

Print and publish your own short run book

A white paper by Andrew Hingeley of KainosPrint.com.au

Introduction

This is a brief white paper on the most important and often confusing issues surrounding the printing and publication of short run perfect bound or case bound books. Books will usually be A5 or A4, and around 70 pages or more. In most cases the publisher is the author.

Do I have a book in me waiting to get out?

We have produced books on a vast variety of subjects, but above all, we like to encourage people simply to tell their stories. We can all recall how important the last years of the lives of our loved ones were as they opened up and we learnt so much we never knew from them. We tend to think of our own lives as boring and repetitious and not worth writing about. We are, of course, very wrong, and our children and their children will find our own stories incredibly. So . . . we encourage you to write down your own story and publish it.

Digital printing makes short run book printing possible

It is possible today to print just a few copies of a book, thanks to digital printing technology. Print runs of from two or three, to a few hundred are common. Furthermore, books can be fully colour, black and white only, or a mixture of the two. When mixed, colour and black only pages can fall anywhere in the book, and you only pay extra for the amount of colour in the book.

What are the most economical sizes for books?

It is always best to stick to 'A' sizes, as most presses are 'A' size presses — A3, A2 and A1. In practical terms, this means A4 and A5 are the most economical book sizes. If your book is a bit bigger than A5 (say B5), you may finish up paying A4 prices. A vexed question is the subject of landscape formats, where the book is bound on the short size, not the normal long side. This is OK for A5 books, but can be a real problem for A4 books. Printing the internal pages is no problem, but covers will need to be over 600mm long before binding, and there is really only one kind of digital press than can produce such covers. Expect to pay a hefty premium of many hundreds of dollars for A4 landscape format books.

What kind of paper should I use?

If your book is a novel or similar, either with no illustrations or with simple line drawings, basic bond paper such as 80gsm bond is fine. If you expect your book to be written on, then you should choose an uncoated paper such as a bond stock. If your book contains colour or black and white photographs or charts, then use a coated stock such as 130gsm gloss or satin. Some people have a preference for satin in that it is not as reflective and tends to enhance photographs more than gloss. A common 'trick' is to bulk a book up so it

looks like an expensive book that has more pages than it really does have. This is done by using a particularly thick paper. Covers should always be around 300gsm — 310gsm Pearl Artboard is an excellent choice. Consider having a gloss or matt celloglaze on the outside cover to both enhance and protect the cover.

What software should I use?

The most commonly used software for producing books is Microsoft Word. This can be a source of problems because few people — either authors or printers — know how to get the most out of Word, therefore finding ways around stumbling blocks can be the frustrating order of the day. Microsoft Publisher is a better choice. Many printers refuse to accept Word or Publisher documents (NOT KainosPrint I hasten to add), so it is wise to check with your printer first. The best software for the job is InDesign, part of Adobe's Creative Suite. Printers will love you (and more importantly, the book will be printed quickly) if you supply a correctly formatted PDF file generated from your original software. InDesign has quite a learning curve and you may find yourself puzzling over how to perform the most basic functions, such as adding space between paragraphs. Most problems can be solved however by using the excellent online Help, and by remembering that a considerable number of functions in InDesign (such as the one referred to above) are accessible only in graphic form.

What basic book layout conventions should I use?

Your endeavours to produce a professional result will be greatly enhanced if you adopt basic layout conventions. Here are a few.

- Page numbers should be at the outside top or bottom margin.
- Even numbers should be on the left, odd numbers on the right
- Except for some novels, new chapters should begin on the right even if it means a blank page on the left.
- Consider having the book title as a left page header, and the chapter title as a right page header either aligned with the outside margin, or centred.
- Don't refer to decades with an apostrophe (90's). Correct usage is 90s.
- Learn the correct use of dashes (-), en rules (–) and em rules (—).

The KainosPrint web site has extensive lists of errors to avoid and various hints and tips to help you produce a professional result. Here are two useful links,

<http://www.kainosprint.com.au/BooksIntro.shtml> and

<http://www.kainosprint.com.au/PreparingFiles.shtml>.

The most comprehensive tool to assist you in producing a professional publication is the **Commonwealth Style Manual**, 6th edition, published by John Wiley, Paperback, ISBN 0 7016 3648 3, \$44.95.

Consider obtaining an ISBN number and a Cataloguing in Publication (CiP) entry.

ISBN and CiP make it easier to identify and market your book.

The ISBN (International Standard Book Number) is a 13-digit number that uniquely identifies books and book-like products published internationally. Each number identifies a unique edition of a publication, from one specific publisher, allowing for more efficient marketing of products by booksellers, libraries, universities, wholesalers and distributors. Download the Complete Manual for ISBN Users from <http://www.thorpe.com.au/forms/files/ISBNUsersManual.pdf>

CiP entries are included in the Australian National Bibliographic Database (ANBD) available on Libraries Australia, Australia's Library Network, thereby providing advance notice of new publications to libraries and the general public. CiP information is routinely used by libraries and publishers for selection and to place advance orders for new publications. CiP data is printed in the book and may be used by libraries for cataloguing new acquisitions. Publishers can use CiP data in their internal files, trade catalogues and promotional material.

Learn about applying for a CiP at <http://www.nla.gov.au/services/CIP2.html>
You can apply online at http://www.nla.gov.au/services/cip_form.html.

What price should I sell my book for?

The single most common mistake of self publishers is to set too low a price for their book! This can be as a result of a natural desire to maximize sales, but most often is simply the result of a lack of self confidence in the product. Visit a couple of bookshops and look for similar publications — not mass market novels, but specialized 'niche market' books, to get a feel for an appropriate price. Ask yourself how many less copies you will sell if you price your book at, say, \$19.95 or even \$25.00 instead of \$14.95? Consider that people will often pay (and expect to have to pay) a premium for a unique 'something different', 'local flavor' product.

Promoting your book

It goes without saying that self publishing projects succeed or fail depending on the effectiveness with which they are promoted. Here are some suggestions on how to promote your book.

- The chief distinguishing factor between success and failure is, to use an old fashioned term, 'leg work'. Don't just dream about it, put one foot in front of the other and get out there and promote it!
- Organise an official launch (but give the printer plenty of time to print the book!). Ask a local MP or other dignitary to officiate, and make sure as many representative of the local media as possible are there.
- Get yourself interviewed on local TV and radio.
- Submit book review copies to newspapers (and follow up).
- Write a press release and send it to all local media organizations.
- Personally visit local bookshops and newsagencies. Be prepared to give them 45% discount, and offer them 'sale or return' if the book does not sell. Don't be afraid to call on branches of national chains. Most managers have the authority to purchase publications of local interest.
- Call around later to places where you have placed the book to make sure it is prominently displayed.

- Don't discount the value of your book to local schools and libraries, especially if it is a family history.
- Promote your book through the internet.
 - * Do you have a web page on which you can promote the book?
 - * Are there other web sites that would be willing to promote your book?
- Do you have an e-mail list you could make use of?

Conclusion

Chances are your publication is of more interest and value to more people than you could possibly imagine. If you have the enthusiasm and energy, self publishing is an excellent option. If you use a book distributor or publisher, expect to pay the distributor 45% of the sale price. The distributor in turn will have to offer a discount of 45% — and sale or return — to retailers. There won't be much left for the author!!

About the author

Andrew Hingeley has been involved in book bookselling, printing and publishing for most of his adult life. Andrew lives in Canberra, and came to Canberra in 1986 as Director of Lay Education at St Mark's Library, part of the Anglican Church. His work involved choosing topics, finding authors, then editing, printing, publishing and promoting lay education courses for use in the wider church.

Before moving to Canberra, Andrew was involved in bookselling for over fifteen years, opening and managing a number of large bookshops for national chains in Melbourne and Geelong.

After leaving St Mark's, he started a typesetting company, Trendsetting Pty Ltd of which he was a director for fifteen years. The company grew to become one of Australia's leading digital printing companies.

He left in 2005 to form, with other family members, KainosPrint.com.au, a dedicated online printing company.