

Self Publishing

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This is written as a guide for novice writers who would like to explore self publishing. I am not an expert. I'm learning more all the time. However, I have done it, so I would like to share what I know. Writing is an important expressive outlet for me. I hope this brief overview helps you enjoy writing and sharing your writing with others.

This is my own, idiosyncratic guide to self publishing. I make no claims of knowing everything, but I have done it and made money doing it. What I've done here is create a general guide to getting started. I left out a lot of excruciating details. They are boring, and they can change. This is a revision to my original guide, and even some of the big information has changed. My goal is to point you in the right direction and reassure you that if you want to publish, you can.

1. Write Something Worth Reading

The first step in self publishing is to write something. Seriously. If you don't write it, you can't publish it. Undecided what to write? I'm not going to spend a long time with this, but ask yourself where your passion lies. You need something that will push you forward when things bog down. If you don't complete the work, you can't publish it.

So, finish it!

There are lots of writing guides out there about the various techniques useful for different types of writing. I can't improve on what's out there, but I will tell you a few things I've had to learn by misadventure.

Essays: If you are writing an essay, jot a note to yourself about the point that you want to make. From time to time, reread the note to make sure you are still headed for that destination. If you get interrupted before you finish, you'll be able to remember the point you wanted to make when you started.

Non-fiction: If you are doing research, organize the information you find as you go. A searchable database takes time to set up, but it can save time once you are actually writing. Also be sure to keep a record of the source of each fact that you gather.

Fiction: If you are writing a novel on an irregular, part-time basis, make an outline, write yourself notes, draw maps, etc. Document where the plot and characters are heading. I am a perfect (bad) example of why you need to do this. My back files are chock full of story starts with no endings. At two to twenty pages each, I laid them aside at the time and now have forgotten what was supposed to happen next. Most of them are intriguing, obviously a good idea, but I've lost the thread. Maybe someday I will work a piece or two into something, somewhere. For now, they are nothing but monuments to wasted work—time consuming dead ends.

2. Make It Worth Reading

Once you finish, the real, uh, fun begins. Edit, revise, evaluate—rinse and repeat. My draft copies are not pretty. I won't bore you with my flaws. The important thing is to fix your own. Let your work cool off a few weeks before you go back through it. Believe me, you will find problems. I am always appalled by some of the bonehead errors I find. The first draft is not your finished product. It takes work to turn your raw text into something a reader cannot only understand but enjoy.

Sadly text editing is not enough. Have you told the story coherently? Do your characters come to life and do they have the personalities you want them to have? While you may be able to catch some problems, the story and characters are all in your head—but are they on the page? You have to have a fresh set of eyes give your work a test read and give you feedback. Find someone who reads your genre, and see how they like it. Some people call this a beta reader. Many authors are willing to trade reads—I'll critique yours if you critique mine.

Note: If you are doing an appraisal of someone else's writing, it's not cheating if you jot down things you like about the author's writing. You are not going to copy of course, but keep your eyes open for the way they introduce characters, describe characters, set a scene, and other technical things they do well (or at least, better than you). And when it's time to make comments about the author's writing, don't be shy about sharing things you *like* as well as any flaws you saw. Nothing makes criticism more palatable than positive comments.

If you are going to sell your work to the public, put your ego in your back pocket. You have to listen objectively to what other people say about your work and try to fix any problems. One struggle I have is figuring out exactly where the trouble lies. Maybe I get feedback that my hero should not get so upset just because someone called him a runt. Maybe he shouldn't, but it could also mean I haven't developed the hero's character or background enough to show why this actually is an appropriate response. I know the entire story, but did I write it so the reader understands it as well as I do?

Is there a group of writers in your area who meet to talk about writing? These groups are usually informal gatherings of people who like to meet to share and talk about their writings. While you might not get answers to large questions about your work, you can learn if a particular scene or character works.

Another choice might be websites like WattPad.com, a free site where readers and writers can interact. I have put draft copies of several works on the site. You get to see statistics on how many people read your works, how many like it, and readers can make comments on what you have written. Sites like this can give you feedback, but you get you pay for. There are also cases where work is illegally copied, so I only put up parts of a work I plan to sell.

Before you go further down the road toward self publishing, ask yourself a key question: Is your work something readers will respond to? Learn something from interacting with others about what you have written. Writing itself is fun. Self publishing, while it can be rewarding, is a lot of work. And, you have to spend time you could have been writing. You have to make a decision. Will people pay enough for you to invest more of your time and money into the project? Your

first book can be a trial balloon to see which way the wind is blowing.

3. Preparing to Publish

Readers expect clear, polished writing—especially if they pay money for a book. Taking a scenic drive along a beautiful coastal highway is great. If you get lost, however, it spoils the trip. If the car has dirty windows, it’s irritating. Reading a story with plot holes, poor character development, misspellings, grammatical errors, poor sentence structure, and all those other unforgivable sins is irritating in much the same way. No matter how charming the story, technically poor, unpolished writing keeps the reader from seeing the delightful landscape you are trying to create.

There are two types of editing, developmental and copy editing.

Developmental editing focuses on the story, the characters, the setting, etc. Are the characters consistent? Believable? Are there holes in the plot? Does the timeline hold together? Your editor may also give you ideas that will give your work more punch.

Can’t a beta reader do this—and for free? Yes, but most often a beta reader will only tell you that the fight with the space pirates is hard to follow, or that the Percy is too good to be true. Good observations, but it will take work to figure out what the problem is and how to fix it. A developmental editor should be prescriptive: In the space battle, be sure that in each of the short scenes you identify the point-of-view character in the first sentence after the scene change. Let Percy make a mistake when he first meets Sue so you can show how he recovers to win her heart.

A good developmental edit will make your story hang together and be as good as it can be. My first draft main characters tend to be feckless wimps. Because I am a feckless wimp myself, I have a hard time recognizing this. A few good comments by a developmental editor will make it obvious—even to me.

When you get the developmental edit back, you will have things to fix. After you address the problems, let the story rest a bit then reevaluate. Many editors will reread a scene where you’ve had to make major changes to make sure the revised scene works. A developmental editor will make sure you’ve told the story in comprehensible way. Is the plot clear? Will readers understand the characters actions and their motivations? Before you worry too much about gooder grammar, be sure the story works.

Copy editing deals with the nitty-gritty, down-and-dirty details of spelling, grammar, and punctuation. These are all the nit-picky, fine points that English teachers used to mark on your school papers. Trivial technicalities? Consider how one lowly comma changes the meaning of these two sentences:

“Let’s eat, Grandpa.”

“Let’s eat Grandpa.”

You want to be sure what you have written says what you mean it to say. Readers notice. The more you write, the better you learn the rules. Even so, you need a fresh pair of eyes (or two) to make sure your writing is clear and correct.

If editing and revisions are necessary, when do you send it off for editing? How many times

do you need to go through your story before you send it off? The guideline I use is that a work is ready for editing when I'm no longer making significant changes. So what are significant changes? If I change the story by adding description, clarifying motives, fleshing out a character, or rewrite a fight scene, I go back through the whole thing again to make sure the changes work. When I get down to debating with myself over whether the character should wear a red or a blue coat to the party, if the correct word is *that* or *which*, or fiddly changes in dialog, it's time to send it off for review by another set of eyes.

I have trouble seeing my own mistakes. I know what the text is supposed to say, so as I proofread, I see what should be there—not what is actually on the page. Sigh. The longer you lay a story aside, the easier it is to see the flaws, but even that is not infallible. Recently I've experimented with having the computer read the text to me. I write with a Mac laptop, and the text-to-speech function is part of the accessibility controls. I would assume other computers can be made to do this one way or another. I turn on the function, select the text, and with a keystroke, my computer will read to me. I listen to the words as I follow the text with my eyes. Since the computer reads *only* what is there, I catch a fair number errors that would slide by my eyes.

Having the computer read to you is quirky. It doesn't use context. If a word has several different pronunciations, the computer reads the word only one way. Does your character have a wound that is bleeding now that he has wound up the case? The computer will pronounce the word "wound" the way it sees fit—and it always seems to use the wrong one. Don't even ask about what it does to the esoteric names I use in my fantasy novels. It's disconcerting, but the process can help you.

However, unless you want to spend a lifetime revising your work, find an editor. There are people who might volunteer to help you with this, but you tend to get what you pay for. A writing buddy may be willing to trade edits. I'm FaceBook friends with several retired English teachers, and they've answered some of my questions. Maybe you have a friend who will help for a six-pack and a couple packs of beef jerky.

Once you have a polished work, this is the point where you could submit your work for publication. Do you have confidence in your work? Will you ever know unless you try? If a publisher accepts, they will take care of the final editing and polishing expenses . . .

But this is a guide for self publishing. I think the best way to insure you produce a polished final product is to pay for an editor. When others pay you for your writing, you are a professional. Therefore, you must *be* professional. Professional editing costs money, and you have to edit *before* you put your work up for sale. Paying for an editor is an investment for a self publisher. You put money on the table, and spin the roulette wheel.

Can you afford to take the chance? Here is where feedback from beta readers can help. Were they encouraging? If you've made serious changes since the last read, think about getting more responses.

Consider how much market there is for what you have written. Do a little research. While tales of romance are popular and many people read stories about zombies, a storyline about a

romance between two zombies might have limited sales potential. How much you think you could make from sales should determine how much you are willing to pay for editing. You are the person who has to make the call. It's your money.

I have used professional editors for all my works, and I've been mostly pleased with the results. Like all things, some editors are better than others. I've found several editors I enjoy working with, and I've learned a lot from their comments on my writing. I like to think of a good edit experience as if I was taking a college level writing class. Yes, I pay for it, but I learn a lot. Plus, I get a finished product that can make me money.

4. Publishing an eBook

So, how do you do it? Writing and revising is one thing (two things, actually), but self publishing your own work is something all together different. Still, if you do your writing on a computer, you most likely know enough about text formatting and file types to work your way through to a finished product. Self publishing is detail-oriented, structured work—but so is writing!

I have used the following services:

Kindle ebooks (Amazon): <https://kdp.amazon.com>

SmashWords ebooks: <https://www.smashwords.com>

Lulu (ebooks or print editions): <https://www.lulu.com>

They are all different, yet similar in many ways. My comments relate most directly to Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing. The other services require similar types of setup and preparation of materials. Note that while the idea is the same for each of them, all the details (and there are lots of details) are different.

At the publisher's web site, open the gateway by creating your account by entering your personal information including the details necessary for the company to send you a report for your taxes. Taxes? Yes, you are planning to to sell your books, aren't you? That means you will have taxable income. By the way, keep track of what you pay your editor and other writing related expenses. The dollars you spend could be a tax deductible business expense.

Now it's time to set up your book. The Kindle Direct Publishing site has instructions for each step. If you are not sure what they are asking you to enter, hover over the [What's this?] button in the instructions. Some of the instructions have links to more detailed information. When all else fails, there is a [Contact us] link to get your questions answered directly. Experience has taught me there's nothing like doing something wrong a few times to help you figure out how to do it right. The site will show you a preview of your final book so you can check your work before you release it. Remember, there are no points taken off if you ask for help.

So to start your publishing career, put in your title where it says [Book name]. There you go. You're on your way. There are more entries, some required, some optional. If you are writing a series of books like my *Chronicles of the Dragon-Bound*, you can link the series' books together so readers can find them. The publisher? Hey, that's you!

You'll need to prepare a blurb, a punchy synopsis that describes your book. This is the advertising copy that will readers see. Your blurb should help sell your book. There are many

tutorials on the web as well as printed sources and examples help you. Check the dust jackets and covers of books you already own for ideas. A good blurb will get potential readers excited about your book—think of a movie trailer. It should be a short, pithy portrait of your book that says, “Buy me!” without saying “Buy me!”

What about the ISBN, an International Standard Book Number? For an ebook on Amazon, it’s optional. They have their own free identifier system, and you won’t need an ISBN. Other publishers will likely require one. To get an ISBN go to Bowker at: <http://www.bowker.com>. They sell them there. Yes, another expense.

Public domain? If you are publishing something you have written, it is not a public domain work—unless you want it to be. Something in the public domain can be copied and reproduced by anyone—free. If you want to sell your books for money, be sure to keep the intellectual property rights. Your work is copyrighted if you say it is—put a statement in the front matter of your book. For more legal protection you can officially register your copyright at <http://www.copyright.gov/eco/>.

Get a cover. Your book, even if it’s an ebook, needs a cover. The old saying: never judge a book by its cover? Not true! If the shopper doesn’t already know your work, the cover and the blurb will sell the book. A good cover can entice a potential reader to read your blurb. Then your blurb will make them want to read more.

There are people who will design a cover for you—for a price. Creating an attractive and appropriate cover is not easy. Established professional designers may charge a lot for their services. However, there are many aspiring designers who will work for less. Typically they advertise on the web showing a portfolio of their work. Things to consider: Has the designer worked in your genre? Do you like the designer’s sample work? What do the designer’s customers’ reviews say?

The Amazon publishing site has an option for you to design your own cover using a somewhat limited selection of pretty generic patterns and type faces. You can also upload your own picture for the cover (see below). It’s relatively easy and free, but your choices and flexibility are limited.

You can create your own covers. I did my own by starting with a picture bought from <http://www.shutterstock.com/> (other services have similar products). Shutterstock has a wide selection, so be prepared to search. Find something eye catching that in some way represents your book. Shutterstock pictures cost money to download, but they come with a standard license to reproduce the picture on your own work. You could use your own photo as long as it didn’t include anyone or anything that would have protected rights of reproduction. (No, I have no information on specifics, only anecdotes of a few bad examples that scared me to death.) If you are a good designer (I am not), you might create your own abstract design to use as a cover.

Once I select a cover picture, I used a simple page layout program (I use Apple’s *Pages*. Microsoft *Word* always makes me swear.) to put the title, author, and other text blocks over the picture. Be sure to check the width, length, and pixel resolution that your publisher requires. They are all different, but each site will have a [Cover Guidelines] choice that will give you more information. Sorting through the different picture file formats, changing resolution, and the like can be confusing if you haven’t done it before. Here is one spot you may want to ask someone for

some guidance the first time.

For the genres I write in, fantasy and science fiction, attractive covers are an important part of selling a book. Consider this factor when you make decisions about your cover. Frankly, I've found that doing my own covers or using Amazon's cover maker are both tricky, time-consuming, and frustrating. In the end, I've managed to get decent covers, but I've used a lot of swear words along the way. However, I've never gotten frustrated enough to want to pay someone else to do a cover for me.

You will have to upload the text of your writing. Be sure to add front matter to the file including a title page, dedication, copyright notice, etc. Each site has a list of different requirements for file types and formats they will accept. Key word there: *requirements*. There are instructions on the site as well as additional help, but you have to meet the requirements.

Amazon has a program available to download that will take your writing file and convert it to their ebook format. The program opens your MS *Word* DOC or DOCX format files and converts them directly to the form Amazon uses for ebooks. Kindle likes to see chapters, and the program helps you identify and format your chapter breaks so they look good. It will also help you build a table of contents. When you have it the way you want it, upload the resulting ebook file to Amazon.

Once you have both the book and the cover uploaded, you're not quite done. Amazon will preview the book for you. This shows you what the customer will see. By all means **DO THIS!** Page through the entire book to make sure that it all looks like you intended. Ebooks are not complicated beasts, but mischievous little gremlins have a way of sneaking in and making your work look unprofessional.

Personal note on the previewing process: These steps take time. Preparing a preview takes time. Uploading and processing any corrections take time. Allow for maybe ten minutes for each part. During these waits, I get restless to do—something. Anything. However, if I pick up something to read or switch to another writing project, I often get involved and distracted. I end up taking much longer than I should to complete the review and correction process.

Once you have the book the way you want it, publish your book. I was spellbound by the drama of the moment the first time I pressed [Publish Your Book]. My baby went winging off into the world as a book—a book other people could buy and read! I was a published author! Well, almost. Turns out it takes another day or two for Amazon to make your book available in its store. Still, it's the thought that counts.

Want a reality check with an example of what can go wrong? I edit my files double spaced. When I uploaded the book file, I left the spacing the same. I didn't notice in the previews, but when I saw it double spaced on a Kindle, it was horrible. Solution? Make the file single spaced, and upload again. And re-preview, etc. The point is any goof on your part is fixable. Trust me. Someone will notice and tell you about it. When you fix it, the change will propagate to all previously purchased files whenever the owner synch their files online. That's one of the nice features of ebooks.

5. Publishing a “Real” Book

I’m an old curmudgeon. Ask anyone who knows me. A book, a real book, is a physical object that you hold in your hand. It has real pages that gives your writing a corporeal presence that is completely missing in an ebook. Holding a tangible copy of your book in your hands is deeply satisfying. It allows you a brief moment of recurring, triumphant glory when someone asks about your writing. You get to hold up a *real* book for their inspection.

[Hint to spouses and others persons who may be shown these precious objects: Gush. No amount of praise is too embarrassing. If you respond with a dismissive, “That’s nice,” there is a risk of physical violence—or at least permanent banishment.]

If you want a printed copy of your work, there are a couple of different ways to do it. A number of publish-to-order sites are on the web. Amazon does it pretty directly by taking some information from your ebook. Other publishers like <https://www.lulu.com> are available. The steps of publishing a hard copy are similar to setting up an ebook. You will need an ISBN number if the printing service doesn’t already provide one. On demand publishing means your book sits out on the web waiting for someone to order it. A copy of your book is printed only when it is sold. There is a bit of deferred gratification for the buyer here. It takes an extra day or so to print then deliver a physical copy, but you do get a book.

The other option is to have your book printed by a conventional printer such as Book Masters (<http://www.bookmasters.com>), located near Mansfield, OH. This was the printer I used to publish my history book about the Bryan City Band. They will work with you to print anything, any format, any size, etc. However, they ask an important, up-front question. How many copies do you want? They print in bulk order—and charge you at that time. So, how many copies? They offer increasing discounts with volume. A cautionary note: I still have excess inventory of my 2002 book about the Bryan City Band.

One advantage of using Amazon’s paperback printing service is that Amazon’s reach is huge. Your Kindle ebook and the print option appear together on your book’s listing page. The customer chooses the format.

A disadvantage of creating a printed edition of your book is that you have to go through the whole cover creating, text formatting, and preview processes a second time.

For the cover of an ebook, you need a picture or design plus a title, subtitle if any, and the author’s name. That’s it—the cover.

A printed book has a larger cover. It has a front *and* back. For the front, the same cover that’s on the ebook will do. On the back, you typically put your blurb, maybe a brief author bio and/or your picture, a review’s comment, and so on—whatever you think will help sell your book. Remember, when you pick up a physical book, after looking at the cover, you check what’s on the back—at least, I do.

For my covers I usually use a re-cropped version of the picture I used for the ebook. Sometimes I’ve been able to look ahead and plan the ebook cover to use just the right-hand segment of a whole picture that will wrap around the back. One thing to watch out for are light/dark areas of your picture or design that will underlie dark/light text and make it hard to read.

With more print on the back cover, there's more chance that this will happen (experience).

A cover for your paper edition also needs a strip down the center of the full cover layout that will lay on the spine of the book. This is the part that shows when your book is on a shelf. The spine needs your book's title and your name displayed at a right angle to the other front and back text fields.

The text of your hard copy book is, of course, the same text as in the ebook, but you have to pay more attention to the page layout. For an ebook, there is little to worry about. The text automatically reflows to fill the screen with whatever the size font the reader choose. For a print book, you have to choose the size font that gets printed on the page. Typically a print book would have a font size in the 10 to 12 point range. Use this as a starting estimate since different font styles may appear larger or smaller than others. You should choose a size that is easy to read, but choosing a larger font means your book will have more pages. More pages cost more money. The decision is yours.

An open print book has a visible spread of two pages, left and right. Certain pages in a book traditionally appear on either the left side or the right side of the spread. For example, in the front matter of a book you'll see Title page: right. Copyright and printing details: left. Dedication and acknowledgements: right. First page of text: right. Look at several traditionally printed books to get an idea of how it is done. Your book may have more or fewer pages, but following an expected style means the reader can focus on enjoying your writing.

Each chapter should start on it's own page. Many books, but not all, put the first page of each new chapter on the right hand side of the spread. Yes, that means you may have a blank page on the left side of the spread at a chapter break. You don't have to do it this way, but whichever way you choose, do it for the whole book.

Think about how you want the start of each chapter to look. Most chapters have a number. How many lines from the top should it be? Are you going to use a chapter title? However you chose to start your chapters, be consistent from one chapter to the next. I have a little (now tattered) Post-A-Note clinging to my keyboard to remind me. After the page break, there should be *x* number of carriage returns, the chapter number—centered, *y* number of carriage returns, then start the text of the chapter.

Many times the first paragraph of a chapter is given special formatting. Sometimes this takes the form of a dropped capital, a grossly enlarged first letter of the first sentence that can displace the first line or two of a paragraph. You can find examples of this in professionally printed books. However, it can take work to make it look right, and I've never done it. One thing you can do to make your work look professional is to start the first paragraph of the chapter (and of each section break) with no indentation. It just looks a bit classy. It also helps the reader see section breaks, places where you leave one or two blank lines to show a break in the narrative.

You should think about widow and orphan control. These are not people needing our sympathy, but printers' terms for distracting flaws in the way a printed page looks. (*Widow*: Last line of a paragraph appearing at the top of an otherwise blank page. *Orphan*: First line of a new paragraph that appears at the bottom of a page cutoff from the rest of the paragraph.) MS *Word* offers a setting to control for this, and you will get it approximately correct if you set your margins

to the exact same margins of the text block of the printed page. Notice that word “approximately”? Don’t trust it for your final, finished project. Check each and every page.

You can also run into other quirks that might cause a break in the wrong place. A classic example is . . . That’s right, an ellipsis. It’s a perfectly good punctuation mark. However, if you type it as a series of periods and spaces, you may find the computer breaks it in the middle and sends a dot or two down to the next line. The way around this hazard is to always type an ellipsis using unbreakable spaces between the periods. An unbreakable space? There is such a thing on your computer, and you can use it to keep things together. I have defined a macro in my system that when I make a particular keypress combination, the computer makes the substitutes and unbreakably-spaced ellipsis automatically.

If you think there are a lot of details to worry about, you’re right. I’ve listed just the ones that come readily to mind—usually because I’ve tripped over them a time or two—or three. Complicated as all this may seem, it’s doable if you have patience and an eye for detail. Of course there are also people you can hire to do this for you. How much are you willing to pay to save time and still look professional?

Be sure to use the [Preview Your Book] function online whenever you fix something. After you’ve previewed everything to be absolutely sure there are no problems, you have one more important step. Order a printed proof copy, and check it page by page. Proof copies aren’t cheap, but they show you your book before the customers get a chance to see it.

When you take your book’s proof copy in your hands for the first time, savor the moment, then ask yourself, how does it look? Check the cover picture and printing. It doesn’t hurt to reread your book even though you’ve been through innumerable times. I’ve found enough previously overlooked *faux pas* to see that a reread is worthwhile. But before you hit the [Publish] button on the website, be sure to go through the proof copy **page-by-page** and evaluate each page’s appearance. Mark everything you find. I use big, gaudy Post-A-Notes to show me where things need fixed. Depending on how many errors you flag, you may want to order a second proof—just to make sure you really did fix all the problems.

Once you have your book the way you want it, order some copies. You’ll want several copies to have on hand to show off. Consider donating a copy to the public or school libraries nearby. You may be able to generate a little local publicity for your work.

What’s the most important thing that happens when you sell a book? (Notice I didn’t say, “*if* you sell?”) You get paid money! How does that happen? Amazon has a couple of royalty plans, and I opted for the simplest at 35% of the selling price. The other choice with higher royalties seemed more limiting—more trouble than it was worth for my purposes. You can reevaluate your options and change later.

You get to set the price you want your book to sell for. While to me, my work is priceless, there is a limit to what the public will pay. I see established fiction authors selling their books for

\$10 to \$15—more for best sellers, less for years-old but still popular titles. Amazon has information that indicates independent authors generate the most sales at prices from \$.99 to \$3.99. I sell *King's Exile*, the introductory book of my fantasy trilogy for \$.99. Once I get them hooked, *King's Dragon*, the second book, is \$2.99, and *King's Crown* costs \$3.99.

Amazon pays you royalties on your sales by direct deposit to your bank every month. Rather than use my existing personal account, I created a new checking account to receive my book royalties. Amazon operates world wide and has many regional entities that pay separately—they each pay you for whatever you sell in that country. My fantasy books sell well in Great Britain, Canada, and Australia, but I've sold English language copies in Russia, Bulgaria, Malawi, South Africa, and many other countries. Every now and again I enjoy the thought that, right at this moment, somewhere in India, someone could be reading my book.

Other ebook publishers only cut you a check once your royalty total exceeds \$100 or some other fixed amount. I have a couple of places that are slowly accumulating money for me. *C'est la vie*. At least my book is available in iBooks, Barnes & Noble, etc.

One thing I caught that you might want to watch out for: When my books sell in a country like Australia, India, and Burundi, my bank charged me a \$1.00 transaction fee for every month's deposit that was made in a foreign currency. Turned out my royalties from countries like Australia, India, and Burundi were not enough to pay the money changers. I had to go back in and raise prices of my books in those countries so the royalties would cover the foreign currency transaction fees. Not all banks charge fees for this. You can shop around for another bank that would not charge.

I mentioned earlier that you have to keep track of your income and expenses. You are operating a business and have business responsibilities. If you have questions about this aspect, consult an accountant or a lawyer.

Feeling a little overwhelmed? Of course you are. I hope you see that, although there is a lot of detail work required to self publish, you can work through it on a step-by-step basis. Who is better at detail work than an author who has written, rewritten, revised, edited, etc.? There are plenty of services who will do any to all of these self publishing steps for you—at a price. If you can tolerate all the fussy particulars, deal with ambiguous directions by experimentation, and maybe have a salty vocabulary to let off steam, you can get the job done. You can publish your own work *and* keep all the profits. It's a tangible recognition for doing something most of us feel compelled to do anyway.

