

Creating and Formatting e-Books

Lesson 2

Decisions to Make

When I published my first e-book, I wrote it, had it professionally edited, hired a graphic artist for the cover, and prepared the files. I did everything I thought I needed to be ready to upload my e-book. Then I started the process. I had to stop a number of times to complete a task I hadn't thought about or mistakenly thought would be easy.

When the book is completed, there is excitement to hit the publish button. In this excitement, it's possible to make mistakes that can slow down the process. While an e-book is being written and edited, some steps can be taken and decisions can be made. If these decisions are delayed until the time of publication, then hasty and sometimes unchangeable decisions are made. That's not to mention it can stop the flow of publication.

Some of these chores can be completed while the manuscript is being edited.

Book Information

Title

The title of any book is often the content introduction to the reader. A writer should take time to research and think about the book's name. The title is a description, a marketing tool, and the personality of a book. Many of us have a title in mind when we start writing our books. That may or may not be the final one. Before, during, and after writing, is a good time to test title ideas and ask for suggestions.

Descriptions

A description of a book can be equated to a thesis statement. Few writers begin without an idea what the book is about. The description should be honed during the writing process. Working on the description during dry writing times may spark the creative process. At least two descriptions, long and short, are needed for effective marketing. A Twitter-sized description may be considered as well.

Categories

Every distribution channel asks for what category/genre the book should be placed in. Think of this as the Dewey Decimal number for the online bookstore. The categories may be broad (Christian, marriage, business) with more detailed sub-categories (Baptist, counseling, entrepreneurship).

Keywords

We often think of keywords as applying to web content. Because an e-book is primarily sold on the internet, keywords are not only used by the e-bookstore but also will help readers find it in an online search. Keywords are the terms readers are

most likely to use when looking for a specific topic. Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) allows up to seven keywords. (Hint: A keyword can be more than one word, as in “e-book formatting.”)

Price

It’s not too early to begin researching the price for the e-book. Research should include comparisons with similar length and topic of the book. We will have a more in-depth discussion of pricing in a later lesson.

Cover

It’s beyond the scope of this class to discuss cover creation. But the cover needs careful consideration. If the author isn’t also a graphic artist, time will be needed to find one. The cover is one of the most important marketing tools. We can work on the final cover with the cover designer while the manuscript is being edited.

Bio, Endorsements, and Reviews

Bio

A bio is a biography of the author. Not a book-length description of lives. It is information about the author, which tells the reader the author is qualified to write the book. It often includes a fun fact or two. If a bio hasn’t been written, now is the time to do so. Like the book description, a long and short bio will be needed. No matter the distribution outlet used for publication and marketing there is a place for the author’s bio. Readers like to get to know the author. A long bio at the end of the book and on the profile page helps build that relationship.

Review and Endorsements

After an initial copyedit, we can start seeking reviews and endorsements. Some experienced authors send the unedited manuscript to potential endorsers so the endorsement can be ready when the manuscript is ready to publish.

Often an Advanced Review Copy (ARC), in PDF file format, is sent to reviewers and endorsers while the book is in the final edit and design phase. Start now to begin making a list and looking for people who will write an endorsement and/or review.

Set up Accounts

Setting up publishing, marketing, and social media accounts may seem like something to be done after the book is completed, edited, and ready for publication, but sooner is better. When planning to distribute to each online bookstore, it will take more time than most of us think it will. Each distribution company has a different set of requirements. The early set-up allows time to learn the system.

Other accounts that may be needed for publishing are the Library of Congress, Bowkers, copyright, plus Goodreads and other reader social networks. Marketing begins long before the book is published. This is true whether a print book, e-book, traditionally published, or indie published. Now is the time to start

talking about the writing project in e-newsletters and on social media. A later lesson will have information about marketing.

Sharing

It's possible to add security and Digital Rights Management (DRM) to an e-book that limits reproduction of the book. However, most of these schemes also limit lending and sharing.

We need to give thought to whether to allow sharing of the book. Think about that a minute—sharing an e-book is different than a print book. While it's not possible to keep a print book while loaning it or giving it to a friend, it is with an e-book.

Before we go further, I think it would be good to have a discussion of plagiarism, copyright infringement, and piracy.

Plagiarism Checker (www.plagiarismchecker.com/) states the following distinctions:

Plagiarism is using someone else's work without giving proper credit - a failure to cite adequately.

Copyright infringement is using someone else's creative work, which can include a song, a video, a movie clip, a piece of visual art, a photograph, and other creative works, without authorization or compensation, if compensation is appropriate. (www.plagiarismchecker.com/plagiarism-vs-copyright.php)

Piracy is defined by the [International Publishers Association](#) as the unauthorized use of copyrighted material. It is often in the form of selling without the publishers or author receiving compensation or given away the material without permission.

Mark Coker, founder of Smashwords, says this: "DRM is counterproductive. If you don't trust your readers to honor your copyright, you'll reach fewer paid readers."

Thomas Umstattd, CEO of Castle Media Group, started quite a discussion on his blog, Author Media, with this post "[Authors: Piracy is Not Your Enemy.](#)"

Before we end this section, I want to mention the [Creative Commons License](#). If you don't know what that is, Umstattd has a clear explanation on his blog, [How Creative Commons Can Help Your Book Spread Like Crazy](#).

Exclusivity

Apple and Amazon have two products that can make them the exclusive distributor. As I read the distribution statements with these products, it means the writer can't sell the book on their own website.

Apple now has iBooks Author, a free app to build interactive books. (This app requires a Mac computer using OS 10.7 or later.) If you create a book using this app and sell it in iBook format, it must be sold in the iBookstore. Apple does allow provisions for free distribution and distribution in other formats, such as EPUB. (<https://www.apple.com/ibooks-author/>)

Amazon offers KDP Select. This option makes a book available for the Kindle Lending Library offered to Amazon Prime members, and it allows a book to be offered free for five days during the 90-day contract period. However, the book may not be offered in any other format anywhere during the contract period, including our own websites. (<https://kdp.amazon.com/self-publishing/KDPSelect>)

These are the two more popular e-book sellers. So there may be other distribution systems that have exclusivity clauses in their contracts.

(Disclaimer: I'm not a lawyer. While I try to check legal matters with attorneys and legal websites, I'm not offering legal advice. If you have further legal questions, please contact a literary attorney.)

Assignment:

- Set up an account on Kindle Direct Publishing, www.kdp.com.
Let me know if you have any questions or comments about the process. The instructions are below. (This account will be used in future lessons.)
- Set up a new social media account, such as [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Pinterest](#).
- What are some other social media sites a writer might want to join?
- What are your thoughts about sharing an e-book? Why or why not? If so, how?

Set Up a Kindle Direct Publishing Account

Setting up a KDP account is not difficult; it's a matter of answering questions.

- Go to kdp.amazon.com. Sign-in using your Amazon account. If you don't have an Amazon account (and what writer doesn't?), create one. Some writers/editors want to create another Amazon account for KDP to keep business separated from personal. I used my personal account so I won't have to keep track of which account I'm logged into.
- Once having signed into your account, there will be a page for publisher information, tax details, and royalty payments. (When I tested for this class, I was taken to the page to begin the upload process. It had a notice in the upper right corner to complete the publisher information.)
- *Publisher Details* – You may choose to select a company name or use your own name. It's beyond the scope of this class to discuss legal or tax information about setting up a publishing imprint and a company.
- *Tax Details* – This is self-explanatory.
- *Royalty Payments* – The first item is where royalty payments will be sent. It isn't necessary to put in the information for direct deposit. Amazon will send a check, but it will take longer to get paid.

This is also the section to set up where the Kindle book will be sold. There are options for English-speaking countries only as well as a variety of other countries. I have my books sold in all the available countries and do sell to Germany, Japan, and India

- After all the information is completed, click Save in the bottom right corner.