

The Business of Writing

Notes from the 2014 Gold Coast Writers Festival



Charmaine Clancy

Charmaine Clancy presents: The Business of Writing Notes from the Gold Coast Writers Festival

The truth:

One simple truth often comes as a shock to writers--writers don't simply write. Nowadays, writers must perform administrative duties, manage marketing projects, handle advertisement, organise speaking events, and many more tasks related to the career that is writer.

This revelation can be overwhelming for the new writer. Where do you even start? How do you turn a creative activity into a business?

Thankfully, the community that is writers, is an incredibly generous group, and there is always someone prepared to share steps and tips with you. I've been fortunate enough to be mentored by many caring and talented writers, so now, I'd like to pass on that information to you.

Options:

Love them or hate them, the introduction of the e-reader has revolutionised reading, and opened up many opportunities and choices for writers aiming to have their work published and read by a wide audience. Writers can still work their way through the traditional channels for publishing, become their own indie publisher, or employ a combination of both (known as hybrid authors).

Taking on the role of publisher for your own works is a big decision. We will be exploring the steps to becoming an indie (independent--not one of the big corporate companies) publisher. There is of course still vanity publishing, where an author pays a company to produce their work. This option is suitable for family memoirs or small group projects where the audience is a very small select few. It's an expensive way to produce books that could be sold for profit.

Another term used often is self-publishing. If you produce your own work as an indie publisher, you are self-publishing, however, we are investigating the process of setting up as a registered publishing house. Why? Because this is a business, and we want to learn how to produce, market and distribute books professionally.

Don't be overwhelmed by the steps and information in this guide. Take it step by step, in your own time. Writing is a passion, keep writing for the sheer joy!

Reasons to become your own publisher:

- No rejection. You won't be judged by publishing companies.
- Immediacy. You won't have to wait up to two years from your acceptance date for your book to hit the market.
- Control. You get to choose your layout, word count and cover design. Your end product will be exactly what you envisage.
- Profit share. All the profit from sales go directly to you.

Reasons not to become your own publisher:

- Instead of being rejected by publishers, you could be rejected by readers.
- Immediacy is a double-edged sword. You can publish right away, but many self-published authors put their books out into the market before the book is ready.
- Yes, you have control, but perhaps you're not the best person to make decision like what should go on your cover.
- You won't have the distribution and marketing budget of a big publishing house. If nobody knows about your book, there'll be no profit to keep.

I do not regret setting up Hot Doggy Digital Press. If you'd like to become your own publisher, follow the steps below.

Registering your business name:

There are a few steps to registering your new business name. You might be able to skip some steps (if you already have an ABN or business name).

You can use your own name for your publishing house, however, it doesn't look as professional to have, say, novels by Charmaine Clancy published by Charmaine Clancy Press.

I already had a business name with an Australian Business Number (ABN) for a previous small business I operated. I simply called the Australian Taxation Office and changed Hot Doggy Pet Grooming to Hot Doggy Digital Press. This name suited my genre and readership.

If you already have a business and ABN and simply want to make a change, call the ATO Business section: 132 861

You'll need an ABN:

If you don't already have an ABN, they are simple to acquire. There is no fee for obtaining an ABN, you can register multiple business/trading names to the one ABN as long as those businesses use the same structure. To learn more about the process, go here:

<http://australia.gov.au/topics/business-and-industry/abn-acn-business-management>

Then, to apply for an ABN, simply fill in the forms found on the ATO site (if you have any problems, you can simply call them on 132 861).

<https://abr.gov.au/For-Business,-Super-funds---Charities/Applying-for-an-ABN/>

Register your business name:

You'll need to check that your very clever business name is not already taken. Search the database to make sure your name is not taken, or is not too close to another business. You don't want people getting you mixed up.

<http://abr.business.gov.au>

To register your business name, you'll need to go to the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) website.

<https://www.asic.gov.au/asic/ASIC.NSF/byHeadline/Registering%20a%20business%20name>

There is a fee associated with registering a business name, and although it may change, at the time of writing this booklet, the cost is \$33 for one year, or \$76 for three years.

There are a lot of forms and process at this stage of setting up your business, but you only have to go through this process once.

Registering as a professional publisher:

You need to set up an account with Bowker Link. They will register your publishing name on the databank of publishers. This is an important step, as some book printers will only deal wholesale with registered publishers.

<http://www.bowkerlink.com/common/StatementOfUse.asp?from=corrections&rgs=bip>

Purchasing ISBNs for your books:

AN ISBN is a 13 digit number used by publishers, book sellers, libraries and internet retailers to identify your book. The number is unique to your book and makes ordering easy. You'll need a different ISBN for each version of your book, for example, one for paperback and one for ebook.

Thorpe-Bowker are part of Bowker Link, and this is where you'll purchase ISBNs
<https://www.myidentifiers.com.au/isbn/main>

Save money by purchase your ISBNs in bulk. One ISBN costs \$42, but you can get 10 for \$84.

Opportunities:

You can claim for lost royalties for books borrowed from libraries and schools.

To learn more about the lending program:

http://arts.gov.au/literature/lending_rights

Click here to register and submit a claim:

<http://arts.gov.au/sites/default/files/literature/lending-rights/claim/lr-publishers-registration.pdf>

Sometimes you can get a grant to cover your costs:

Applying for grants for authors and publishers of Australian fiction:

<http://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/grants/2013/literature-publishing-27-march>

Book printers:

You will need to set up yet another account. This time with your printer. The two most common, and reasonably priced companies for this are Lightning Source and Create Space. I have found both companies produce a similar quality product but the service and price of Lightning Source is slightly better.

If you choose Lightning Source, register with them as a publisher:

<https://www1.lightningsource.com/default.aspx>

Now, I find their website much more confusing than Create Space, but they do offer a lot of help via email and phone. You will be assigned a representative who you can work with. As Create Space are not located in Australia, you will pay more for postage on paperbacks if you order from them.

If you do want to set up your titles for the US, you can register with Create Space here:

<https://www.createspace.com>

Book production:

This is the area where you'll have to make some tough decisions. If you want to produce a professional product, then you'll want experts working on the construction and design of your book.

For my first ebook, I used a writing program called Scrivener to convert the files for uploading to Amazon. This worked okay and is certainly a budget way of producing an acceptable ebook. I did have my cover professionally designed, and I warn against attempting to do your own cover if you have no graphic art skill or talent.

The cover is the biggest selling tool you have for your book.

My paperback books are typeset and designed by a professional company. My books are all also professionally edited.

I use Book Cover Cafe for my book production services and am very pleased with their results. Shop around, see what companies offer (but check the small print, there are a few business out there taking advantage of writers with big dreams).

Extras:

Signage can be expensive. One cheap alternative is to print up the cover of your book onto A3 sheets, laminate them, and place them around as signage.

Print material can also be expensive, I use Vistaprint for my business cards and book launch material, they are cheap and do a great job.

Promote yourself!

When your book is due for release hold a book launch party. Invite everyone you know (and a few people you don't, through Facebook). Offer prizes, snacks and entertainment.

Donate your book to libraries (and if appropriate, schools). Give author talks at libraries, book stores, Rotary clubs, writing groups and schools--if you wish to give an author talk to children you must either be a registered teacher, or have a Blue Card (police check).

Hold an online book launch. Get as many bloggers as you can to sign up to post about your book. Not blogging yet? What are you waiting for?!

Fairs, expos and markets are a great way to sell books.

Websites and blogs:

It's a good idea to wait until you've registered your business name before purchasing a domain name (the domain name is the www.com address for your website).

But you can, and should, set up a website/blog before you have a business name. Remember, your business name represents you as a publisher, but you still want to promote yourself as a *writer*. There are many free sites for websites and blogs. These allow you to get started and build yourself a following without investing any money. I started off with a free Blogger site (www.clancytales.blogspot.com). It was a good way to learn and I do still use that site sometimes.

Eventually though, you will want a professional site that is easy to find. Using your author name (I don't have a pseudonym, but if you do, that's the name you should use), purchase a domain name (www.YourName.com). If your name is taken, try 'AuthorYourName' or 'YourNameAuthor'.

You can purchase domain names from many sites (just try searching). Once you have a domain name, you'll need a hosting site. The two will need to be linked, so this is easier if you purchase your domain name from your hosting site. I use Just Host, which allows me to have as many domain names as I was all for the one price.

My author website:

CharmaineClancy.com

Website for kids and teens:

iTeenWrite.com

My publishing website:

HotDoggyDigitalPress.com

My writers retreat website:

RainforestWritingRetreat.com

Setting up a website is not easy, but using a 'template' can make it less complicated. Check out YouTube for lots of videos on how to get started.

We covered a lot in our session on 'The Business of Writing', and remember, you don't have to take it all on at once. Little by little.

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