

“I’VE WRITTEN A BOOK”

“Good Morning, Society of Authors”

“I’m ringing because I’ve written a book and want to know what to do now?”

“Are you a member?”

“No. But I just need the name of a publisher. My neighbour has read it and said I shouldn’t change a thing. I might need someone to check the spelling and grammar”.

“We do have a list of assessors and editors on our website. We recommend getting professional feedback on your manuscript first. Then you can decide the best way to proceed”.

“I don’t need an assessor. I went to a workshop at the British Library! My sister has already done the cover”.

What happens at the end of the blood, sweat and tears of writing a book remains a mystery to many writers. NZSA know 32% of our members self-publish in either book and/or digital form each year. We have variations of the above conversation every week. As a membership organisation, advice is a benefit of membership, along with many other reasons to join NZSA.

How to sell and promote your book follows the same principles whether you are releasing the book yourself, or via a traditional publisher. Don’t leave it to the end of the writing process. Get quality, professional advice as you write. Write and re-write and ‘kill your darlings’.

Create a website and build your profile and CV as a writer. Ensure followers can sign up to your site and newsletter. You are your brand and writers need to invest in marketing as you establish a career, and create an author persona.

1. Join NZSA and a local writing group and get regular feedback on your writing. Take a creative writing course to ensure your work is the best it can be. Use our Startwrite, Complete MS, Mentorship and Youth mentorship programmes to work with a professional writer to progress your manuscript at each stage of your career. Enter competitions: flash fiction, poetry, short stories and begin to build a literary CV.
2. Think about how to sell and market your book (before it is finished, before it is printed, before it is designed). How many words are a standard manuscript length for the genre? Who is the target market? Research other book jackets. Talk to retailers about what works. Read all you can in your chosen genre.
3. Once a manuscript is complete following a structural edit and proofing, think about format. Target publishers in your genre and see what the instructions are to submit. Publishers will want to know about you, your website, your social media presence. Include reviews and links to any media interviews that show you can handle media. Practice a pitch for your book: a synopsis is not a pitch – a pitch captures the essence of the story and the selling points that will make this title stand out to a publisher and their marketing team.
4. Nothing is more important than the jacket, the blurb and the overall design of the book. Invest in design. Classic traps for self-publishers: ensure the layout of the book has enough white

space in the 'gutter' between pages and to layout the title page and bibliographic information. Don't print on the inside covers; increase the page count. The book must look professional, if you want a retailer to stock it. The content must be good, but it is the jacket and perhaps the promotion, that makes someone pick up your book.

5. Each book must have a barcode and ISBN to scan and sell at retail. The National Library will issue ISBN's to publishers and writers – and you lodge two copies with the National Library on publication. Companies like Barcode Technologies produce the barcode from the ISBN and supply that as an eps or pdf file for your designer. Load the title, ISBN, price and release date and distributor into both global databases: Bowker and Nielsen – this can be done through their on-line portals. All retailers use one of these two systems.
6. Be prepared to sell yourself and your book. If you have produced a book it is best to have a distributor and/or sales agent to present your titles to bookshops, library suppliers and chains. Whitcoulls head office looks at new titles 4 months ahead of release. Booksellers will want to know your marketing plan to assess how many they want on their shelf.

There are a range of local distributors who may take your book: Bateman, Book Reps, South Pacific Books to name a few. Their reps will subscribe your book 3-4 months ahead of release. If you are printing locally, this can be a boon as you can fine tune your print run to the stock quantity required for initial release. Distributors will usually take your book on a commission basis, warehouse it and pay you the net sales value, less their commission, 60-90 days following the month of release. Commission for sales, warehousing, representation, customer service, credit control, freight, invoicing et al will be around 30% of net receipts. The administration of single titles is costly for distributors. They need an ATI (advance title information sheet), sample chapter and jacket artwork as a minimum to sell. Children's books and illustrated N-F require samples.

7. Price your book right for its market. We often hear of people who printed 2000 copies "to get the right price", but is that for the right quantity or will they sit in a garage for a decade? Many traditional publishers print far fewer of a new title so seek advice about the right quantity to print in this small market. Build into the recommended retail price (NZRP), the required margin for retailers, including GST, a distributors/sales agent commission, the cost of production, design and editing, review copies and the cost of a freelance publicist if you are not handling the publicity yourself. The retail price **must** include a minimum of 40% discount for a retailer though the chains require higher discounts than that. If you are distributing and selling yourself, you will still need a retail margin and GST receipt for purchasers.
8. Print-on-demand printers in NZ such as Your Books, Wickliffe, the Copy Press and many others will advise on formats, design and pricing. Get quotes, shop around. To print in Asia is half the cost, but usually the minimum print run is 1000 copies plus freight and customs clearance charges. There are some formats that are not cost-effective to print in NZ such as board books that need to go overseas.

9. Begin to promote your book 3 -6 months out from release. This includes getting copies to long lead media (i.e. glossy magazines or literary pages that may want an excerpt to tie in with publication). One month before publication send out review copies and a media release offering author interviews to a media: to book review pages in magazine/newspapers, on-line review sites, appropriate radio/TV shows and specialist publications or organisations. Follow up. A traditional publisher will do this launch media for you, but the next month their publicity teams will be working on other titles. To ensure ongoing coverage and events, offer yourself for local events, to writers' festivals, conferences and if appropriate, ensure your book is submitted to awards. There are freelance publicists who can assist self-publishing authors and we recommend Penny Hartill and Lighthouse as book trade specialists and they should be contacted 6 months pre-pub. As your book releases and reviews and interviews appear: share on your social media platforms and your website.

10. An array of providers exist beyond traditional publishers and print-on-demand presses: digital platforms assist self-publishing such as Ingram Spark, Amazon and Book Baby if you do not want to do it yourself. It is easier than you think to load an e-book onto Amazon so research and follow the guidelines.

There are local and international companies who will share the cost of editing, production and design if you pay for the printing; publishing collectives again with cost-sharing and crowd-funding enterprises such as Cold Hub and The Cuba Press. These are good options often for beginning writers and for poetry collections or chap-books.

There are some international companies that are on a Writers Beware list – Google that US list if you receive a contract from an international company. Remember to send in your contract for free advice, if you are an NZSA member.

All in all, if you have written a book and want to know what to do now – there's a starter for 10!

NB This information is reported from standard industry practice and may vary.