

SELF- PUBLISHING A BOOK

A presentation by Domenico Rossi at the ICAP Calgary Conference, August 25, 2018

Why self-publish?

Traditional publishing can be a lengthy and difficult process [if your manuscript is selected at all].

Self- publishing is an interesting and rewarding process in which the author, as publisher, has complete control over every aspect of the production of the book.

Authors themselves often see more marketing opportunities than a trade publisher would, so they can do a much better job of promoting the book than a publisher could.

Two of the reasons authors choose self-publishing are:

- 1) They cannot find a publisher who is interested in their manuscript
- 2) Publishers are reluctant to publish works that might compete directly with titles on their existing lists.

Why I chose to self-publish my memoir, "**The Quest for an Education**"

The memoir covers the first 31 years of my life, from 1937 to 1968, and I definitely wanted to capture all the details of my various experiences, both the negative and positive memorable experiences. My book was not going to be for sale but I had control of the content:

- the horrors of war, especially during the battle for Ortona, Dec. 1943
- the poverty and the hunger during the first 16 years of my life
- the disappointment of not being able to continue school past grade 5
- the immigration to Canada in 1953, at age 16, not a word of English
- the 10 days on the immigrant boat from Naples to Halifax
- the 4 days and 4 nights on the train from Halifax to Fernie BC
- the cold winter, and mountains of snow, that first winter in Fernie
- starting to work in a B.C. lumber camp while I was still 16 years old
- moving to Calgary in 1956, \$100 in my pocket no job, no place to stay

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- completing my university entrance program while working full time
- the struggle/challenge to pass “English 30” after failing it twice
- studying hard to pass every one of my 48 university courses
- and finally, in 1968 achieving “my Quest” to obtain an engineering degree at age 31

Activities involved with self-publishing.

1. Preparing the Manuscript and Editing

Put the text of your book into a computer file, or files. When you write a book you make thousands of creative decisions. By the time you have done your 1st, 2nd, or 3rd draft it becomes nearly impossible for you to grasp how a reader would experience your manuscript for the first time.

Editing is a very important part of a book production, and an editor provides fresh eyes and improves the quality of your writing. Authors shouldn't edit their manuscripts because they are too familiar with the text to look at it with a critical eye.

2. Designing the Book

Once the manuscript has been edited you need a designer to achieve a clean, professional-looking book. The designer creates a compelling cover that will help the book sell. The designer also does the interior layout of the book to create a comfortable reading experience and to ensure that the design file meets all the specifications to distribute the book both in print and eBook format.

One of the main problems with self-published books is that they “look self-published”, which means they are poorly designed and the layout looks unprofessional. Images in the book must be scanned at the correct resolution and size and, if necessary, enhanced using a computer program, like Photoshop.

At this point you must search for a book printing company. In my case, I contacted 5 companies and met with their designers. I chose Blitzprint, a Calgary book print company, and discussed with their designer the various features I wanted for my book.

3. What goes on the covers and spine of the Book?

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Try to find a good photo or illustration for the Front Cover. If your book is a memoir you can probably use one of the photos from inside the book. The Back Cover can be a photo or a summary of the book. The Spine usually includes the title and the name of the author.

4. Getting an estimate for the production of the book

Before you request a cost estimate for either the page layout or the printing and binding of your book, you will need to have the following information:

Finished Size

Check out the books at the book store or library and decide what size would be most appropriate for your project. The most economic size for soft cover books are 5.5 X 8.5 inches or 6X9 inches. I chose 6X9.

Page Count

Find a book that is a similar size and typeface to what you would like for your book and count the characters per page. Then count the characters in your manuscript (the word processing program will do this) and divide by the characters per page. This will give you the total number of pages.

Number of photographs or images that need to be scanned

Images can be supplied as digital files or you can scan them, either way you need to know the total number. Scanned images will need to be enhanced to compensate for quality lost during scanning.

Inside Ink

Printing the inside in black ink only will be much less expensive than using color. If you want to include color images in the book, the most economical way is to group them together so only those pages need to be printed in color.

Binding

Specify soft cover or hard cover binding.

Quantity of books to be printed

The more books you print the lower the cost per book. You must estimate how many books you need.

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My Book as an example:

In my case the book contains 175 pages, including about 60 pictures/images, each occupying about a third of a page.

I printed 100 books at a cost of about \$8.50 each	\$850.
The "Design", or "Prepress", as Blitzprint calls it	\$450
Extra proof copy and miscellaneous	\$100

Total C	\$1,400

Conclusion:

As I was too anxious to have the book printed, I did not take the time to make sure that images were scanned at the correct resolution and sizes. As a result, unfortunately some of the pictures are not as clear as they could have been. An important lesson learned for future projects. My second book, "The Long Walk to Success", will have a complete set of photos.

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