

make ebooks pay



**How journalists and writers
can profit from self-publishing**

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Preface

Before Johannes Gutenberg's development of moveable-type printing, scribes could take as long as a year to reproduce a single volume. With the advent of mechanised reproduction, books steadily became part of the everyday lives of nearly everyone, at least in the developed world.

The chained libraries of medieval cathedrals gave way to mass-produced 'penny dreadfuls'; pamphleteers set themselves up as agents of political change; and printed ink became a ubiquitous feature of the human landscape. It's too early to say whether the arrival of eBooks is quite such a paradigm shift. However, it's beyond doubt that ePublishing's transformation of production times, book economics and democratic access to knowledge transmission is at least on a similar scale.

Vast fortunes have already been made from eBooks. EL James' *Fifty Shades* series enjoyed early success as an eBook that went viral. At times more than a third of the titles on the *New York Times*' eBook best-sellers

list have been self-published. And, in the UK alone, significant numbers of authors are making more than £100,000 a year from self-published eBooks.

This is all great news for journalists who are looking for new ways to share their work and generate income. Most already have the critical skills to differentiate third-rate research and writing from that which really engages a reader. Those interested in using this expertise to benefit from self publishing eBooks should find everything they need to know here.

As a trades union, the NUJ does not promote eBooks as a panacea to all the media's current ills or the desperately hard times many journalists have recently experienced, particularly since the economic crisis that started in 2007. Neither would the union provide a stamp of approval for the business practices of some of the most prominent companies in this market. It would be surprising, however, if eBooks were not a significant part of the publishing landscape a decade hence, and I suspect that by then a great many NUJ members will have found ways to profitably self-publish their work.

I love books of the paper-and-ink variety, but if, as a publishing medium, self-publishing eBooks provides a way to sustain more creative, investigative, argumentative individuals, then surely that is a good thing?

John Toner, National Organiser, the National Union of Journalists

Introduction

eBooks provide a unique opportunity for journalists. They can be produced in a few hours and put on sale swiftly. They require neither capital, nor inventory. They can be left on sale indefinitely and updated at will, and pricing is wholly in the hands of the author. What's more, there is a growing market for eBooks of around 10,000 to 20,000 words, a format which is ideally suited to long-form reporting.

That this is all true in no way means that 'real' books don't have a future or are any less desirable than they ever were. I am not arguing for turning off the lights in the country's last book shop, or disparaging the significant contribution made by conventional publishers or the many skilled workers they employ. However, for journalists who own the rights in material or are able to create content that interests readers, self-published eBooks are a potential game changer. A handful of journalists may make their fortunes from them and a far larger number will be able

to produce modest, enduring streams of income that could potentially sustain creative careers that might otherwise be abandoned.

Compared with every other post-internet means of delivering journalistic material, eBooks' critical difference is that they deliver a straightforward, unambiguous revenue stream. Unlike music, film and short-form news, a significant proportion of consumers, possibly even the majority, continue to accept that they should pay for books at the point of delivery. The fact that authors can expect a significantly higher percentage of the sale price of an eBook than they would were their work conventionally published is icing on the cake.

This book contains two elements. The first part is a description of eBook self-publishing. This should enable even those with no prior experience to begin planning a self-publishing venture. The second part features case studies of journalists, writers and publishers who have made a success of eBook self-publishing. Hopefully these will provide inspiration and ideas to fuel similar endeavours.

Although it is not designed to be a manual, most readers should find sufficient information here to enable them to create an eBook from start to finish using this publication alone. For those who need more help, there are pointers towards all the resources you need to create your first eBook, the majority of which are free to use. There are lots of real-life examples of writers and others who have taken up the opportunities of eBook publishing and some of them have profited significantly.

Although I hope it will also be useful to aspirant self-publishers with other backgrounds, this book is aimed at journalists and professional writers, and if you're looking for basic information about conceptualising potentially saleable books, creating engaging, readable text or adapting your storytelling for particular markets, then you might wish to take up some of the suggestions in the chapter 'Resources'.

This work is not a consideration of the ethics of eBook publishing or

the companies that operate in this sector. Controversial as this subject is in some circles, involvement in eBook publishing is a matter of individual conscience or possibly a topic on which representative organisations such as the NUJ might campaign.

This book aims to provide an overview of what journalists need to know when considering whether eBook publishing is for them. For those who do decide to take this route, it should provide the springboard to significant sales success.

Tim Dawson, January 2016

Make eBooks Pay

Tim Dawson

Chapter One: How the eBook market has developed

Since the first Kindles went on sale in 2009, eBooks have made dramatic inroads into the book market. A third of all UK internet users now own an eReader of some kind and 50% of all UK households possess a tablet computer. Something up to 30% of all book sales are now eBooks. Nevertheless, it is a maturing market and after several years of dramatic growth, sales of eBooks appeared to plateau in 2013.

Amazon's Kindle (device and allied apps) – the dominant device from inception – now looks untouchable, while the prospects of competitors such as Nook and the Sony eReader are uncertain. In part, Kindle's victory in the format war is due to Amazon's aggressive market positioning and pricing, but also because smart phones have increasingly taken over as the device of choice on which many readers consume books. Other eReading platforms offer their own smart-phone apps, but none are as widely used as Amazon's.

Perhaps eBooks will never capture more than a third of the market, and maybe paper-and-ink books will endure as the dominant way of consuming the written word, but that doesn't really matter to a journalist or other writer looking for an outlet for their work. Large advances are unlikely, but the possibility of professional support and the validation of mainstream publication have obvious attractions. There are plenty of significant success stories, however, among those for whom conventional publishing was not an option or where the effort of conventional publishing outweighs the potential benefits.

According to a report by authorearnings.com at least 25% of the books in Amazon's top 120,000 selling books are self published (it could be as high as 38%). Many of these are works of fiction, but a significant number are factual - among them significant works of journalism such as Marc Herman's *Shores Of Tripoli*, Peter Apps' *Before Ebola* and, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists* (some of which have been traditionally published after initial ePublication).

Some non-fiction self-publishers are also making significant incomes from their work. Steve Scott, for example, has written more than 50 self-help books - a fair number of them on self-publishing and internet business - and is reportedly making around £30,000 a month (stevescottsite.com). Indeed, authorearnings.com suggests that 40% of all author earnings from eBooks is going to self-publishers.

Unsurprisingly, much of the established media has attempted to exploit this growing market. US titles *The Atlantic* and *The New York Review of Books* promote their own eBooks, often featuring extended articles from their print titles. In the UK, The Independent is one of several 'heritage media' publishers that actively promotes allied eBooks.

For journalists considering publishing their own material independently, the eBook route brings some distinct advantages.

- By convention, ‘proper’ books rarely contain fewer than 70,000 words – roughly the length of a short paperback novel. Consumers of eBooks seem perfectly content to buy much, much shorter volumes. The ‘single’ or pamphlet format tends to be between 10,000 and 20,000 words, but there are instances of journalists selling eBooks of as few as 3,000 words. For example, Hina Pandya managed to recoup as much as she could have earned from a national newspaper by self-publishing a travel advice article that she had been unable to place.
- eBooks can be produced very quickly. Once a manuscript is completed to publishable quality, it can be prepared for publication and put on sale in little more than two or three hours. This particularly suits subjects that are based on contemporary events or information whose usefulness has only a short shelf life, such as specialist travel books.
- Many journalists own the rights in large quantities of copyright material that is ideally suited to being anthologised.

How the opportunities offered by eBook publishing will change journalism remains to be seen. The speed and ease of digital publishing may have the capacity to ‘save’ long-form reporting; what is certain is that at this moment eBooks represent an opportunity that journalists would be foolish not to consider. Perhaps only a handful of us will make fortunes from this kind of publishing. eBooks, however, undoubtedly provide a means by which we can: get our work into the market; earn something from every sale; and thereby create income streams that have the potential to sustain us.

There is also an increasingly vibrant ‘scene’ around self-publishing,

particularly in the United States. Many now describe themselves as ‘indy publishers’ (although that term in the UK more usually refers to small traditional publishing houses, rather than self-publishers). There is a fast-expanding library of books detailing various approaches to self-publishing, as well as several regular podcasts on the subject. Some of these are detailed in the ‘Resources’ chapter.

Chapter Two: How eBooks are consumed

The term 'eBook' is generally taken to mean a book published to be read on an eBook reader, such as a Kindle, Kobo or Nook. More recently, it has come to mean a book that can be read using an app that emulates such a reader on a computer, tablet computer or smart phone. In certain circumstances it might also be taken to mean a book published as a PDF or on a platform such as Issu.

eReaders are dedicated devices whose primary use is reading eBooks. Many use black-on-white 'eInk' that allows them to be read in direct sunlight and tends to give them very long battery lives, sometimes in excess of 40 hours between charges. Unlike computers, tablets or phones, they generally require an external source of light.

The main eReaders - Amazon Kindle

Amazon and its Kindle device dominate the world of eBooks. In April

2014, Mintel surveyed more than 500 internet users over the age of 16 who had bought an eBook in the past 12 months. Seventy nine per cent had done so via Amazon. Apple iBooks/iTunes was the nearest competitor, but only 10% of the sample had shopped there.

There are many reasons why you might choose not to publish using Amazon and many alternatives to the Seattle-based behemoth. If maximising sales and revenue are a significant element of your motivation for publishing, however, the case for sticking with the market leader is striking.

eBooks published via Amazon are in the proprietary format AZW3, also known as KF8. The technical details of this are unimportant to most authors. A manuscript prepared in a word processing program is automatically converted into this format when it is uploaded to the Amazon website. eBooks in this format can be read only by Kindles and Kindle apps running on other devices.

Of course a manuscript can be converted into any number of eBook formats, but the AZW3 format includes Digital Rights Management (DRM) features that make it relatively difficult to subsequently export books created in AZW3 formats into other formats.

Amazon's self-publishing platform is called Kindle Direct Publishing, universally known as KDP.

Kobo

Kobo is a Canadian-based manufacturer of eReaders, it also makes applications that can be used on most other computers and platforms. It also operates an eBook store. *Wired* has called Kobo "the only global competitor to Amazon (in the eBook market)". The most optimistic assessment of the company's penetration suggests that it accounts for around 20% of the market globally, although in some countries, notably Canada, it is the market leader.

By July 2014, more than 250,000 books had been published via its Kobo Writing Life. Kobo devices will read multiple formats, but generally use the open EPUB format.

Nook

Created by US bookseller Barnes & Noble, which partnered with several British retailers to make it available in the UK, the Nook also generally uses the EPUB format. In June 2014, Barnes & Noble spun Nook off into a separate company, which was widely seen as an acceptance that its challenge to Amazon had failed. Nook devices on the market today have Samsung Galaxy co-branding.

Nook's self-publishing platform is called Nook Press.

Sony eReader

Sony invented the eInk technology that continues to be used by many eBook readers, but their own devices have now been discontinued. Those already in circulation will doubtless continue to be used for many years to come. They, too, support the EPUB format.

Devices that will do the same job as an eReader

Desktop and laptop computers, tablets and smartphones are not eReaders as such, but all will run apps that allow them to be used as eReaders. All of the main eReader manufacturers offer free-to-download apps that allow other devices to read eBooks created for their readers. They can be downloaded from the 'store' from which other apps for the device in question can be obtained – such as the iStore.

Tablets and smartphones are difficult to read in direct sunlight, but their backlighting makes them much easier to read in low light.

Chapter Three: Self-publishing platforms

To be read on an eReader (or an app that emulates an eReader), a manuscript is usually converted into a format that such devices can read. These include files with the extensions .pub, .mobi and .azw3. A file produced on a word processor, such as Microsoft Word, can be converted on your own computer using a free-to-use program such as Calibre - calibre-ebook.com. In addition, Kindles and Kindle apps will read a Microsoft Word file as an eBook, although this is not the usual format in which eBooks are offered.

Some programs, such as InDesign and Scrivener, output directly in eBook formats. InDesign, in particular, allows greater graphic control than other software.

The easiest books to self-publish, however, are those that comprise just text. This can be created in any software, although it is helpful if it can be saved in Microsoft Word format (.doc or .docx).

It is perfectly possible to add graphics, such as page furniture at the beginning and end of chapters to eBooks, or to create fully illustrated books. You don't need to be particularly technically adept to do this, but there will probably be an element of trial and error involved.

Graphics also add to the size of a book's digital file. If you publish via a commercial platform, such as Amazon, eBooks with larger file sizes can attract a lower percentage rate of return, albeit not dramatically. Footnotes and references are also relatively complicated to include, as are tables or indeed any tabulated material.

Once converted, your file can be copied to your own eReader, emailed to others to copy to their own devices or uploaded to your own website, from where it can be downloaded by others.

If your intention is to create a free-to-share publication and distribute it to a small audience then this route is worth considering. If you want to sell your book, however, it will almost certainly be necessary to publish it via one of the larger, commercial eBook publishing channels.

Commercial self-publishing platforms

As this book is primarily aimed at journalists and those with some professional writing experience, what follows relates to books containing nothing but text, save for the cover.

All these services are delivered in their entirety via websites. Publishers (in other words the individuals publishing a book) must set up an account, which generally costs nothing, and upload their manuscript digitally. In each case, little technological expertise is required to undertake the process, but for those who feel nervous there are plenty of third parties who will inexpensively undertake such work.

KDP – Kindle Direct Publishing

Like or loathe it, Amazon is the largest creator and retailer of eBooks

in the world. Its penetration in various national markets differs and accurate comparative figures are difficult to obtain because Amazon does not use ISBNs for self-published works. (An ISBN is not a legal requirement in the UK.) Nevertheless, few seriously doubt that around two-thirds of all eBooks are sold through Amazon.

A survey for Mintel in 2012 found that 79% of UK customers who had bought an eBook in the past year had done so via Amazon. The other self-publishing platforms described here didn't show up in the Mintel survey, although 10% of respondents had bought eBooks through the Apple iStore.

Publishing through KDP is usually childishly simple. *Building Your Book For Kindle*, Amazon's manual for creating eBooks, is free to download and is little more than a pamphlet. Using the most straightforward method, you prepare your manuscript as a Microsoft Word document. This should include a contents page, something that can be created almost automatically in Word by highlighting and tagging your chapter headings. You upload your manuscript to the KDP website and then upload your cover as a .jpg file. KDP allows you to preview your publication both online and by downloading a file that can be copied onto a Kindle for previewing.

A little experimentation might be necessary the first few times that you create an eBook this way, but for the most part it is simply a matter of adding or removing carriage returns to make chapter headings as you wish them to appear.

KDP allows you to set your own selling price and, although it offers various slightly different 'royalty' packages, most people opt for the headline offer of 70% of the selling price. Once your book is uploaded, it is generally available all over the world in less than 48 hours. Thereafter you receive a monthly statement and payment is made directly to your bank account.

Amazon does not require you to publish exclusively with Amazon, but some of its promotion and royalty packages are structured to encourage you to offer your works exclusively through them. For example, enrolling in KDP Select, which makes your book available to some of Amazon's subscription customers, is only available if you make your book exclusively available through Amazon.

Smashwords

Smashwords is not a major retailer of eBooks, although you can buy from its site. It defines itself as an 'eBook distributor'. For many self-publishers its most useful qualities are that it is not Amazon and that publication via Smashwords creates books that can be read on most non-Kindle eReaders.

Like Kindle, Smashwords has an easy-to-use online interface that allows you to upload your manuscript, preview your work and get your book on sale within a few hours. Smashwords pays self-publishers an 85% royalty of those books sold directly from its site and 60% of the cover price of books sold from other sites. One of the benefits of Smashwords is that, so long as your book meets certain technical standards, it will automatically make your book available through online retailers such as Apple and Barnes & Noble. In 2013, around 85,000 eBooks were published via Smashwords.

Lulu

Lulu.com has much in common with Smashwords. It operates as an eBook creator, its own marketplace and a conduit to selling your books in through other retailers. It, too, offers an online eBook convertor. It allows creators to set their own cover price and 90% of the sale price goes to authors. If you opt for revenue to be transferred electronically, it is paid monthly to a PayPal account. In 2013, nearly 34,000 eBooks were

published via Lulu. It also operates a dovetailed service to sell print-on-demand paper copies.

Nook

Barnes & Noble's Nook does not operate a self-publishing service. By publishing via Smashwords or Lulu, however, it is possible for self-publishers to make their work available to Nook users through the Nook bookshop.

Kobo

Kobo Writing Life operates in much the same way as the other online self-publishing platforms and pays a royalty of 70% of the sale price.

iBooks

iBooks Author is significantly different to the other eBook creation methods. It is a software package that is supplied free with most new Apple computers and can be downloaded at no cost from the Apple iStore for those with older machines. It is a powerful content creator that gives authors the ability to create graphically elaborate books fairly easily. However, books created with iBooks Author can only be sold through the iStore. Authors are free to set their own price and receive 70% of the cover price. Books created with Smashwords can also be sold in the iStore.

Independents

There are dozens of smaller self-publishing operations. None have the scale of the outlets mentioned above, but all could potentially create best-sellers by focussing their marketing efforts more effectively than the giants. The biggest eBook success to date, EL James' *Fifty Shades of Grey*, was first published as an eBook by the small Australian publisher, The

Writers' Coffee Shop. It is the proof that great success is possible without the intervention of major companies or huge technological back-up. There is no guarantee, however, that its success will ever be equaled by another author publishing via the same channel.

The decision about which platform to choose depends on an assessment of your priorities. Amazon is by far the biggest player in the market and has been a consistent self-publishing innovator. If your priority is generating the greatest volume of sales, then the case for using Amazon is compelling. However, many people find some of the company's business practices objectionable and prefer to use other outlets for this reason. It is possible to publish on Amazon at the same time as other platforms, but Amazon offers incentives to those who publish exclusively with them.

Readers who do not like Amazon can be vociferous, particularly if your audience is left leaning. Satisfying those who are not willing to use Amazon is a good reason for using a platform such as Smashwords, even if you publish on Amazon as well.

Smashwords, Lulu and Nook are all a lot more relaxed about self-publishers appearing on multiple platforms. There are obvious appeals to Lulu, because of the royalty it offers - particularly if you have a means to bring your works to the attention of readers that does not rely on online discovery.

Chapter Four: The practicalities

Have you decided on the book you're going to write, but haven't actually started it yet? Or do you have a file of previously published material that you are considering reworking or republishing? Perhaps you already have a completed manuscript and are looking for a way of releasing it to the public, or maybe you're simply researching the possibilities of eBook publication before you settle on a subject? Wherever you are in this process, time spent thinking your project through from first principles will be well spent.

Before you start the physical publishing operation, you need to be in a position to answer the following questions with confidence.

- Who is your book aimed at?
- What is the three-sentence pitch for your book?
- What makes you a credible author?

- Where will you place your book in the genres and subgenres into which most eBook platforms split their catalogue?
- What other books might someone buying your book also consider?
- What do those ‘competitor books’ look and feel like as online products?
- What prices are similar titles selling for online, particularly those that are selling well?
- Have the bestselling titles got something that you haven’t, for example an author with a pre-existing reputation, a tie-in with other products or a successful marketing campaign?

These are all questions a traditional publisher thinks about when it’s considering publishing a new title. They are not necessarily easy questions to answer, particularly for those who are used to simply focusing on creating the product.

Talking through your answers with a few friends, particularly if you know anyone with experience in publishing, can be helpful and may provide a useful ‘reality check’. Certainly, thinking about these questions may mean a book project twists through several incarnations in the search for a winning formula.

Setting up an account

It’s hard to overstate just how easy it is to create simple eBooks. All the major platforms provide free-to-download guides. Kindle’s *Building Your Book for Kindle* is just 41 pages long, which is quite sufficient to explain the process in exhaustive detail.

Smashwords’ *Secrets To Ebook Publishing Success* by Mark Coker contains a great deal of general information about design and marketing that is useful to anyone intending to self-publish.

To use any of the online platforms, you need to create an account with them, filling in the usual name and address details. Those that pay by bank transfer will require your banking details; those that use PayPal will require those account details. Some will pay by cheque, although payments tend to be less frequent by this method (quarterly, rather than monthly, as a general rule).

Metadata

During the process of uploading a manuscript and putting your book on sale, all the platforms ask you lots of questions. Your answers determine how your book is categorised, what brief description appears on the initial sales pages, how you are described as an author and so on. It is worth doing a trial run and following this entire process through to see what questions you are asked (each platform is slightly different), so that you can give proper thought to how you answer them.

This wraparound information is technically known as your book's 'metadata'. Well-drafted and carefully considered metadata can be the difference between disappointing and outstanding sales. Checking out how other authors have used these questions to provide information for potential readers can be illuminating.

Your manuscript

The starting point for a mainly text-based book is the manuscript. Most people prepare these in a word processor such as Microsoft Word. Rich Text Format (.rtf) files produced in other packages, such as Open Office, work just as well.

The way in which you use your word processor's formatting features is important. It is best, for example, not to use tabs to indent paragraphs, nor to use double carriage returns after paragraphs. Both are better set in the program's paragraph options. It is worth checking your

manuscript with all the formatting symbols visible, so that none sneak through unnoticed. Only use hard page breaks to separate the title, contents pages and chapters.

Having assembled your manuscript into a single, continuous file – not forgetting to add title, copyright and dedication pages at the front – use your word processor to create a contents page, by highlighting the chapter headings.

From the web site of the publishing platform that you are using, you then upload the manuscript to the host. In most cases this is simply a matter of browsing your own computer for the location of your manuscript and pressing the ‘upload’ button on the website.

At this point you will generally want to preview what your book will look like, either by downloading it and copying it onto an eReader or using the web-preview function. The former is preferable as it will give you a dependable sense of what your book will look like to readers. You’ll probably have to make a few amendments, but this usually means nothing more complicated than adding or taking out hard returns. Most platforms allow you to upload and download as many experimental manuscript files as you wish, without actually publishing.

Covers

Covers are uploaded as a separate .jpg or .tiff. If you’re using Kindle, the ideal dimensions are 1000 x 1600 pixels. The cover text must include the name of the book and the author. It is perfectly possible to create your own cover in a package such as Microsoft Paint or a free, online design tool such as [Canva.com](https://www.canva.com).

Once downloaded, few eBook consumers ever look at the cover as eBooks tend to open at the start of the text. However, the cover is possibly the only part of a book that potential readers will see before they purchase.

Smashwords founder Mark Coker is fond of the story of RL Mathewson, the author of romance novel *Playing For Keeps*. In its original cover daily sales were rarely in double figures. After she updated her cover image, daily sales soon topped 1,000. Some estimates suggest that at least half of all books are chosen for their cover alone. And a survey of 1,000 self-published authors found that those who had used professional cover designers earned on average 18% more royalties than those who did not.

Much has been written about what makes book covers work, but this can be summarised as: easily understood images, clear typography and an appealing look. Perhaps the most important for sales, however, is that a cover must immediately and unequivocally communicate the mood of a book be it an exposé, biography, thriller, romance or misery memoir. Even authors with graphic-design backgrounds admit this is something that it easy to get wrong.

Happily for self-publishers, there is a growing online cottage industry of designers who offer inexpensive covers. There are some suggestions in the resources section at the end of the book and searching the internet will also turn up dozens of possibilities.

Other professionals

Getting a book into a state where it can be published is something that few are competent to do without help.

A traditional publisher might use as many as three separate editors to help an author prepare their work. A development editor will read a book in progress and provide guidance and opinion on structural issues – does the plot make sense, do passages answer all the questions readers might reasonably ask as they read?

A copy editor will then go through the finished manuscript ensuring that it is presented in a consistent style, checking spellings, fact-checking

and tidying up prose where that is necessary.

After the author has checked the corrected manuscript, it will then be proofread to ensure that no errors remain.

A self-publisher could, of course, pay freelance editors to undertake some or all of these roles. Some NUJ freelancers offer such services and they can be contacted via the NUJ *Freelance Directory* - freelancedirectory.org. The Society of Editors and Proofreaders also operates an online directory of editing professionals – sfep.org.uk. Many writers entrust friends and family with this work, possibly conflating the roles, although it clearly helps if you use people who have a professional background in preparing text. Among self-publishing authors there is also a growing culture of bartering services – you read someone else’s text and in return they read yours. The discussion forums listed in the Resources section are a good place to start looking for bartering opportunities.

Chapter five: Voyage Of Discovery

Online booksellers' catalogues groan with products, many of which are already being lavishly promoted. Key to successfully selling your own eBooks is to work out how readers will discover what you publish.

In the traditional publishing model, an author's main responsibility is writing. Selling their work is generally the job of the publishing house. These employ specialist professionals for this purpose, although more of the burden is falling on authors even in the traditional sector.

When an author self-publishes, digitally, or otherwise, marketing falls squarely on their shoulders. For some this is a boon. With real passion for their work and control over how their work is sold, authors can be far more dynamic marketers than publishing houses. Those authors who want to immerse themselves in taking their work to potential readers find themselves doing so at a time when it is advantageous to take on the big boys. Disruptive technologies such as social media, search engines and

email marketing make it easier than it has ever been for a determined individual to outsell big publishing houses.

Selling your own book is never easy, however. Those who are most successful at promoting their own work often put as much time, effort and ingenuity into this process than they do into actually writing their book. Of course, there are books that have become viral best sellers, for example, HM Ward's *Damages*, Amanda Hocking's *My Blood Approved* and Hugh Howey's *Dust* series. Famously, EL James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* was an eBook long before printed copies appeared. But sadly hoping to repeat that level of chance success without some kind of promotion is no more certain than wishing on a lottery win.

Most recent eBook publishing successes have been the product of a variety of marketing and promotional techniques. Intriguingly, many of the most successful self-publishers have relied largely on one of the following approaches. Picking and choosing elements of all of them may also be effective.

Addressing unfulfilled demands

The overwhelming majority of eBook purchasers buy through online retailers such as Amazon or Smashwords. Of the two, Amazon is far the larger. I will give detailed consideration to that.

Some buyers – friends and personal contacts, for example – will simply enter your name or the name of your book into the Amazon search engine.

There are four other potential routes to finding a book.

- browse the genre categories in the 'new and popular' lists;
- look at the Top 100 bestsellers in the category that interests them;
- choose from the 'also bought' suggestions;
- or input what they are looking for into Amazon's search box.

Look carefully though the catalogues of available books on the eBook

sales platforms that you intend to use, giving particular consideration to the four routes to buying listed above. This should provide an insight into the way that sellers such as Amazon categorise books. Pay particular attention to the categories where you intend to place your own work. Look up titles you already know on similar subjects to your own and see what other books people bought.

If nothing else, doing this should give you an idea of what other books are out there, how they are selling, how they appear to potential buyers who are browsing and how they are being priced. All are useful primers when you come to consider how you present your own book to the market.

Even if your book is already written, careful consideration of the categories where it is advertised can be key to success. Algorithms determine which books are featured in 'bestselling' and 'also bought' lists. Some self-publishers devote considerable time to working out how to present their book to take maximum advantage of these algorithms. This approach can repay the necessary effort in spades as it is possible to apply a highly scientific approach to analysing relatively unfulfilled wants. Tools such as KindleSpy – kdspy.com – can significantly aid such investigations.

Nick Stephenson's *Supercharge Your Kindle Sales* is largely devoted to these techniques. His stock-in-trade is a series of thrillers, whose hero is called Leopold Blake. Using his techniques, he grew daily sales from a consistent average of just under 100 to well over 250.

Marketing with social and digital media

Fabulous as online marketplaces are for selling books, there are great benefits in establishing direct relationships with your readers. This is particularly true if you intend to publish several books that might appeal to the same market. It also has the advantage of making your future

success less dependent on massive multinationals over whose terms of trade you have little or no control. Putting this crudely, if, say, Amazon, decided to halve the royalties that it was paying per sale, an author with an independent means to communicate with readers could more easily find an alternative sales channel that better served their interests.

The direct communications route on which you concentrate will probably be determined by the one with which you feel most comfortable. Research published by McKinsey in 2014 suggests that email marketing remains significantly the most effective in terms of the percentage of purchase decisions that result from each message, so garnering individual email addresses should probably remain your ultimate goal.

The route to doing this might be something like this. Establish an online presence to promote your work. This might be a blog, static website, Twitter feed or Facebook page. Start placing carefully considered material on this to generate attention. This could include blog posts related to the material in your book, Tweets seeking information relating to your book or Facebook pages doing the same.

Photographic and other graphic material is very easy to publish online - on all the above platforms, as well as Instagram, Flickr and others. A natural synergy could be achieved by publishing pictures on the web to promote words available in an eBook.

At first use all your personal contacts to direct attention to this, as well as sending enquiries to people running similar websites, Twitter feeds or Facebook pages. Some successful authors talk about devoting an hour or more daily to this task. As your list starts to grow, you might offer some special material or a preview of a forthcoming book to anyone who emailed you. Once your list starts to grow, you can email those who are on it to promote your book as it becomes available. This can be particularly useful in getting a title noticed by Amazon's algorithms.

There is a whole science of building marketing emails lists. John Locke's *How I Sold 1 Million eBooks* is good on this, as is Nick Stephenson.

YouTube also provides a space in which some authors have successfully built audiences. There are an increasing number of examples of people who have built a following on YouTube, only to find themselves courted by traditional publishers. Zoe Sugg, or Zoella, amassed five million followers on YouTube before being sought out by Penguin and commissioned to write *Girl Online*, which went on to become one of the fastest selling books of 2015.

Felix Kjellberg, also known as PewDiePie, who covers gaming, followed a similar route. Even if a YouTube channel attracts thousands rather than millions of followers, it still offers a route to publicise other products. Audio platforms such as [SoundCloud.com](https://www.soundcloud.com) and [audioBoom.com](https://www.audible.com) gain less attention than their picture-based rivals, but can also be effective at attracting an audience. An increasing number of self-published authors are now running podcasts that discuss the opportunities and techniques of indie publishing. There is a list in the resources section.

Traditional grunt

Established publishers have long known that the technique and effort required to sell books is much the same as selling anything else. Ensuring that your product is visible, accessible and attractive is vital.

Some attribute Jeffery Archer's initial success as a novelist to his effectiveness at schmoozing the intermediaries who linked publishers to bookshops. With them on his side, his books had an enthusiastic advocate in every bookshop and prominent displays of his works became far more likely.

Thinking through the process of how potential readers make purchasing decisions is every bit as important for eBooks.

Successful examples abound. Andy Leeks drove the initial sales of his *As They Sleep* series of books (see case study) by leafleting people reading Kindles on the commuter train to work that they shared. Any book that addresses a group of people who come together physically at one time can be similarly targeted. If your book is about a road trip in a camper van, then why not hand out leaflets at one of the many VW rallies that take place? Writing about making things in fabric? Then leaflet the Stitch&Sew expo. Equally, a book about the Middle East, austerity Britain or the realignment of the left might find an audience among those who attend related political meetings.

Other authors have scored successes by attracting an audience to a blog and then using that to sell eBooks. Lisa Pearson, who blogs as the Mummy Whisperer, was attracting up to 500 visitors a day to her site, but making no money. She distilled her thoughts into the eBook *Six Steps To A Sparkling You And Enjoying Being A Mum* and was soon selling more than 50 copies a month. She also attracted a conventional publishing deal on the back of her success.

Readings at events, appearing in the media and endorsements from better-known authors are just as useful in promoting eBooks as their conventional counterparts. Jack Thurston, for example, developed a following through his radio show on Resonance FM. After 11 years broadcasting, the podcast of his show is downloaded by around 15,000 people, all of whom form a receptive audience for his *Bicycle Reader* eJournal. (For the sake of probity, I should note that I co-edit *Bicycle Reader*.)

There are plenty of impressive success stories from authors who have profitably sold their own books. This is a process that generally takes a significant amount of time. A frequently mentioned rule of thumb is that you will need to spend as much time selling as you do writing.

Other authors quite reasonably reflect that they would prefer to spend their time doing what they do best and most naturally – writing books. For those for whom this is true, eBook self publishing may not be their best route to market, particularly if they aspire to sell in quantities.

Chapter six: Pricing and revenue issues

There are many schools of thought on how to price an eBook. This is partly because on most publishing platforms a selling price can be changed instantly and authors often experiment with different price points, but there are fundamentals that remain constant.

One is that the biggest national markets for eBooks is the USA – according to a report by Rüdiger Wischenbart, in 2014 it accounted for 26% of all eBook sales. The same report divides world sales as follows: China 12%, France 8%, Japan 7%, Germany 4%, UK 3% and the rest of the world 39%.

The dominance of the US market means that much of the discussion about eBook pricing relates to US dollars. Indeed, some of the most successful British authors price their books in dollars, precisely because it makes commercial sense to focus on the largest market.

The basic price band

In the early days of eBooks, Amazon attempted to impose pricing norms on the market by offering its best royalty rate, 70%, to those who priced their books between £1.99 (\$2.99) and £6.50 (\$9.99). It continues to do this, with books priced either side of this range, of which there are plenty, generating a royalty of 35%. Many authors publish outside this band, but the vast majority stick to it. A number of the other platforms, however, offer consistent royalty rates across the price spectrum.

While eBooks have done much to alter the expectation that a ‘proper’ book should contain 70,000 words or more, readers do seem willing to pay more for longer books, so a novella or long essay might be priced at the bottom end of the spectrum and an epic novel or major piece of research at the upper end.

Pricing to sell

Any item is only worth what people are willing to pay for it. Many unknown authors find that by pricing their eBooks cheaply, they are able to attract a wider audience than might otherwise be the case. A survey of \$25 million worth of eBook sales by Mark Coker in 2014 showed that, although some books do well when priced at 99 cents, the most effective pricing point appears to be between \$2.99 and \$3.99. Readers are clearly willing to pay more for longer books, and fiction series sell better than standalone books, but Coker says his data suggests that readers are, on average, willing to pay more for non-fiction than fiction. British author Jack Thurston prices his *Bicycle Reader* eMagazine at £1.99 and sells around 3,000 copies of each edition.

Assess the competition

One useful pointer for pricing is to see what the competition is doing. In the case of fiction this is easy – simply check the bookselling platform

of your choice and look for books like the one you are about to publish. It can be slightly harder to make direct comparisons for non-fiction, but in most cases you will be able to find something similar.

Giving it away

Giving eBooks away is another popular strategy because, although you don't earn revenue, 'giveaways' appear in the retailer's statistics as sales. This means a book can appear to climb the bestseller charts, even though its author hasn't made a single actual sale. This brings a book to wider attention, but, even more importantly, it might garner beneficial reviews. Short-term giveaways can provide long-time sales benefits or can help drive sales of other books, because readers who like the free material will often seek out paid-for books.

John Lee Dumas, for example, initially gave away *Podcast Launch*, his guide to podcasting. It garnered almost exclusively five-star reviews and made it into the Amazon 'small business and entrepreneurship', and 'reference' niche category bestseller lists as a result.

Sampling

Most eBook retailers allow publishers to offer a free sample to browsers. It is a powerful way to provide readers with reassurance that they are buying something that is of potential value to them, but giving more than 20% of a book away is likely to undermine sales.

Other money issues

If you earn royalties in the United States, but are not normally a US tax-payer, 30% of what you earn will be withheld by the US tax authorities. You can, however, apply to the US tax office – the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) – to be exempted from this. How much of an exemption you receive depends on the country in which you usually pay

tax, but no tax at all will be withheld from UK tax payers. Registering with the IRS can be done via Amazon or other ePublishers, and it is probably easier if you initiate the process in this way, but the Internal Revenue Services form you need can also be found at irs.gov.

Kindle Unlimited

Kindle Unlimited is a subscription service. In return for a monthly fee – currently £7.99 in the UK, \$9.99 in the US – readers can borrow from a stock of over a million Kindle titles. Publishers that allow their works to be made available in this way are paid a fee each time their book is downloaded and more than 10% of it is read. This payment is calculated as a proportion of the KDP Select Global Fund – which has been over \$11 million a month for most of 2015. In practice this means authors have received around 0.005 cents per page read. The major publishers have, to date, resisted this scheme.

The benefits of Kindle Unlimited are a matter of debate. To enrol you have to publish exclusively on Amazon and the size of the fund and the way that it is shared out are entirely at that company's discretion. The scheme provides access to a new group of readers (quite how many Amazon doesn't say) who can sample your work inexpensively. If they can borrow a book, however, there is a danger that few will buy the book.

Data on this is thin on the ground. British author Nick Stephenson records that his daily revenue increased when he joined Kindle Unlimited. Some authors report that their revenue fell when they joined. It is possible to opt in and out of the programme, so there is a case for experimenting.

Chapter seven: Self-publishing and the law

It is quite possible to self-publish safely having given little or no consideration to the law and never be troubled by writs, injunctions or other legal actions. Nevertheless, by the very act of publication you open yourself to potential jeopardy and a few moments' prior consideration is often the difference between avoiding pitfalls or becoming their victim. What follows sketches out the main issues that can face a publisher. Needless to say, if you're in doubt, it is best to seek specialist advice.

Amazon's standard self-publishing contract defines the person uploading a book as the 'publisher' of that work and states that full legal responsibility for publication lies with the publisher. Other self-publishing facilitators' terms are similar. At the time of writing, these contracts are relatively untested in court. It would be foolhardy, however, to assume that, as 'publisher', you are assuming anything less than full responsibility for what you publish.

Owning the rights in the work you publish

In the United Kingdom, the Copyright Designs and Patents Act (1988) grants creators full rights in their works. For a writer, this means that you own all the rights in your writing. Unless a creator licenses or assigns their rights, then their copyright in their own works lasts for their lifetime and 70 years thereafter. The only real exceptions are those works created by an employee while they are working for an employer. Copyright in those works resides with the employer.

Copyright laws vary around the world but the fundamental notion that the rights in their work belongs, in the first instance to the author is common in most of the world's countries.

If you plan to include any material that you have not created yourself, then, as a general rule, you must be certain that such works are 'rights free' and can be exploited commercially, or that you have permission to use them in the way that you intend. If you fail to do this, you risk incurring a liability that you may have to settle after you have published.

This includes illustrations, photographs used on the cover, data that has appeared elsewhere and much else beside. If third parties have granted you the right to use their work, then carefully retain the relevant paperwork just in case there are disputes in the future.

Issues can arise, for example, if an author quotes from works owned by someone else. This can include quoting from song lyrics and poems, or substantial extracts from other works of prose, which are still in copyright. In most cases this applies during the lifetime of the author and then 70 years after their death.

Blake Morrison, for example, in his novel *South Of the Border*, quoted a couple of lines from a handful of relatively recent pop songs. On the eve of publication, his publishers realised that permission was needed to use the lyrics in this way. Buying permissions from artists such as the Rolling

Stones, Eric Clapton and Oasis eventually cost Morrison £4,401.75 – a significant chunk of what he might have hoped to make from the book.

Quoting from other works is allowable if you are reviewing them. Be wary, though. A list of events compiled by another author, for example, might also constitute a ‘copyright work’. If, say, a writer put together a list of venues and dates where a political figure spoke at public meetings, that list would be considered a copyright work. Simply reproducing that list without re-researching it yourself, and being able to prove that you had if challenged, could constitute an infringement of the original author’s copyright.

The product of interviews can also be more problematic than some journalists assume. By allowing themselves to be interviewed, a subject is generally considered to be granting the journalist a licence to reproduce their words. By writing up an interview into an article, a journalist is creating a new copyright work. Reproducing long, verbatim interviews can create issues, however.

In 2010, for example, Mike Gerrard created an eBook from a long interview with author Bill Bryson, conducted 16 years earlier. The question-and-answer piece appeared in a specialist magazine at the time of their conversation. When they were republished in an eBook, however, Bryson successfully argued that his words were, in fact, his copyright work and required Gerrard to withdraw his book from sale. Again, if in doubt about using what is potentially someone else’s copyright material, seek advice.

Libel and defamation

As a publisher you are also responsible if what you publish is considered by a court to have defamed someone. Broadly, defamation occurs when you make a statement that you are unable to prove to be true and that is likely to adversely affect the reputation of a living person

(or company) in the estimation of ‘right-thinking members of society’. If you are sued, what matters is what a court understands your words to mean, not what you intended to say.

What follows is intended to be only the most basic guide to the law in England and Wales and should not be considered a substitute for specialist advice.

Understanding the laws of defamation is part of most journalists’ basic skill set and those without such a background should certainly seek expert guidance if they fear they are in danger of defaming someone. It is also possible to insure against the risk of legal actions of this kind.

To be actionable, a claimant must show that a statement has caused them serious harm. There are a number of potential defences, including: publishing matter that is in the public interest; demonstrating the measures that you have taken to verify information; being able to show that comment was sought from the claimant; the seriousness of the allegations; and the overall tone of the article. Publishing statements that are defamatory but defensible is a fraught business for national newspapers with specialist legal departments and it is a route best avoided by self-publishers.

The risk of defaming someone is clearly greatest in works of non-fiction, particularly if the work makes accusations about actions that might be considered discreditable. Defamation cases based on fiction are rare, but there are some potential pitfalls.

If a character in a work of fiction is based on a person who is easily identifiable, this can pose a risk. It is also possible to defame someone accidentally. A novel, for example, might include a corrupt police officer called Dave who lives in a village on the border of Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire. A real police officer called Dave living in a similar location, might feel maligned, whether that was intended or not. Such cases are, however, very unusual.

Northern Ireland chose not to adopt the Defamation Act (2013) which applies in England and Wales, so the previous law applies there and in Northern Ireland defamation does not require there to have been ‘serious harm’ and the range of defences available is slightly different.

In Scotland the differences are more pronounced. The definition of defamation is broadly similar, but in Scotland it is also not necessary to show that a statement has caused ‘serious harm’ for it to be actionable.

There are important differences in the ‘public interest’ defences too, but if the specifics of this are important to you, then you should almost certainly have your book read by a lawyer. In Scotland those who think that they have been defamed have three years after publication to initiate an action, rather than the one year allowed in the rest of the UK.

Proceedings in court and contempt

If you intend to write about any kind of actual legal case, particularly if it involves live proceedings, exercise extreme caution. If you don’t have a background in journalism or are uncertain of the privileges and restrictions that apply when reporting on legal proceedings, then seek specialist advice.

Breaking the law in respect of reporting the work of the courts or court proceedings is known as ‘acting in contempt of court’ and is a criminal offence. The consequences of such a crime can include imprisonment.

Privacy

There is no ‘privacy law’ in the UK. However, successive cases, often involving celebrities and their lawyers, deploying interpretations of the 1998 Human Rights Act have created new restrictions on what personal information can be safely reported.

This is a complex and evolving area of law. As a general rule, you are

safe if you only report on personal information that is already 'in the public domain'. A reasonable test of this might be if information has already appeared in a widely available publication such as a national newspaper. If you are writing about high-profile individuals and are in any way concerned that you might be encroaching on their privacy, obtain professional help before publication.

If challenged, stop

In the unlikely event that you do receive a complaint about something that you have published, then you can reduce the jeopardy to yourself significantly by acting quickly. You may feel, of course, that you want to defend what you have said against any challenge. Should you find yourself in this position, however, it is still best to remove your publication from sale while taking advice.

One of the beauties of self-publishing is that you can take down an eBook immediately and revise your text instantly, if you think it necessary. In many cases swift action is sufficient to satisfy complainants and is often the best course of action, even if you feel that what you have said is defensible. Needless to say, lawyers' fees and court costs devour money at an alarming pace.

Chapter eight: Title pages and publishing information

Books traditionally have a page of information at the front containing the elements below. It is important that this information is included in your eBook, too. Many ePublishers now place it at the end of the book, although where it falls is entirely a matter of preference.

Publisher

Most eBook self-publishers simply publish under their own name. If you do this on Amazon, a publisher won't be listed in the 'product details'. Some take the view that a book will be better received if it appears to come from a distinct publisher. If you agree, simply adopt a name of your choosing and put this in the appropriate field during the uploading process.

If you decide to do this, choose a name that is unique to you and doesn't sound like any other publisher, particularly any of the larger

ones. Using a name that might be mistaken for an existing publisher might be counted a ‘passing off’. Calling yourself ‘Back Bedroom Publishing’ or ‘The Garden Shed Publishing House’ or something similar will not alter your tax situation or any of the liabilities that result from publishing books.

Some authors set up separate limited companies to publish their books. If the level of your sales is creating a significant tax liability, there are advantages to this and should you find yourself in this position it is worth seeking an accountant’s advice. However, publishing using a distinct limited company doesn’t exempt an author from the possibility of being pursued for defamation.

Moral rights

Moral rights are generally considered to be an element of copyright, but they are not economic rights. Their precise form varies around the world, but they are recognised in the 168 countries that are signatories to the Berne Convention. There are three moral rights – integrity, attribution and false attribution.

The right to integrity means that your work cannot be altered without your consent. It, and the right not to have work falsely attributed to you, are automatic and require no action on a publisher’s part. Attribution – the right to an author being identified as the creator of a work – requires that this right is asserted at the start of that work. To do this, simply include the following statement on the book’s title or copyright page: “The author asserts their moral rights to be identified as the author of this work.”

Copyright notice

The following statement should also be included: “All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval

system or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior permission in writing of the publisher, nor be otherwise circulated in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published without a similar condition, including this condition, being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.”

Edition numbering

Books usually contain information about their publishing history – the date on which they were first published and the number of editions thereafter. It is less usual to do this with eBooks, but it is nonetheless a useful feature. For readers, it is potentially useful information, particularly in the future. More importantly for publishers, however, is that it gives them a clear indication of exactly which electronic edition of a book a reader has. This is helpful because of the ease with which you can update and re-upload an eBook.

To give an example, suppose that after a few weeks on the market several readers have notified you of typos that they have spotted. You make corrections to your manuscript and then effectively publish a ‘second edition’ by uploading your corrected manuscript. Should anyone else then contact you with suggested corrections, you will be able to easily tell which edition they have been reading.

ISBNs

International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) are a cataloguing system that is used in the book trade to identify books and their publishers. There is no legal requirement for either printed or electronic books to use an ISBN, but they are vital if you hope to make a book available through bookshops and libraries. Many eBook publishers do choose to use ISBNs so that their book can be found more easily. If you are using ISBNs, then an eBook edition should have one to itself, rather

than sharing one with a print edition. Publishers can buy blocks of ten ISBNs from the agency that serves their country. In the UK, that agency is Nielsen – isbn.nielsenbook.co.uk.

Amazon uses its own book cataloging system – the Amazon Standard Identification Number – which is free and is automatically added to your book information during the publishing process. If you intend to publish only on Amazon then this is probably sufficient. Smashwords currently offers publishers free ISBNs when they publish on that platform.

Legal deposit

Since 1662, publishers in England have been required to submit copies of their books to the nation's written-culture archive. In the case of printed books, six copies must be supplied to the British Library's Legal Deposit Office, from which they are dispatched to the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, the National Library of Wales, the Library of Trinity College Dublin, the Bodleian Library in Oxford and the University Library in Cambridge.

eBook publishers are subject to a similar requirement, but have life rather easier. They simply need to upload a copy of their eBook via the British Library's website - bl.uk/aboutus/legaldeposit/websites/.

Bibliographic data

Bibliographic Data Services is the organisation that populates the British National Bibliography, a database of books that are available to libraries and library supply services. It is free to list the details of your eBook in this database, although you must do so before publication and you must have an ISBN number – bibliographicdata.co.uk.

Introducing the case studies

The following ten case studies provide an informal survey of digital self-publishing in the UK. A few of these writers have enjoyed spectacular financial success, some have successfully pitched work that might have otherwise gone unseen into the public sphere, others have exploited the freedom to experiment with formats that eBooks allow. All have lessons for those that seek to join their ranks.

Self-publishers appear vibrant, creative and imbued with the feeling that the world lies at their feet. It is common to liken the ethos of today's 'indie publishing scene' with the anything-goes DIY spirit of 1970s punk rock. You won't find many self-publishers bedecked in safety pins and bondage trousers, but the legions of writers swell daily whose clarion call is "Never Mind The Bookshops".

Case study one: Tweet success at hacking trial

Reporting one of the longest criminal cases in English legal history, Peter Jukes also happened upon a string of publishing innovations with revolutionary potential.

Jukes spent 138 days watching every twist and turn of the News International phone hacking trial, during which he live-tweeted more than half a million words. Many of his 14,000 Twitter followers crowdfunded him to the tune of £20,000 to keep going. ePublished copies of his subsequent book were then edited, fact-checked and proofread by a community of followers, and he pre-sold around 1,500 paper and eBooks – sufficient to fund the second phase of his project.

“A lot of this is accident posing as causality,” he now admits. “I had no idea that you could live-tweet court cases when I got the last [press] ticket to observe the trial, had not thought of crowdfunding to

carry on through the trial, and did not really consider the book until the case was more than half completed.”

Jukes came to the trial in October 2013 having written a previous book about the scandal that finished off *The News of the World*. *The Fall Of The House Of Murdoch*, published in 2012, started life as a series of blog posts for an American website and was then conventionally published, albeit with crowdsourced finance.

His tweets from the opening day of the trial were well received. “I have a good ear for dialogue,” he says. Friends encouraged him to carry on and suggested that an appeal for crowdfunding might provide sufficient resources to sustain him through the trial. The first £12,000 took him through to May 2014, by which time he had over 10,000 followers. A second appeal for help kept him in court until the verdicts. “People wanted to help us. It was amazing. As the first money came in I felt like the James Stewart character in *It’s A Wonderful Life*.”

Jukes tweeted using an iPad and separate keyboard, and was fortunate that the phone network to which his tablet was connected had good coverage in the Old Bailey’s annex (most didn’t).

As the witnesses were cross-examined he did nothing but live tweeting and then used the breaks to write up more detailed notes, cross-checking these with others, as well as drawing on the written legal instructions that were handed down during the course of the trial.

“I wasn’t really thinking about a book, but as the case went on, more and more people asked me about what they assumed was my plan,” says Jukes. “I talked to Martin Hickman, who co-wrote *Dial M For Murdoch* and runs Canbury Press, and he said, ‘Why don’t you write it and I will publish it.’” From there the idea took off.

“The tweets stand alone as one testimony of what happened. The

book is different. It tells the story of all the bits that I was not allowed to report and includes my impressions of witnesses and how they performed.”

Beyond Contempt: The Inside Story of the Phone Hacking Trial was offered for sale on the web while the trial was still on-going and was promoted on Jukes’ Twitter feed. Priced at £25 for the paper book, it wasn’t cheap, but for that subscribers received a signed, numbered copy as well as an eBook.

The trail ended in June 2014 and the book was conventionally published that October.

The benefits of this business model were two-fold. Jukes offered an eBook of the first draft of his manuscript to subscribers well before October. A significant number of these people then set about fact-checking, proofing and offering suggestions. “For about a month people came back to us with suggestions. Some of them must have spent hours and hours combing through the text. That level of engagement with people was amazing.” Pre-selling also meant that they knew how many physical copies were needed before instructing the printers. The book is now available in paperback and as a conventional eBook.

peterjukes.com

Case study two: Self-publishing to escape the travel-writing trap

Frustration that her idea had been scooped prompted Hina Pandya to try self-publishing an eBook. “I went to Bermuda to research what I had hoped would be a couple of articles about travelling there in the low season,” she explains. “I had figured that it was a niche market that big players such as Time Out and Lonely Planet didn’t cover. Sadly, once I got back, Simon Calder wrote a series of articles on a very similar theme and I feared that he had beaten me to the idea.”

Annoyed, she remembered a presentation she had seen at the London Book Fair. Amazon/Kindle had impressed her with the resources they were putting into eBook self-publishing and they made it look like an easy thing to do. It was enough to persuade her that, despite her modest technical skills, she would give it a try.

“As easy as I imagined it would be, because it was a travel book I included a lot of pictures, which is not really what KDP is set up for.

That meant that I had quite a lot to learn. It was easy to make something look great on my Mac, but it usually didn't translate when I put it up as an eBook. I created my manuscripts in Microsoft Word and then converted them into pdf files before uploading them to KDP. I found that gave me greater control of pagination and how the book looked."

Sales were promising, perhaps because a book aimed at off-season travellers appealed to a small but discrete market. Six months in, she had passed a hundred sales, with many coming from the US and quite a few from Germany. "I released it through the Kindle Lending Library, too, and used all the promotional devices that I could find. I charged 99p a copy, of which I received 60p back. In the end, I probably made as much from the book as I would have done if I had sold a couple of feature pieces to a national newspaper, which was my original intention. Once it had been on sale for a few years, however, I took it down, because travel information dates quickly."

Pandya's next book was based on a blog she wrote during a year living in New York. Her initial plan was to keep family and friends up to date with her life, but the blog got favourable write-ups from a couple of travel magazines, which made her think that it might have a wider audience. Again, she fashioned it in to an eBook, including some of the photographs that she had taken while she was there, and that has sold even better. "During the summer months it delivers a tidy cheque every month – nowhere near enough to live on, but a useful supplementary income."

On the back of this, she has also successfully offered consultancy services to others who want to publish eBooks, but lack the technical confidence to take on the job themselves. One client, for example, wanted to turn his father's First World War diaries into a book. He prepared the manuscript and then Pandya undertook everything after that. "I suspect that offering that kind of consultancy could be quite a

lucrative market, if you could get your name in front of people who have material to publish,” she says.

hinapublish.com

Case study three: A short history of publishing success

Rupert Colley's plan was at least a decade in the gestation. Working as a librarian in Enfield, London, he dreamed of creating a series of popular histories that could be read in about an hour. "My hunch was that there was a real appetite for easily-digestible histories, maybe in subject areas that people felt they ought to know about or in anticipation of a holiday. 'History for busy people' was the slogan I had in my head," he explains.

In 2009 he published his first title, a self-penned, 10,000-word account of the Second World War. Since then his History in an Hour imprint has sold more than 250,000 bite-sized eBooks on everything from the Reformation to Ancient Egypt and the Cold War. "There have been times when it was manic, but the level of the success of the series has been overwhelming", he says.

However, Colley's experience suggests that you can't necessarily expect riches the second that you add your work to Amazon's vast

catalogue. “I started by putting up free-to-read articles on my website to generate some interest”, he explains. “It took four months after I published my Second World War book before I sold a single copy, though”. During that time he was busy building interest on his site and via social media, but a year later sales were so strong that HarperCollins offered to buy him out and retain him to run History in an Hour on its behalf.

Among the more surprising ways that professional backing has helped has been in the development of audio versions of his titles. Actors read abbreviated versions of the 10,000-word titles and the resulting products have sold tens of thousands through iTunes.

“Initially I just wrote about what interested me. That’s why I did a lot of contemporary history titles,” notes Colley. “I also went with what people offered me, so long as they were competent writers. Since HarperCollins’ involvement, I have become more anniversary-driven, but writers still get the same basic percentage of sales revenues.”

When HarperCollins came on board all the existing titles were republished, which caused a dip in sales as a lot of positive Amazon reviews were lost. These were quickly replaced, though, and Colley is convinced that the association with a major publisher has enhanced the credibility of his series and added to its success.

historyinanhour.com

Case study four: A train ride with travelling support via crowdfunding

Lorraine Wilson's self-publishing journey took her to 20 countries and more than 60 cities during an odyssey that was crowdfunded by friends and contacts on social media. The resulting book, *Facing Forwards*, had strong paper and digital pre-sales and a February 2016 publication date.

"Having been traditionally published in the past (*Take It To The Bridge*, a history of popular music in Dundee, Wilson's home city) put me off that route," she explains. "It cost me money to write the book, which sales did not repay and I couldn't afford to do that again."

Wilson started her career as a journalist on DC Thomson's magazines in the late 1980s, before working for national newspapers in Scotland and England, and latterly editing *The Scots Magazine*. She has also freelanced for significant periods of time and now concentrates largely on writing.

Her journey – a solo train trip through the Low Countries, Scandinavia, Germany, eastern Europe, Italy and France – was one that she wanted to undertake, in part to reassess priorities and refocus after a challenging few years. Friends encouraged her to write a blog as she went, but, she says, “I resisted because I did not want to spend time away writing and worrying about the response that I was getting, and there is no money in a blog.”

Others’ enthusiasm to hear her story did, however, persuade her that there might be a book in her experiences. “I decided to seek crowdfunding to meet the costs of print and production. I have previously supported ‘pledge campaigns’, such as the one that Rufus Wainwright ran to fund his opera. I thought that I could do the same, with a similar system of tiered benefits.”

Thus social media contacts were encouraged to sign up for as little as £10 - for a digital edition of the book and a postcard while she was away, to £100 for digital and print copies of the book, six postcards, a gift and a bookmark. Over 28 days, promoting the project on crowdfunder.co.uk, 79 backers came forward and pledged a total of £2,080.

“It was an incredible boost to get so much support, but it was also quite a pressure to deliver,” says Wilson. “At one low point while I was writing the book I very nearly emailed everyone to say that I couldn’t do it and they could have their money back.”

The crowdfunding has paid for most of the design and production costs, including creation of an eBook and a 1,000-copy print run. Wilson then aims to liaise with bookshop buyers to try and get her work into their shops, and she will put effort into promoting the book. A friend who has significant PR experience will run a national media campaign. Her own love of nicely produced books persuaded her to print copies,

but, she concedes, the best return will almost certainly come from eBook sales.

“I have learned an awful lot already and the book is not even in my hands. A couple of publishers have already asked me why I didn’t come to them and the reason is very largely about control. I wanted to write about the experiences that I had, not try to fit what I had to say into someone else’s niche. I hope that readers will agree that the book is better for that.”

Wilson isn’t sure whether the indie publishing route will be a big part of her future, but *Facing Forwards* has already brought her to the attention of traditional publishers who have hired her as a ghostwriter.

lorrainewilson.net

Case study five: Turning a commute into self-published sales

Watching fellow commuters on his daily hour-long train journey in and out of London, Andy Leeks despaired. Like him, they had clambered early from bed, showered, dressed and left their homes.

Once they were bumping along towards the capital, many returned to the land of nod. Keen to fill his own journey purposefully, Leeks couldn't imagine how anyone could waste so much time every single day.

"I got into a Facebook spat on the subject," he says. "Some friends insisted that sleeping was the best way to pass a journey. I replied that with the time they were wasting they could easily write a book."

Rising to his own challenge, Leeks set himself the task of proving his point. The resulting four titles, published as eBooks and written only while he was on the train during the ensuing year, have already sold nearly 50,000 copies.

"I have always written, albeit only for myself, and I like to fill my

time. What I wrote starts with things that I have seen on the train, what I hoped were funny observations and thoughts which then digressed as my mind wandered.”

His decision to self-publish on Kindle was motivated by simplicity and speed. He committed to writing the first book on 6 September 2012. He finished it on 11 December and it was on sale by 14 December. By 26 December it was number one in Amazon’s ‘humour and biography’ category.

Leeks’ promotional strategy was simple, but proved to be highly effective. He printed flyers advertising his book and gave them to anyone reading a Kindle on his train to and from work. That, and a price of just 77p, saw him sell 50 copies in the first week and 200 in the second week. This level of activity was picked up by Amazon’s algorithms, which consequently gave his publication additional promotion. Soon he was selling 400 units a day.

Publishing books in quick succession also worked to his advantage. “I class my books as ‘toilet books’ – they are intended to be funny and you can pick them up and put them down without losing any important threads. Readers either get my humour or they don’t. If they do, they tend to come back and buy the other titles.”

He describes the money he is making as a “useful second income, comfortably into five figures,” although it’s not yet enough for him to give up his day job.

Leeks spent no time on Amazon category analysis, but he does engage with readers using social media. “I set up a Facebook page for my books. That allows me to interact with readers and give them sneak previews of upcoming books. Doing this assiduously has been really important for me. It creates fans who are super-loyal and who put real effort into persuading other people that they will enjoy my work.” His books continue to sell well at £1.99 each.

Since finishing the *As They Slept* series, Leeks has written a book about diet. “I knew that it wouldn’t sell as many copies as the first series, but it has done a lot to establish me as an author. Because I’ve written that book, I now have a regular BBC gig and have appeared in a lot of other publications.”

He has yet to settle on his next project. “I have started several books and can’t quite decide if any of them are worth seeing through to the end. There will definitely be more books, though,” he says.

andyleeks.wordpress.com

Case study six: Assassination proves more lucrative than the law

In 2014 Mark Dawson wrote more than 950,000 words – six novels and several novellas – while holding down a full-time job as a lawyer. He self-published them all and has now sold more than 450,000 units. With his monthly income from writing now running at more than ten times the salary he was receiving as a lawyer, he has recently given up going to work in favour of his publishing interests.

“I was very fortunate to have a couple of books published by a major publishing house in my late twenties,” he says, “but they disappeared from view almost immediately, were hard to find in shops and were little promoted. That experience put me off writing for quite a long time.”

However, when a colleague had some success self-publishing an eBook, Dawson was prompted to try again. His early aspirations were towards literary fiction. Now he concentrated on crafting page-turners and wrote a couple of books set in the 1940s. Getting the dialogue and

references right required a lot of research, but the response was sufficient to prompt him to concentrate his energies anew, as well as changing tack again.

Dawson's new character, John Milton, is a contemporary former special-forces assassin engaged in gritty adventures that take him all over the world. Dawson found that he was able to write 3,000 words a day, doing background research on the Internet. With the intention of building a large audience, he initially gave books away on Amazon. "I remember the day when I saw that one of my books had been downloaded 40,000 to 50,000 times and realised that I was on to something. That was enough to really push me up the bestseller charts and to make me the highest-selling work in the 'noir thriller' chart. I retained that visibility even when I put a price on the book and that was enough to drive sales."

Much of 2014's extraordinary output was written on his three-hour daily commute between Salisbury and London. Dawson says that a distraction-free long train journey was ideal for writing, but since giving up his job he has divided his time between writing more books, and developing an increasingly sophisticated approach to marketing his product.

"Amazon is by far the best platform for readers to discover authors, but they don't give me any information back about my readers, so I use other methods to build up an email list of fans." This list, which now has getting on for 25,000 names and email addresses, is at the heart of Dawson's technique. An 'advance team' of 750 readers are offered pre-publication editions for free. In return for this, many will offer final editing suggestions and some, with backgrounds in the military, security and special forces, even advise on plot details. They mainly repay Dawson, though, with enthusiastic reviews on Amazon. Then he lets his main list know that a new title is available, and when they click through

to Amazon they find over 100 positive responses to that book. He can easily sell 6,000 copies after emailing his main list about a new publication.

He answers every reader email personally, although with these running at up to 600 a day, he concedes that it is increasingly difficult. He uses a Facebook page to generate interest with free previews and cover reveals, and he uses Facebook advertising to drive both sales and mailing list sign-ups. “I might sometimes spend \$400 a day on Facebook advertising, but from that I can generate sales of at least that or more.”

Using his mailing list he is able to drive sales in a number of ways – announcements of new works, pushes on the next in the series and promotion of series that centre on other characters. “As the sales that I drive build up, Amazon’s algorithms start to notice. That is when they kick in, for example emailing people who have bought Lee Child’s latest book, suggesting one of my John Milton stories to them.”

As he has found success, Dawson has pushed his prices up – some of his books now sell for as much as £3.50 – but he is still inclined to keep them cheap. “It makes more sense to me to prioritise volume over value. The more people who read my work, the more come back to me.”

Asked what it is that makes his books so popular, Dawson refers to the many emails he gets from readers. “I often get messages from new readers saying that they started reading one of my books at 11 at night and didn’t stop until they had finished at four in the morning. I won’t ever win the Man Booker Prize, but if readers really enjoy what I write, that’s enough for me.”

Would Dawson ever consider returning to a traditional publisher? “I doubt that a regular publisher could find ways to sell more than I am at the moment and would therefore be willing to pay me what I know my titles are worth,” he says. He is more interested in traditional publishing in foreign markets, though, where he might find an even larger reader

base but he doesn't have the linguistic skills or the time to replicate his English-speaking operation.

For the moment, however, one of his series has been optioned by a major Hollywood producer, he has started offering courses for self-publishers, and he is content writing in the morning and spending his afternoons selling his work. "I explained this at an event recently and someone in the audience said you're not really a full-time author then, are you?" he says. "To an extent that is true. I am an author and I run a publishing house that only publishes my work, but as I have yet to find anyone who can sell my work as well as me, let alone any better, I am quite happy with that for the time being."

markjdawson.com

Case study seven: Self-publishing subsidises full-time writing

Novelist Helen Smith had already written four books for conventional publishing houses (*Alison Wonderland* and *The Miracle Inspector* are among her best-known works) before she discovered ePublishing. “It took a lot of hard work to get the first eBook out – more than I had imagined at the outset – but the first night my book went live, and I sold six copies, I was just so happy. Previously my books had only been published in the UK and watching them being bought in America was an amazing thrill.”

Smith was fortunate, because shortly after she self-published, an Amazon imprint picked up her work and she was subsequently offered a three-book deal with another of the Seattle-based retailer’s publishing offshoots. Two of those titles are out at the moment.

“One of the great things about ePublishing is that you can publish shorter works. I have a couple of novellas that are available and I wrote a Christmas story last year. It wouldn’t make sense for a publisher to invest

in books of that length, but I can, and sell them for very modest prices.”

Smith’s initial motivation was to make available books that had already been conventionally published, but which were no longer in print.

At first, she ‘coded’ these herself, using a piece of software to convert them into .mobi files. More recently, to enable publication on multiple platforms, she has outsourced the actual production of the books. She has paid around \$40 for conversion of a novella and then uses Draft2Digital.com to distribute her work to the various platforms.

“Don’t be under any illusions that you can produce a book entirely alone,” she says. “You do need at least one other pair of eyes to look over a manuscript before you publish.” Smith points out that a traditional publisher will almost always provide both a commissioning or development editor to advise on the narrative trajectory of a book, then there will be a copy editor who fact-checks and picks up grammar and spelling errors, and finally a proof reader who gives a manuscript a last read through.

“It is a difficult call between being sure of your own brilliance and self-delusion,” she says. “I perfectly understand why writers don’t want an editor who suggests recasting their stories in another country or reworking characters so that they are younger or older, but I still believe that it’s worth getting someone – a friend or someone you hire – to go through your text. Just make sure it is someone whose judgement you trust.”

Smith recommends looking at what similar titles in the same genre are selling for when deciding how you price your book. “If you’re hoping to get your book to number one on any sales chart, then you have to sell cheap – probably 99p a copy. Buyers, particularly in the UK, really respond to low prices.” She promotes her books on Facebook and from her Amazon author page, which has about 4,500 followers.

Smith says she hasn't made a great deal of money from self-publishing her works as eBooks, but it has allowed her to profit from works that had gone out of print and the income she receives makes a useful contribution to what she says is: "enough to do what I do full time".

helensmithbooks.com

Case study eight: Making eBook publishing a high-volume business

Writer and publisher Richard Foreman publishes eBooks on an almost industrial scale. Endeavour Press, which he runs with colleague Matthew Lynn, launched in February 2012. Non-fiction and genre fiction make up the bulk of its catalogue, which features more than 500 titles, and the company now sells over 20,000 books a month.

“We try to publish at least eight books a week and are as interested in republishing older works as we are in new material,” says Foreman. From the outset editing, and cover design have been outsourced, allowing them to ramp up production as opportunities arose with minimal risk.

Endeavour uses the KDP toolkit, just as any self-publisher does, but Foreman describes his company’s key areas of expertise as the technical knowledge needed to create the books and the search engine optimisation experience that ensures its products find a wide audience.

“There is a global market for eBooks – only around a third of our sales are in the UK,” he says.

The venture started as a part-time business, but both Foreman and Lynn now work for Endeavour full time and employ several assistants. Among their big sellers have been Foreman’s own *Augustus: Son Of Caesar*, which sold 12,000 copies, and *Arthur Britannicus*, part of a historical fiction series by Paul Bannister. They have had good successes with essays and are always on the lookout for journalists with pre-existing reputations and back catalogues to which they own the rights. They encourage speculative submissions and offer authors 25% of net price of sales (the standard trade royalty is 10% of net price).

Foreman believes that eBook publishing has created new interest in shorter works. “Lots of writers, like Ian Fleming, PG Woodhouse and Agatha Christie, wrote books of 50,000 to 70,000 words. Standard contracts in traditional publishing these days tend to be for 100,000 to 150,000 words, but modern reader preferences seem to be returning to short and concise works,” he says.

Pricing is in line with the cup-of-coffee philosophy, with shorter titles at £1.99 and longer ones at £2.99. Most of their marketing is channelled through Twitter and, although Endeavour does sell direct from its own website, most sales come through Amazon. “We have tried other formats, but Amazon/Kindle constitutes 90% of the market, so that is where we concentrate our efforts,” says Foreman.

Although using the same tools that are available to any self-publisher, Endeavour has become a publishing house much like any other, save that eBooks are its prime focus. Foreman claims that his company understands the algorithms that propel sales on Amazon in a way that gives them a unique ability to generate sales. The company makes around £1 from every book it sells and on this basis Foreman says that he hopes one day to overtake Penguin as a volume bookseller.

Whether he manages this remains to be seen, but however he fares in the long term, it won't be ambition that holds him back.

endeavourpress.com

Case study nine: Press to activate - prolific author turns publisher

Having written books on everything from Jane Fonda to The Who, the Arab/Israeli conflict to data warehousing and much else beside, Gary Herman felt that he had the experience to launch a dedicated eBook publishing house. “There are a lot of good books out there that are not getting published and a lot of self-published books that fail to meet professional standards”, he says. “Zois books intends to bridge that gap.”

The Manchester-based veteran already has two books on his list – a memoir and a volume of angling stories, and aims for this to rise to six in the coming months. He is offering the full services of a traditional publisher – manuscript development, editing, cover design, eBook creation and marketing support – in return for a 50:50 royalties split and the author retaining all rights in their work.

“In the past couple of years I have done a lot of consultancy for a small publisher that wanted to transfer its catalogue to eBooks. That, and

my background as an author and editor, has given me a lot of experience in getting professional books out there, in all eBook formats, as well as giving them the best chance in the market place”.

Herman’s personal experience of ePublishing also provides a useful example of the way in which the right product at the right time can bring unexpected success. After visiting Pompeii and Herculaneum he wrote up a 3,000-word piece in which he mixed fact with fiction. He was fortunate to launch it as an eBook shortly before the British Museum’s 2013 Pompeii exhibition. The resulting interest generated enough sales to make his effort worthwhile and occasional royalty cheques are still dropping though his letterbox.

zoisbooks.com

Case study ten: Around-Britain trek to a career change

Setting off from Land's End to walk and cycle the length of Britain, penniless and wearing just a pair of Union Jack boxer shorts, might seem like an excellent starting point for a humorous travelogue. Alas, HarperCollins was not persuaded. George Mahood's manuscript about his travels with only a flag to hide his pole won him an agent and the enthusiastic endorsement of one of the publisher's more lowly editors, but sadly failed to make it into print.

A couple of years passed and his words gathered dust until Mahood noticed that attitudes to self-publishing were undergoing a sea-change. "The stigma seemed to be lifting and I could see that people were selling serious numbers of books through Amazon."

That was May 2012. At the time Mahood was working as a wedding photographer and decided that he had nothing to lose by self-publishing. For the first few months he sold a trickle of copies of *Free Country*, his

account of his resourceless walk, to family and friends. One of the two Amazon categories that he chose was ‘cycling’, where sales volumes were low, so even the handful of sales he was making gave him a bit of a showing.

“Then came the Tour De France and suddenly cycling book sales took off – and that gave a massive new impetus to my sales. The Olympics that followed carried that trend on. The timing was no more than luck, but it worked fantastically.”

With sales now sufficient for Mahood to take his publishing venture more seriously, he started to experiment with slightly more sophisticated marketing. “You can change your Amazon category as often as you want. With *Free Country* I moved it between ‘cycling’, ‘humour’, ‘travelogue’ and ‘memoir’. That meant it was always being presented to new audiences.”

In the meantime he wrote two further books – *Life’s A Beach* and *Every Day’s A Holiday* – and tried giving his first title away. During a four-day promotion 13,000 copies were downloaded for free, which led to an immediate spike in sales of his other books. He has also run promotions on BookBub, the email newsletter service that alerts readers to free or discounted eBook offers.

Mahood doesn’t hire in help to produce his books, although says that if he ran out of cover ideas that is the one area where money would be well spent. He also confesses to having only ascended the lower slopes of book marketing. “I have been slow at getting a list of readers together and have not yet communicated with the owners of the 500 or so email addresses that I have collected, and while I do keep up on social media, I am not sure that it has yet generated new readers for me.”

Quite how many books he has sold is hard to say, not least because Kindle Unlimited and Kindle Prime pay him for the precise number of pages that borrowers read. However, his best seller, *Free Country*, has sold

somewhere between 50,000 and 100,000 copies. “In a good month, particularly if I have done a promotion on BookBub, I might make as much as £5,000 from book sales. There are slower months, but it is now enough for me to give up other work and concentrate on writing full time.” With the youngest of his three children now at school every day, he promises that the two new books he has in the pipeline will soon be finished.

georgemahood.com

Resources

Books

Supercharge Your Kindle Sales, Nick Stephenson

Stephenson, a British author, explains in detail how to analyse Amazon data and tailor your own book descriptions to maximise sales. Easy to understand and honest, he also reviews the tools that are available to help with this process, and to build and service mailing lists. Short and useful.

How I Sold 1 Million eBooks In Five Months, John Locke

Locke writes fiction in several related genres with great success. His tone sounds slightly booming to British ears and he devotes considerable space to building up to each point. However, his success at reader

engagement is hard to ignore and his technique is proven and well explained here.

Secrets to eBook Publishing, Mark Cocker

Cocker is the founder and CEO of Smashwords. A cynical view of this book would be that it is nothing more than a lengthy advertisement for this platform. Nevertheless, it is full of sound advice and so long as you keep in mind the author's perspective, a worthwhile survey.

Kindle Book Promotion, Anthony Heaven

Badly written, poorly edited and scarcely proof-read – evidence that eBook self publishing is not an unalloyed good thing.

Write, Publish, Repeat, Sean Platt, Johnny B Truant and David Wright

US writers who have systematised ways to write more stories in less time and turn fiction into serials share their technique.

Building Your Book For Kindle, Kindle Direct Publishing

A useful guide to the mechanics of using KDP – notable for its apt brevity.

Audio

Rocking Self Publishing

Made in Britain by Simon Whistler. Most editions feature long-form interviews with successful self-publishers. There are over 100 episodes available on the archive. Interesting, well-made and full of inspiration even if his chats can occasionally feel unstructured – rockingselfpublishing.com

Self Publishing Podcast

Made in the US by Sean Platt, Johnny B Truant and David Wright. Their weekly edition contains quite a lot of general joshing, which can be wearing. For writers of fiction, their focus on story craft is stimulating and helpful. They distilled much of this into *StoryShop*, a taut, nine-part series on the elements of fiction – sterlingandstone.net

Write 2 B Read

The podcast of Armenian Ani Alexander. Most shows feature conversations with successful authors, many of them self-published. The focus is on how to make a success of self-publishing – anialexander.com

Writer 2.0

AC Fuller's podcast, largely about writing and self-publishing. Fuller is an American novelist and university teacher. His podcast is among the more professional – acfuller.com

Blogs

Indie publishing is an increasingly populated space on the web. A culture of sharing information and working co-operatively thrives among many practitioners, as a result of which there are dozens and dozens of websites and blogs on the subject. Indeed, so plentiful are the websites filled with advice for would-be self publishers that spending too long taking advice and too little actually writing is a real risk. Notwithstanding that, a few of the most useful sites are listed below. Several sell eBooks of advice as well.

Authorearnings.com

Gritty information repository to help authors make better decisions.

jakornrath.com

Best-selling self-publishing author Joe Kornrath shares some of the wisdom that has helped him to sell over three million books.

Thecreativepenn.com

As well as writing very successful thrillers, Joanna Penn has also written widely about indie publishing.

Savvy book marketer

Dana Lynn Smith shares nearly 20 years of book marketing experience – bookmarketingmaven.typepad.com

Useful software

Scrivener

A word processing and text organisation software that is designed around the needs of those writing books and is widely favoured by authors. British-made and free to trial. The full version costs \$45 – literitureandlatte.com.

Calibre

Free-to-download software that converts word processor files and others into a multitude of eBook formats. Non-essential if you are planning simply to upload your file to one of the major platforms, but a useful resource for experimenting with formats and making eBooks that you might get from elsewhere. Useable on multiple devices – calibre-ebook.com.

KDSpy

Ingenious software that reverse-engineers the Amazon marketplace so that you can more easily discover niches that can be profitably tapped. Currently on sale for \$47 – kdspy.com.

Services

Bookbub

An eBook discovery service for readers that regularly emails recommendations to millions of subscribers. Bookbub selects some books to profile, others are publicised as paid promotions. Some authors have used it with enormous success to build their audiences – bookbub.com.

Mailchimp

Many marketers' default provider for email sales campaigns – mailchimp.com.

Audiobooks

Turning a book into an audiobook broadens your market and helps push your title up the ratings on sites such as Amazon. However, making audiobooks is not cheap. As a rule of thumb, a 90,000-word book will make a ten-hour audiobook, which will cost roughly £130 a hour to create. Audiobook Creation Exchange (ACX – another Amazon owned company) puts narrators, producers and authors together. Most agree a royalties split for the resulting audiobooks, rather than either party having to risk money up front. The general terms of publishing via ACX are significantly more involved than those for eBook publishing, which some authors find off putting.

There are alternatives. If you have the expertise or resources to create your own audio book, they can be sold through sites such as CDBaby – cdbaby.com. Audiobooks are a fast-developing market, though, and new providers are likely to emerge in the near future.

More complex books

The vast majority of eBooks published to date have minimal formatting. This allows the eReader or app to flow the pages depending on the viewing preferences of the reader. Increasing attention is now being devoted to simple means by which more involved books can be produced. Adobe's InDesign has features that allow text to be formatted into eBooks with set page designs and the same is also true of Apple's iBooks software. Not to be outdone, Amazon/Kindle has recently launched discrete services for the production of children's books (Kindle Kids' Book Creator) and textbooks (Kindle Textbook Creator – currently in beta).

Discussion forums

All the main self-publishing platforms run their own forums for ideas sharing and self help. They are invaluable and should serve as a first port of call for advice.

There are dozens of more niche forums – Google 'self-publishing forums' to find more to consult than there are hours in the day.

Writing-community.writersworkshop.co.uk is UK-based. Writewords.org.uk is a well-liked subscription-based forum.

About the author

Tim Dawson is a London-based writer and journalist. For 20 years he wrote weekly for *The Sunday Times*, and was a section editor for that paper for a decade. He has written for most British newspapers and news magazines, as well as having been a regular contributor to the US magazine *People Weekly*. He edits the websites newmodeljournalism.com and cycling-books.com and is co-editor of the *Bicycle Reader*.

He co-authored *Help Yourself – Ways To Make Internet Journalism Pay* and provides training related to emerging publishing practices.

A long-time National Union Of Journalists activist, he is currently the union's vice president.

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