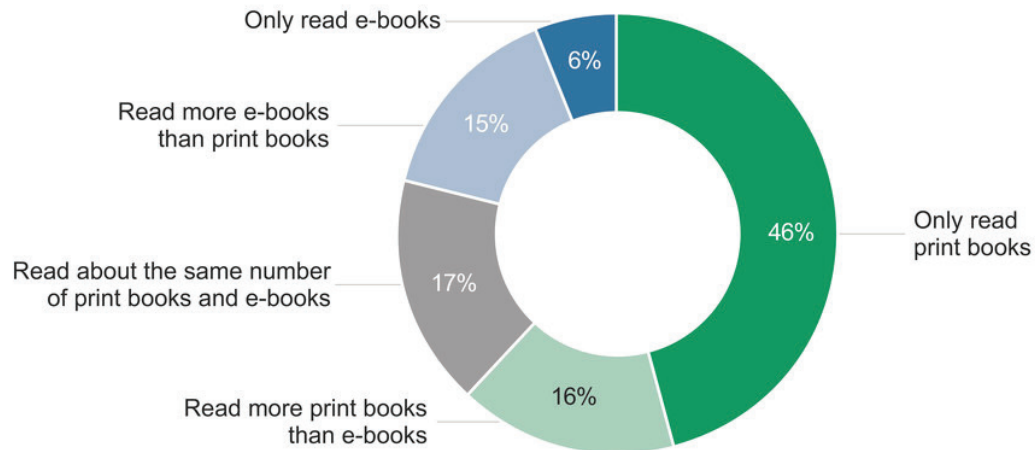
1. THE DEATH OF PRINT: AN EXAGGERATION?

Conventional wisdom has it that print is steadily becoming obsolete—abandoned in favor of eBooks. In reality, the two are sharing the market.

Consider the following chart, featured in a 2014 *Wall Street Journal* article:

People Still Prefer Holding Dusty Old Books

Percentage of U.S. Internet users reading hard copy and electronic books



THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

n=2,234; Source: Harris Interactive



Pew Research Center's Internet Project reached a similar conclusion in its comprehensive report on data collected in 2013, writing:

“...print remains the foundation of Americans' reading habits: Among adults who read at least one book in the past year, just 5% said they read an e-book in the last year without also reading a print book.”

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SELF-PUBLISHED AUTHORS?

1. Print books remain relevant to a large number of your potential readers.
2. The cost and barriers to entry for creating print books have never been lower.
3. Independent bookstores have become conditioned to work with self-published authors.

PRINT BOOKS DO NOT NEED TO BE THE FOCUS OF YOUR DISTRIBUTION STRATEGY.

1. They can be employed as giveaways, prizes and special editions.
2. They can be sold at special events—conferences, trade shows, conventions and book festivals.
3. Print-on-demand services enable you to create manuscripts and galley proofs for editing.

2. PRINT AND DISTRIBUTION

Each of the following platforms offer methods for printing and distributing your book:

1. CreateSpace
2. Ingram Spark
3. The Espresso Book Machine

Let's consider the pros and cons of each of them.

CREATESPACE

CreateSpace is the most widely used platform formatting, printing and distributing self-published books.

Pros:

1. Of all options, the best pricing on print books
2. Free CreateSpace ISBN
3. Professional-quality paperback printing
4. Templates for interior layout and design
5. Do-It-Yourself cover creator
6. Expanded distribution options
7. No setup fee

Cons:

1. No telephone or in-person customer service
2. No hardcover options
3. Takes a minimum of a week—and sometimes much longer—to receive wholesale copies.

INGRAM SPARK

Like CreateSpace, Ingram Spark (and Ingram Lightning Source) offers distribution and print services.

Pros:

1. Competitive pricing on print books.
2. Free Ingram-owned ISBN
3. Highest quality printing—indistinguishable from traditionally published titles
4. Ability to buy books in bulk at wholesale rate
5. Expanded distribution options

Cons:

1. No telephone or in-person customer service
2. No hardcover options
3. Takes a minimum of a week—and sometimes much longer—to receive wholesale copies.
4. No built-in formatting or design services.
5. \$49 cost to upload book

THE ESPRESSO BOOK MACHINE

The Espresso Book Machine is a print-on-demand technology available across the country at select booksellers and institutions.

Pros:

1. One-on-one personal service
2. Extremely fast turnaround—can sometimes have a book printed same-day
3. Full-bleed and largest variety of trim sizes
4. Expanded distribution options
5. Design templates and tools available at SelfEspress.com

Cons:

1. Service, prices and policies varies from location to location.
2. Most EBM locations do not offer free ISBNs
3. All EBM locations require upload fees starting at \$15
4. *Much* higher cost, per book; not suitable for large print runs

**PRICE COMPARISON:
CREATESPACE—INGRAM—EBM**

Using a 300-page black-and-white book at a 6" x 9" trim size with a gloss cover and cream interior paper.

CreateSpace

\$4.45 ea.

Ingram Spark

\$4.86 ea.

Espresso Book Machine

\$12.00 ea.

EXPANDED DISTRIBUTION: IS IT WORTH IT?

Both CreateSpace and Ingram Spark enable authors to pursue “expanded distributed” options. If you opt for one of these options, your book will be available (in theory) to booksellers via Ingram.

But there’s a catch...

THE CATCH: EXPANDED DISTRIBUTION ISN'T WORTH THE PRICE

Most independent booksellers will only carry self-published books on a consignment basis, even if they are available via Ingram. It comes down to economics:

1. Booksellers require that your books be returnable. CreateSpace does not offer a returnable option.
2. Ingram spark does offer a returnable option, but with a discount of only 40% to booksellers—which is too low.
3. Indie booksellers pay return shipping on unsold units.
4. Not all booksellers use Ingram for distribution into their store.

GENERAL TIPS

1. Indie booksellers will prefer to carry your books on consignment. To maximize your profit, purchase books directly from the publishing platform of your choice at the highest possible discount—and skip advanced distribution options.
2. Avoid hardcover. Certain platforms (e.g. Lulu.com) offer it, but margins will be incredibly unfavorable and your resulting book will have a much higher price tag.

3. SELLING YOUR BOOK AT INDIES: CONSIGNMENT

Independent booksellers traditionally carry self-published books on a consignment basis.

With consignment, the bookseller (the consignee) agrees to carry the book and pays the author (the consignor) a portion of the sale in the event that it sells. Books that are not sold remain the author's property, and are returned to them at the conclusion of a predefined period of time.

WHY CONSIGNMENT?

1. Consignment allows booksellers to carry self-published books at little-to-no financial risk.
2. With consignment, indie booksellers do not need to exercise nearly as much discrimination—they can stock books they'd normally pass over.
3. Consignment contracts are usually simple and easy to understand.

For indie booksellers, consignment has few drawbacks.

CONSIGNMENT AND AUTHORS: PROS & CONS

Pros:

1. Gives the author maximal control over their books; with consignment, the author remains the owner until the books are sold.
2. The author typically enjoys much higher margins— usually between 60% and 80% of the sale price of the book.

Cons:

1. Because they retain ownership of the books, the author is responsible for all damaged and stolen units.
2. The author is also responsible for keeping the bookseller stocked, and any shipping costs that arise.
3. There is sometimes a one-time administrative fee for entering into a consignment relationship—typically \$25.

CONSIGNMENT: TYPICAL TERMS & POLICIES

Consignment policies vary from bookseller to bookseller.

These are the most common policies:

1. Authors must submit one or more copies of their book for review. This usually takes 1–2 business weeks, and will sometimes include a fee (~\$25). Booksellers are usually not responsible for returning review copies to the author in the event that the book is declined.
2. Books are held on consignment for predefined period of time—often three months. At the end of the cycle, the bookseller determines whether or not to renew the consignment contract for another predefined period of time.

3. Checks are issued to authors on a regular basis—not as copies are sold. Every sixty days is typical.

4. Sales are split between the bookseller and author, usually to the author's advantage. 40/60%, 30/70%, and even 20/80% are common splits.

5. Unsold books are returned to the author—at the author's expense—at the conclusion of a consignment relationship. Books that are not picked up are usually donated or destroyed.

CONSIGNMENT SYSTEMS VARY

How booksellers shelve consignment titles, and whether or not they offer authors opportunities to participate in signings and events, varies from bookseller to bookseller.

CONSIGNMENT AT THE WRITER'S BLOCK

The Writer's Block will begin offering consignment in April 2015, and will pursue an unorthodox system.

1. Books will be carried on consignment for periods of one month only. Consignment contracts will not be extended or renewed.
2. Consignment books will be prominently displayed—with their covers facing out—on an exclusive shelf in the “New and Notables” area.
3. All authors will be invited and encouraged to participate in a group signing and meet-and-greet at the end of the month.

4. There is no setup fee, and all sales are split in the author's favor at 80/20%.

5. A single check will be issued at the conclusion of the consignment period, and all unsold books returned to the author in person.

CONSIGNMENT: MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

All indie booksellers have minimum requirements in place for books they'll carry on consignment. These are some of the most common.

1. The book must have a bound spine.
2. The book must be paperback, hardcover or a board book and must feature the title and author name on the cover.
3. The book must have spine text.
4. The book must have a valid ISBN and barcode.

YOU AND YOUR BOOKSELLER: HOW TO APPROACH INDIES

Doe's:

- Visit the bookstore in advance. Is their selection compatible with the type of book you've written?
- Check their website. Do they have a consignment policy or application posted? If so, begin there.
- If you cannot find a consignment policy listed, email or call the store asking if they have one.

Dont's:

- Avoid coming to the store unannounced with copies of your book in-hand. Booksellers are often busy helping customers, and unscheduled consultations can be disruptive.
- Don't offer an alternative to the system the store has in place. Booksellers will know their market better than you do.
- Alternately, don't work with rude, discourteous or condescending booksellers. Consignment is an ongoing relationship— make sure you feel comfortable working with the bookseller!

4. FORMATTING YOUR COVER & BACK: GOING BEYOND THE BASICS

The previously mentioned minimum requirements are just the tip of the iceberg. There is plenty more that a self-published can—and should—do before offering their book to booksellers.

INCLUDE AN MSRP

- An MSRP is the “manufacturer’s suggested retail price.” It’s the price you choose for your book.
- Not all booksellers require this, but The Writer’s Block will.
- Makes it easier for people browsing and for bookstore employees. Customers are less likely to purchase items that do not have a clearly marked price.

Note: You can always deviate from the MSRP if you intend to sell your book for a lower price at certain events. Even better, it will have the effect of making your customers feel that they are getting a good deal!

SET A REASONABLE PRICE

- Most paperbacks retail between \$14 and \$18.
- Setting your price too far beneath the market average—far from incentivizing customers—can have the effect of “cheapening” the perceived value of your book.
- Setting your price above \$20 (if your book is paperback) can appear amateur—and, of course, will turn off dollar-conscious buyers.

INCLUDE GENRE CLASSIFICATION(S)

- You can (and should!) include multiple genre tags (e.g. Romance/Horror, Science/Memoir, etc.). It will give booksellers some latitude when shelving your book.
- If you do not include genre tags, the bookseller can easily shelve your book in the wrong section.
- If booksellers display consignment titles in a special area, genre tags help orient readers who are browsing.

As a writer, it can be helpful to avoid thinking in terms of genre. But as a *self-publisher*, it is critical that you take genre into consideration.

ISBN: WHAT IS IT?

An ISBN is a unique identification number given to each separate edition of a book. ISBNs are used internationally by publishers, distributors and booksellers.

ISBN: WHY YOU NEED ONE

- ISBNs are necessary for booksellers carrying your book—even on consignment—because they allow the book to be entered into the store point-of-sale.
- ISBNs communicate that you are serious about selling your book commercially.

ISBN: ARE THEY REUSABLE?

- Each separate edition of a book—particularly when they will be priced differently—must have its own ISBN. This means that eBook, paperback and hardcover editions of the same book would all have their own ISBN.
- Whoever purchases the ISBN initially from Bowker is listed as the publisher. CreateSpace ISBNs list CreateSpace as the publisher—these are not reusable. ISBNs you purchase yourself will list you as the publisher, and are reusable. Unless you purchase an ISBN from Bowker directly, assume that is *not* reusable.

ISBN: WHAT DO THEY COST?

ISBNs are purchased from MyIdentifiers.com, a web store and registry maintained by Bowker. The price for ISBNs goes down dramatically the more that you purchase in bulk.

1 ISBN is \$125

10 ISBNs are \$295 (\$29.50 ea.)

100 ISBNs are \$575 (\$5.75 ea.)

You can use free online barcode generators— do not purchase one from Bowker!

A BOOK SUMMARY IS ESSENTIAL

You must include a brief summary of your book on the back cover if you intend for it to sell. Pull quotes and tag-lines might appear interesting and enigmatic, but they rarely do the work of selling a book if they are printed in isolation.

BLURBS ARE OVERUSED

Publishers will use blurbs on their books in order to “sell” a prospective buyer on an author. However, they can easily be overused and can appear suspicious to savvy readers.

- If the prospective buyer does not recognize the name on the blurb, they tend to skip over it.
- Too many blurbs from unfamiliar and non-professional names can make a book appear amateur.

FROM A BOOKSELLER: ADVANCED TIPS

- Consider a memorable pen name. Even better, consider a pen name that places you alphabetically adjacent to bestselling author. It might sound ridiculous, but it works...
- Visit the genre section for your style of writing at a bookstore. What colors are the spines of the books that you see there? Consider choosing a dramatically different color for the spine of your own book.

5. INTERIOR DESIGN AND FORMATTING

Booksellers (and readers!) can usually tell within moments of looking at the interior of a book whether or not a book was professionally typeset.

The following are some of the most essential do's and don't's for formatting your book in Word, OpenOffice, Pages or In-Design.

LEFT-JUSTIFY YOUR TEXT

Text in long-form prose books is left-justified. This means that the text lines up neatly on both sides of the page.

Correct

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. Integer a augue placerat, imperdiet lorem nec, lobortis erat. Cras non ullamcorper nunc. Etiam cursus aliquet blandit. In bibendum ipsum sit amet orci porta interdum. Ut vitae ligula euismod lacus ullamcorper ullamcorper. Cras commodo scelerisque ex. Etiam venenatis semper tortor, vitae condimentum turpis porttitor eu. Donec ut lectus vel justo convallis luctus. Praesent vel enim rutrum, viverra est nec, venenatis libero. Integer at est pretium orci porttitor congue vitae sit amet ligula. Cras varius lacus dui, id mattis ex vehicula id. Morbi eu molestie purus.

Incorrect

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USE CONVENTIONAL PARAGRAPH BREAKS

- Paragraph breaks can be indicated with either an indentation OR a double line-break. Not both.
- Paragraph indents should be between one and four times the point size of the font.

WRONG

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Aliquam in ante quis justo porttitor interdum. Phasellus facilisis luctus ipsum sit amet gravida. Nulla nisi metus, malesuada in fringilla cursus, venenatis non nibh. Suspendisse potenti. Fusce a viverra ex, at suscipit ex. Phasellus hendrerit, massa id convallis hendrerit, tellus purus interdum ante, nec malesuada magna diam in diam. Suspendisse quis metus quis felis ultrices congue eu at sem. Sed sed nisi eu urna consectetur bibendum consequat ac libero. Nulla at nunc eget enim feugiat elementum scelerisque vel mauris. Nam quam erat, ultricies nec magna vel, malesuada dapibus eros. Vestibulum rutrum est eu lacus interdum mollis. Duis fermentum tincidunt odio, non blandit sem sagittis in. Donec maximus leo at massa blandit, ac sollicitudin neque convallis. Curabitur quis lorem in lacus luctus auctor id vel metus. Nulla odio ante, dignissim nec ornare vel, egestas et arcu. Integer efficitur, velit feugiat rutrum porttitor, ex sapien ultrices quam, non posuere sapien mi vitae ligula.

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RIGHT

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Vestibulum ante ipsum primis in faucibus orci luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia Curae; Nam tempus eleifend volutpat. Quisque dapibus pretium neque, et rutrum augue interdum...

DO NOT USE A DECORATIVE FONT

Monospaced fonts (like Courier) and decorative fonts will hurt your readers eyes and will look extremely unprofessional.

THIS IS VERY BAD. HURTS TO READ.

This is also ridiculous. Save this font for chapter titles.

Again, save this for the chapter heading.

Phew. This is better.

DO NOT USE A HUGE FONT

(OR A TEENSY ONE)

Anything larger than 12 point (depending on the typeface) will cause your book to appear intentionally large-print.

INCLUDE PAGE NUMBERS

This one is self-explanatory!

START YOUR CHAPTERS ON THE RIGHT-HAND PAGE

Unless you'll be allowing your chapters to flow freely into the text, it is common to start all new chapters on the right-hand page of your book. You can certainly break this rule, but only if you are doing it *deliberately*.

DO NOT DOUBLE-SPACE YOUR LINES

While this is conventional for school papers, it is not for print books. Line spacing should be between 1.25% and 1.75% the point size of the font.

Correct

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Incorrect

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DO CHECK YOUR APOSTROPHES AND QUOTATION MARKS

Apostrophes look like this: ’

Good: I told ’em I was comin’.

Bad: I told ‘em I was comin’.

Quotation marks and apostrophes should curl.

Good: “I have decided to leave,” she said.

Bad. "I have decided to leave," she said.

DO CHECK YOUR LINE LENGTH

Your lines should never be more than 95 characters long. Otherwise, it becomes too difficult to read.

Correct

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Incorrect

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CONSIDER HIRING A PROFESSIONAL TO DESIGN AND FORMAT YOUR BOOK

It's worth the money. But if you notice that they're not following the above guidelines, hire someone else!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME

Please be in touch with any questions!

info@thewritersblock.org