

Stages of Publication

By Tammy L. Hensel

Independent publishing often carries with it a stigma because new authors don't fully understand the publishing process and sometimes skip vital steps that ensure a good product. Authors going the traditional route also need a good grasp of the process to effectively communicate with agents and publishers. Below is a brief outline of the steps you need to follow to fulfill your publication goals.

Stage 1: Develop your idea.

Write an outline or working synopsis for your book. Then research and write your book. Self-edit and revise. Do it again. Plan to make many revisions.

Stage 2: Research options and set a publishing budget.

Whether publishing traditionally or independently, you need professionals to help you with your project. Although new online publishing methods decrease publishing costs dramatically, it still takes money to produce a good product. Basic costs include: editor, proofreader, artist, page designer, copyright and ISBN fees, printing, and marketing. In traditional publishing the publisher covers most of these costs, but a professional editor can help you polish your book before submitting it.

You can utilize the Internet and reference books like *Writers' Market* to find names of editors, agents and publishers. Many major publishers only take agented material, but a few still take unsolicited manuscripts.

With independent publishing your options include subsidy presses that offer editing, design, and marketing packages with print-on-demand (POD) and traditional printing; or strictly POD printers who require camera-ready layouts. In the case of the latter, you may hire freelance editors and artists. You can research these options by talking to other writers, reading reviews and blogs on the Internet, and looking at books published (or agented) by the professionals you're considering. If you plan to submit to an agent or publisher, ask for guidelines to find out if they want a proposal or not.

Stage 3: Editing and proofreading.

No matter how well you self-edit, you still need at least two people trained to catch errors to go over your manuscript thoroughly. If submitting to an agent or publisher, you want as clean a copy as possible. Many publishers today don't have the editorial staff for line-by-line editing, so they tend to reject manuscripts full of errors, regardless of how good the story is. If you intend to publish independently, you want a quality product. So don't skip this important step.

An experienced copyeditor looks not only at the technical aspects of your book (grammar, punctuation, etc.), but also at the way you communicate your story or idea. Does it grab the reader? Does it flow smoothly? Can the reader clearly understand what you say? Plan also to hire someone to proofread, as you always need a fresh set of eyes. Many editors subcontract this to other editors on their staff or in their network.

Stage 4: Submit or publish your book.

Most agents and publishers require a book proposal, although some may want a query letter only. Never send a manuscript without querying first. Remember, your letter is the first sample of your writing they see, so make it a good one. If you're not using an agent, you may want to find a lawyer who specializes in book contracts.

If publishing independently, hire the people you need to design your cover and interior layout and print your book. Make sure to include a proofreader to look over the final product. Most design packages should include proofreading, but don't forget to double-check.

Stage 5: Devise a marketing plan.

If submitting a manuscript, you will do this in your proposal. Even though the publisher will handle most of the marketing, they want to know what contacts you have to help speed the process. If independent, then it's all up to you. Assess your networking contacts and devise a plan to promote your work.

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Dedicated Publication Services can help you prepare your manuscript for submission or independent publishing. Download and fill out our Prospective Client Form to get an estimate on what we can do for you and how much it will cost. Send questions or other queries to Tammy L. Hensel at tammylou.hensel@gmail.com