Basic Self-Publishing Information Guide

Version 1.1

July 18, 2019

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Introduction

This guide provides high-level information for those self-publishing a print (paperback or hardcover) edition of their book. It does not specifically address ebook publishing.

Copyright

In most parts of the world an author holds copyright to a work the moment they create it in fixed format. See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berne_Convention for information about the Berne Convention, which sought to standardize and regulate copyright law.

Some countries, like the United States, provide for the means to officially register your copyright with a government agency. The UK does not. This document covers the copyright process in the United States.

Copyright registration is not required, but it is recommended in order to provide proof of your copyright that will hold up in a court of law. The so-called "poor man's copyright" of mailing yourself a printed copy of the manuscript and maintaining this package unopened (or some variant of this process) is a myth and provides absolutely no legal proof of copyright whatsoever, at least in the United States.

In the US, copyright registration is performed through the US Copyright Office at https://www.copyright.gov/ and can be done online at https://eco.copyright.gov/eService_enu if your work qualifies for the Single Application. As of this publication, the fee for a Single Application is $35. The fee for a Standard Application is $55. Registration should be done at the time of publication or shortly thereafter.

Part of the application process for a book that includes a print edition is to send two copies of the best edition to the Library of Congress. If your book is only published in ebook format, there is obviously no Library of Congress requirement. But if you have an ebook edition, a paperback edition, and a hardcover edition, for example, the hardcover is considered the best edition and must be submitted to the Library of Congress.

Single Application

This process is for a single author registering a single work. This is the option you'd use to register a novel, picture book, nonfiction book, or any other individual work that contains nothing from any other author, and no part of any other book (such as a preview or first chapter of your next book).

Eligible for Single Application	Ineligible for Single Application (must use Standard)
one article	two or more articles
one nonfiction monograph	two or more stories
one essay	two or more poems
one novel	dictionaries
one poem	directories
one short story	encyclopedias
	serials

For more information regarding the Single Application see https://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ11.pdf.

Standard Application

This process is for multi-author works like anthologies, and for works by a single author that contain multiple types of content, including previews or first chapters of a subsequent book in a series. Short

story collections and poetry collections fall under the Standard Application process, even if all of the content is by a single author.

ISBNs

All print books that are distributed to retailers require an International Standard Book Number (ISBN). The ISBN identifies several details of a particular edition of a book, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Title
- Subtitle
- Author
- Publisher
- Publication date
- Trim size

The cost of ISBNs varies by country. Some countries, like Canada, offer ISBNs for free. Each country has a single authorized ISBN agency, although not all countries have an agency. You can find the ISBN agency for your country at https://www.isbn-international.org/agencies.

ISBNs are not transferrable. You cannot buy a block and then sell individual numbers from that block to other authors. You would still be listed as the publisher for any book using that ISBN, and you would have sole access to the ISBN record to make updates. This is also one of many reasons why you should not buy an ISBN from any entity other than the authorized agency in your country, with a couple of exceptions. Some companies, like KDP Print and IngramSpark, have special agreements in place with the US ISBN agency, Bowker, to offer ISBNs through their platforms. These exceptions are completely legitimate ISBNs. See the sections below on each of these printers for more information.

Printing

Your first decision when self-publishing should be whether you want to use a print on demand company, or whether you want to have a print run done. Both options are discussed below.

Offset or Short-Run Printing

In this model, your book is produced in large quantity (often in terms of hundreds or thousands) in one run of the printing machines. The benefits are that the machines are calibrated for your book before the run begins, so the entire print run should be consistent and of very good quality (which is also ensured by manual inspection). The drawbacks are that you must pay for the entire print run at the outset, then take delivery of pallets of books and store them somewhere. You are then responsible for marketing, selling, distributing, fulfilling orders, shipping, etc. This can be a very expensive and daunting model for those new to publishing, which is why print on demand developed.

Print on Demand (POD)

In this model, the author/publisher uploads files to the POD printer (ideally a print-ready PDF for the interior and another for the cover). When these files pass review, the publisher approves the book for sale and it goes live. From that point on, the publisher's role is limited mainly to marketing. Orders for the book are fulfilled by the POD company, which then reports those sales and the amount due to the publisher in the dashboard of their account.

In the world of POD, the current biggest names are KDP Print (owned by Amazon) and IngramSpark (owned by Ingram Content Group, the largest US book distributor). It is possible to use both printers together for the same book, and in some circumstances I recommend this. See **USING KDP PRINT AND IS TOGETHER** for more information.

IngramSpark

IngramSpark (IS) is a bit newer on the scene than KDP Print, but its parent company (Ingram) also has another POD company (Lightning Source) that has been around for longer than KDP Print, so IngramSpark is a solid choice.

Distribution

Since IS is owned by the largest US book distributor, their service comes with wide distribution, both within the US and to some international booksellers. This includes distribution to Amazon. However, it's not uncommon for books that are only produced through IS to have availability issues on Amazon.

Wholesale Discount

IS allows the publisher to set the wholesale discount for each geographic market the publisher selects to offer the book in. You can set this discount anywhere between 55% and 30% or 35% (depending on the market). Ingram keeps 15% of this amount, passing the remaining amount to the retailer. Most booksellers expect a 40% discount, so this means you must set the wholesale discount to 55% through IS if you wish to target brick and mortar booksellers. However, if you do not have a solid plan aimed at these booksellers, with a very strong chance of getting on their shelves, there's very little point in setting the wholesale discount there. The large majority of independent authors' sales come online or from

selling in person, so by setting the wholesale discount to the lowest amount for each market, you maximize the revenue in your pocket.

As an example, we'll use a 100-page black & white paperback with a retail list price of $15.00 for easier math. The print charge for this book is $2.40.

55% discount: The publisher earns $4.35

> 15.00 X .45 (publisher's portion) = 6.75 – 2.40 (print cost) = **$4.35 to publisher**
>
> 15.00 X .15 (Ingram's share) = **$2.25 to Ingram**
>
> 15.00 X .40 (retailer's share) = **$6.00 to retailer**

30% discount: The publisher earns $8.10

> 15.00 X .7 (publisher's portion) = 10.50 – 2.40 (print cost) = **$8.10 to publisher**
>
> 15.00 X .15 (Ingram's share) = **$2.25 to Ingram**
>
> 15.00 X .15 (retailer's share) = **$2.25 to retailer**

Returns

The publisher can opt to allow or disallow returns through IS. If you choose to allow returns, you are responsible for the printing and shipping costs for any returned copies. This can turn into a losing proposition very quickly, so put some serious consideration into your marketing plan before setting a book as returnable.

Fees

IS charges a $49 title setup fee. There are often discount codes to be found to waive this fee, and membership in some professional organizations can come with a permanent discount code. IS also charges a $25/file revision fee for any changes to the book after the publisher approves the digital proof.

ISBNs

IS does not provide free ISBNs. If the publisher is in the US, they can buy an ISBN through IS for $85 (through Bowker's agreement with IS). Otherwise, the publisher can obtain an ISBN from the agency in their country: https://www.isbn-international.org/agencies.

Each edition of a book must have a different ISBN. So if you publish a paperback edition and a hardcover edition of the same book, you must have two ISBNs.

Links

Website: https://www.ingramspark.com/

Trim sizes: https://www.ingramspark.com/plan-your-book/print/trim-sizes

Printing specifications (PDF): https://www.ingramspark.com/hubfs/downloads/file-creation-guide.pdf

KDP Print

KDP Print is relatively new on the scene. It took the place of CreateSpace, which was also owned by Amazon, and had been around for some time. KDP Print can be a bit more user-friendly than IngramSpark for those new to the world of publishing.

Most of the Amazon websites are available for KDP Print books. The publisher can select the territories to which they want to distribute the book. KDP Print also offers Expanded Distribution, which lists the book in the Ingram catalogue (the same distribution as through IngramSpark). However, only a subset of available trim sizes are eligible for Expanded Distribution.*

KDP Print does not allow the publisher to set the wholesale discount, and they do not allow returns.

Fees

KDP Print does not charge any fees to setup or publish a paperback.

ISBNs

KDP Print offers free ISBNs, or the publisher can obtain their own from the agency in their country: https://www.isbn-international.org/agencies. The free ISBNs cannot be used with any other print service and list the publisher as "Independently published."

Links

Website: https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G202059560

Trim sizes: https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/GQTT4W3T5AYK7L45#eligibility*

Printing specifications (website): https://kdp.amazon.com/en_US/help/topic/G201857950

* These are the trim sizes that are eligible for Expanded Distribution – KDP Print can accommodate any trim size between 4" and 8.5" wide, and between 6" and 11" or 11.69" high (depending on interior color), but custom trim sizes would only be sold through Amazon.

Using KDP Print and IS Together

In some cases, a book that is produced only by IS can have availability message issues on Amazon, sometimes even "Ships in 1-2 months." To avoid this problem, it's possible to use both KDP Print and IS for the same paperback edition. In order to do this, you must own the ISBN yourself (you cannot use a free KDP Print ISBN) and you **must not enable** Expanded Distribution for the book on KDP Print.

Decisions to Make

1) If you wish to use print on demand, which service or services?
2) Do you want paperback, hardcover, ebook, or some combination of those three? KDP Print can do paperback and ebooks, but not hardcover. IngramSpark can do all three, but I don't recommend them for ebook distribution.
3) If you want to do an ebook edition, which retailers/distributors do you want to use?
4) What trim size (final book size) do you want the printed book to be?
5) Will you obtain a single ISBN, a block of ISBNs, or use a free one (if available)?

Appendix: Terminology

Bleed: the portion of an image beyond the trim line, designed to be cut off when the bound book block is trimmed to size, to ensure that there is no white border around a full-bleed image

Gutter: definition depends on context – KDP uses it to mean the inner margin of a bound book. Book design software like Adobe InDesign uses it to refer to the space between two columns of text.

Leaf: a single piece of paper

Page: one side of a leaf of paper

Signature: the number of pages that are printed together on a single large sheet of paper – books that are printed in signatures must have a total page count that is evenly divisible by the signature