

I Have a Story, How Can I Self-Publish It?

By Shiela Martina

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Everyone has a story. Strangely enough, my story started in 1995 with segregation. Now I know that catches a few of you by surprise, because I didn't say the 1960s. I said 1995. You see, as children's librarian I travel around to various daycares and in 1995, I witnessed segregation in the children as I visited the daycares. I found that the children were separated, blacks with blacks and whites with whites, in each daycare. But I also noticed that the children responded similarly wherever I went. However, didn't they know that they would benefit by coming together, learning from each other?

Hence my drive to publish started. Now today, I know that you have a story that you too want to share. As we journey through the next paragraphs, we want to make sure you publish your story to the world. It is imperative that you have a purpose for publishing. Whatever the purpose, stand firm upon your reasoning and self-publishing will be a reality. Some reasons you may want to self publish are...

- 1. FULFILL A DREAM**
- 2. FEEL A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT**
- 3. SHARE INFORMATION**
- 4. BUILD FINANCES/EARN FUNDS**

Since self-publishing is our choice to share our story to our fellowman, it is important to know some basic facts about it. Be mindful that successful self-publishers need to learn the unfamiliar rules of the publishing industry. Being self-published means that

1. You bear the entire cost of publication, meaning you handle all marketing, distribution, storage, etc. This cost could start as low as \$2,000 and climb as high as \$10,000. However, being self-published means earning a profit of 40 - 400%. When compared to having a large publisher finance your project and only earn as little as 5 - 15% royalty.
2. The author puts the book together as he or she sees fit. Usually the cost-per-book is far lower than at a vanity or subsidy press. This will give your book a chance to be a higher-quality product.

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3. Completed books are owned exclusively by the author, who keeps all proceeds from sales. This will require an entrepreneurial mindset to start and maintain.

Not only do Librarians read many good books, more importantly, they also have a story to tell. Self-publishing is a way to tell that story. It requires dedication and hard work. Because self-publishing is a perfect example of the American dream, it is one of the most rewarding experiences of a lifetime. Here are six ways you can successfully publish your books. When done rationally, you will find self-publishing is the best way to share your story just like you want it.

1. Be persistent—Just like the turtle in the old familiar folktale “Hare and the Tortoise,” you must keep at the work of getting your story in print. This may mean writing your story 10, 20, or 100 times. Make sure these hindrances do not stop you from getting published. Time will also be a factor in filling out forms, editing, and working with an illustrator (if needed). That unrelenting quality will guarantee your story in print.
2. Select an illustrator—Recall the saying, “Great minds think alike.” It is important to find an illustrator that thinks just like you. Although the illustrator is drawing from his or her perspective, the illustrations should resemble what your story is saying. Illustrators can be costly ranging from \$200 - \$500 per page. Since you are in charge of your book, the illustrator must depict what you desire unless your story will not be affective.
3. Find a graphic designer—An old adage is known to advise, “Don’t judge a book by its cover.” While I know it is best you do not do this, I am almost always guilty of doing it. Graphic designers have the power to make your cover and between the covers advertising to the eye. Good graphic designers could even give a flare to your book without you directing them what to do. Unlike illustrators, graphic designers need little to no coaxing. A graphic designer can cost as little as \$100 but can reach \$500 per page.
4. Decide on a printer—If you believe in wise advice that “Time is money,” then you may determine a printer sooner than later. Printers are easy to find, but deciding who best meets your needs or desires may not be so easy. Most printers will offer more books for less money, but storage must be

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available. It is important to select a printer that provides an ISBN number, copyright options, and access to book distributors online and offline. If you find a printer that prints on demand, this may be your best option. They will print from 1 – 200 books upon request and payment. Be careful not to spend too much during this step in self-publishing. While there are excellent printers available, CreateSpace tends to stand out. Their website is user friendly, the cost to print per book is reasonable, and the final product is professional and timely.

5. Have a marketing plan—We have heard that “Creativity is the key to your success.” Since good marketing means everything, it behooves you to create a good marketing plan. Knowing where and how to market your book will increase sales. Marketing includes attending conferences, workshops, family reunions, flea markets, PTO meetings, faculty or business meetings, group functions and setting up booths that are easy to set-up and take down with as many of the following as you desire:

- flyers, t-shirts, colored balloons
- business cards, pens
- bookmarks, postcards, magnets
- Printed posters/banners

Marketing will definitely consist of doing a book signing at bookstores, libraries, churches, or other venues. It is important to send autographed copies to media, public officials, mentors, and selected doctors; contact newspapers, radio stations, television; get reviews for your book. If you are not the public type, then setting up a website exclusively for your book is one of the most effective and cheapest forms of marketing.

6. Keep contacts—A business-minded person said, “If they bought from you this time, they will buy from you again.” This is why it is important to keep all contacts of persons who bought your first book. Connections can be everything; these same people may want to share your book with a friend or family member. Never underestimate the power of a “breathing link.”

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You have written your story, now you want to self publish. If you have take the **time and utilize the skills, you will reap the rewards needed to earn you the title of self-publisher.**

Happy self-publishing!

Shiela Martina, Children's Librarian, Singing Storyteller and Author of 10 self-published children's books. You may visit her on her website: www.ShielaMartina.com. Her titles include: **Hannah and Dexter: the first meeting**, **Folktales From A to Z: A guessing game**, **Guessing The Nursery Song**, **Flower Your Garden**, **Americans of Character**, **Active Children**, **The 3 Little Pigs Song**, **What If?: A different look at fairytales**, **The Cinderella Rap**, and **Jack's Beanstalk Medley**