

Self-Publishing network

Thursday 10 September 2026



Led by Rachel Bonner from the Self-Publishing network steering group

In today's session we considered the question of out-sourcing – when to outsource, and when to learn new skills. In our first breakout session we thought generally about

- In general terms, not thinking of specific tasks, what should we outsource and what should we learn?
- Which pre-publication tasks do you think we should outsource, and which should we learn?
- If you have outsourced tasks, what, where, and were you pleased?
- If you have learnt new skills, what, and where did you learn them?

Feedback from groups:

Formatting is something that you might outsource but could do using Atticus, or Vellum, or several other available packages to do it yourself. Editing is good to outsource, although cost is a factor. You can find editors through various channels including Reedsy, Society of Authors members, Wishing Sheet, and personal contacts. There's also the [Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading \(CIEP\)](#).

Outsource cover design, but others have used friends, pre-made covers, 99designs, Miblar.

Talked a lot about illustrations and graphic arts – needed to outsource this within the text of their work. Cover art – big issue. Need to outsource! Others made their own covers. Social media and pre-publication marketing. Launch campaign too – successful subscriber base.

Outsourced illustrations – different places, discussed the legalities checking copyrights etc before publication. Outsourcing editing – it's not vital, as it can be done to a very high standard yourself.

Outsourcing to AI – for research purposes, perhaps.

Outsourced editing to husbands! One was an illustrator – how this was done. One had a bad experience with one of her publishers. Another used Amazon to do everything. Using students at art school to supply illustrations.

Distribution – this can be difficult to accomplish. Some did lots of driving to book fairs – struggled to get into bookshops. Ebooks can be easier to distribute!

Covers, editing, pros and cons of trying to give your book a really good edit – really squeeze it dry yourself, then it might be cheaper to get it edited professionally.

Taking into account production costs for paperbacks, printing costs, number of pages makes a big difference to profit.

Helpful to get author friends writing in a similar genre to be beta readers for you and help to improve your work at an early stage.

Key learning point

Outsource where you don't have the skills, art and design and editing are likely to be the main ones.

In our second breakout session, we talked more specifically and discussed what elements we have outsourced and how that worked.

- What elements of marketing and advertising do you think you could outsource?
- If you did outsource, was it financially viable, how did you find someone to outsource to?
- What skills would you need to learn to handle marketing and advertising yourself?
- Where do you learn these and who do you recommend?
- What is your one best marketing and advertising tip for others, whether you have learnt new skills or outsourced them?

Feedback from groups:

Advertising – learning about FB and Amazon and how they can be good but don't necessarily make your money back.

Bookbub – lots of copies distributed “featured deal”, didn't make a loss. This works very well for series. Advertising seems not to be financially viable unless you have a series. Selling in person – some enjoy it and some don't. This can be worthwhile.

Good places to learn about advertising – how to keep your skills up to date too – include David Gaughran, Nicolas Erik, Matthew Holmes.

Can use a friend who has marketing skills to support you – behind every successful self published writer there's a supportive partner who does the technical stuff, the accounts, the marketing, the website, experience in publishing, journalism.

Reviews – you could put a note in hand sold books, or on your website for reviews.

Instagram reels on books. You can write about your own work if its featured on Good Reads. BookTok and Bookstagram.

Pay someone to do an online book blog tour.

Substack where you can either do it free or you can charge people. Didn't want to charge people – as you're beholden to them - need to produce content regularly. Similar to Patreon.

On social media use a channel you use yourself, if your readers are also there.

Libraries – how supportive, especially if the book has local themes. Get it in there and it helps with marketing and sales. Meet the author panel, volunteering at the library.

Festivals and events – local opportunities open up if the book is locally focussed. Going along to local events.

Podcast – main way to market book.

Newsletter, local press, write articles, Facebook groups – join lots of the kind that allow you to promote your work. Get started on your marketing even before your book is out.

Once you start advertising your book you may be approached by people who say they will help you build your profile – very hard to make your money back. And beware scammers!

Know your audience – who do you want to reach? Blurb from other authors can be helpful. Reciprocal blurbs from authors – some are well established – that can be used on Amazon, on the back of the next book. Might work better within genres.

Ways to promote your work. Book launch. Signings. Better not to go to mainstream bookshops, try general stores, backpacking with books and selling them around. Podcast with an interview. Leave books around in public places – with QR codes to connect with readers.

What about independent bookshops? Might be a good place to try for independent authors. Local coffee shop, perhaps, art gallery shop, gift shop, think about if you're writing in a niche genre.

What would be your one marketing and advertising tip?

- Pick one skill and learn it well.
- Unlikely to make money – only spend what you can afford.
- Be yourself, be authentic – this will come across when you're communicating with your readers.
- Ignore advertising; concentrate on marketing. Everyone can do marketing, but advertising is harder. Social media, blogs, write a marketing plan – a list of things you need to do, frequency, where, what.
- Make it easy for people to sell your books locally – provide a Perspex stand to put your books in; talk to the staff and come to a financial arrangement.
- Create silly posts on Instagram – use music instead of your voice.
- Playlists on Spotify to accompany the novels.
- Talk at a WI – writing journey, local ish, champions of writers.
- Big book shops won't talk to you. Independent bookshops will be delighted that you're visiting them! Offer a discount, sale or return. (Might be able to do an event!)
- Newsletter – a resource for every stage of publishing. The subscribers can become your Beta readers, help spread the word about your work, and because you own the list you don't have to worry about a platform changing things. Just moved from a blog to Substack. Consistent output helps build engagement.
- Submit your book for awards. Can get great reviews and awards from organizations like BookLife and IndieReader [Soa advising that you carefully read the terms and conditions to make sure you're happy that they're not grabbing all your rights!]
- Produce bookmarks and hand them out to people who are reading when you're out and about!

Details of this group, including notes from previous two meetings, and a link to book for the next one: <https://societyofauthors.org/groups/self-publishers-network/>

I put together a load of resources that I thought you might find helpful to self-publishing members here: <https://societyofauthors.org/groups/self-publishers-network/self-publishing-resources/> If you think of anything else, please let me know, especially if they're already elsewhere on our website and I can just add them! Or a particularly useful article in The Author

If you're not sure if you're on the mailing list for this group (although you're here, so it's likely) please contact membership@societyofauthors.org to be added to the list.

Resources:

Recommendation for a self-publishing service: PublishNation.com

SoA event on substack: <https://societyofauthors.org/event/professional-development-substack-for-beginners/>

SoA Advice on scams: <https://societyofauthors.org/2026/08/18/authors-beware-scam-alert/>

@gillianmauthor has a great Instagram account where she doesn't gloss over the issues she faces – she is traditionally published, but doesn't pretend everything is wonderful.