

STEP 2

Editing

How many times do you think I've heard an author say this: 'My book was better *before* it was edited?' If you guessed absolutely never, well done. I've been doing this for over 15 years and that has *never* happened. I did once have a first-time author ring me up and berate me when I returned his edited file because he thought I'd butchered his book. A few days later, after he'd actually been through what I'd done, he sheepishly called back to apologise. He thought the editing was excellent and he was very pleased. So, it's never happened.

Mostly editors get the opposite response. I've lost count of the number of excited authors I've had on the other end of the phone after I've sent their edited book back to them. They ring up and express great surprise at how much an edit has improved the book. Many realise that while they thought their book was good before, the editing process has helped it reached its full potential.

What *is* editing anyway?

Most people who have never been involved in a book have no idea whatsoever about what the editing process involves. They often

think the author does all the work and the editor comes in at the last minute and moves a few commas around.

Yes, we check the spelling and the grammar and the punctuation and make sure it reads good ... sorry, well ... but there's a lot more to it than that. I've had an author dump a pile of barely collated material on my desk – the pile included some pages he'd bashed out between meetings and some notes written on a napkin – as he asked me to turn it into a book. That's fine. It's doable. It's just going to cost more. And I have another author who I work with regularly who is the consummate professional writer; if I have to insert a comma every few pages, I'm surprised. So editing can take many forms, but let me tell you what it will *always* do: it will always make a book better.

But do I *really* need an editor?

Authors sometimes ask if they *really* need an editor. Their arguments usually go something like this:

- 'My spelling is really good, and I've read through the manuscript lots of times. I don't think it needs an edit.' Editing is *much more* than just fixing the spelling.
- 'My Mum reads a lot and she's read it for me. I don't think it needs an edit.' If Mum's not an editor, the book still needs an edit. An English teacher is not an editor. A person who reads a lot is not an editor. The person who writes your website at work is not an editor. Only an editor is an editor.
- 'I've edited it myself.' A lot of the slightly dodgy material on the internet trying to promote cheap self-publishing talks about how you can 'edit your book yourself'. (I saw on one website recently a discussion on 'self-editing'.) Technically

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this is true; you could edit your book and you'd certainly save yourself a few dollars. You could also give yourself open heart surgery with a bottle of tequila, a Swiss army knife and a sewing kit, but would you really want to?

Even people who are excellent editors can't properly edit their own work. Do you think I edited *Stand Out* myself? Of course not. My wonderful editor, Charlotte, has certainly helped me improve this book. A crucial part of the editing process is getting an expert second opinion on what you've done, and you can't really give yourself a second opinion on your own work. A person who edits their own work has a fool for an author.

So, I've hopefully convinced you that you do absolutely, 100 per cent, without doubt, need an editor. It's non-negotiable if you want to produce a professional-quality book, and I know you do because you're reading this book and not one of the slightly suspect websites that tells you how to produce your book for only \$13.00 and sell a million copies on Amazon. Your book will be a reflection of you and your business; you want it to be the best it can be, right?

The role of the editor

Many first-time authors become a little nervous at the thought of somebody editing their book, but there is absolutely no need. The editor is on your side, and is just as keen to publish a good book as you are. It's not like at school where your work is being graded!

A good editor will be very involved with both you and your book, and will be just as enthusiastic about it as you are. Far from just 'correcting' your work, an editor will improve it in many ways small and large, while working with you to ensure you are producing the book that you want.

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Your editor will fix up spelling mistakes, inconsistencies, incorrect grammar and other errors, but a good editor will do much more than this. A good editor will:

- suggest additions where more information is required
- suggest deletions where you've included something unnecessary or repeated something
- alert you to any possible copyright concerns
- discuss with you changes that will improve your writing.

Because you're self-publishing, you have the final say in what goes in your book, but you would be well advised to take the advice of your editor in most instances. If your editor has made a change that you don't agree with, raise it with him or her and discuss it. You'll usually find you can come to an agreeable solution and, if not, it's up to you what to do. That's one of the advantages (and occasionally disadvantages) of self-publishing. (If you're publishing through a traditional publishing company, the editor or publisher usually has the contractual right to insist on changes, although in practice this rarely happens and agreeable solutions are almost always found.)

Just the facts, ma'am

It's a common misconception that your editor will check the facts in your book. This is definitely not the case. As both author and publisher it is absolutely your responsibility to get the facts right. It is very important that you're aware of this. If you're writing a book, you are the expert in your field and know more about it than most, and certainly more about it than your editor. So, when you're writing, make sure you're thorough and do your homework. Check your facts. If you put London in the US or start writing about World

War V, your editor will probably notice, but beyond that it's up to you. You can't expect your editor to know that when you wrote 'use a 15 mm spanner' you really meant 'use a 25 mm spanner'.

One exception applies here: you can hire an editor who is an expert or highly experienced in whatever you're writing about and ask them to check the facts, but this is a very big job and will cost you extra, possibly quite a bit. A better option can be to have a trusted colleague who knows your topic review the book for you before sending it to the editor. Most people will be happy to be involved and will do this kind of technical review for a bottle of wine and a free copy of the book.

The importance of finding an editor or company you can work with

Your editor will play a very important role in the final quality of your book. Not only do they need to be highly skilled and to understand your aims for the book, but you also need to get on well with them. You will be working closely with them for a number of weeks (and maybe months).

With this in mind, talking to at least two or three editors or self-publishing providers about your book before selecting somebody, and even meeting with them if you can, is a good idea.

One of the first things I do when I get that first call from an author is ask them to email the book to me so I can have a look. This does two things: it allows me to provide an accurate quote, and it also gives me the opportunity to discuss the book with the author and advise them on what I think needs to be done. I usually ask them to give me a few days to look at it so that I can discuss the book with them properly. Any decent editor or self-publishing company will be willing to do this with no commitment or cost. After you've discussed your book with a few editors or self-publishing

companies and received quotes, you'll be able to make a decision on who you think will be best for you and your book.

Although some editors specialise in certain areas, you don't necessarily need an editor who knows your topic well. Any good editor will be able to help you with your book, unless it's highly specialised and requires a detailed understanding of the topic. In all my years editing I've only ever knocked back a couple of manuscripts because the material was highly specialised and I didn't think I was the best person for the job. If this is the case for your book, hunt around until you find the right person and expect to pay more for your edit.

The editing stages

So, now that you've called Mum and told her, 'Sorry, you're not allowed to edit my book', let's have a look at what a *real* editor can do for you.

There are four different stages of editing, though not every book will need every one. The stages are:

- manuscript assessment
- developmental editing
- copyediting
- proofreading.

Copyediting and proofreading *are essential for every book*, but not every project requires a manuscript assessment or developmental editing. After having a look at your manuscript, your editor will be able to advise you on what it requires.

So let's see what's involved in each stage of editing.

Manuscript assessment

A manuscript assessment is when an editor reviews your book and advises you on what improvements can be made. The editor will not usually make any changes to the text, but will instead provide feedback in the form of a written report, which can be anywhere from two to ten pages, or more. Some editors will also make notes in the manuscript, suggesting changes.

Many authors don't have a manuscript assessment done. They're most commonly used by authors who are submitting their book to a publisher and would like to improve the book as much as possible before submitting. Self-publishing authors can use an assessment to receive some expert feedback while they're still working on their manuscript.

In my experience around 20 to 30 per cent of authors submitting to a publisher have an assessment done, and it's fairly uncommon for self-publishing authors. Still, it's an option you should be aware of. Receiving some expert feedback at the end of your second or third draft can be helpful, and then you can do another draft or two. It's not usually worth getting an assessment done after only your first draft because the book will still need work. Better to tidy it up more yourself before you pay for an expert opinion.

If you're going to have this done, many manuscript assessment agencies are available – just do an internet search. A good tip is to have the manuscript assessment provided by somebody other than the editor who is going to copyedit your book – that way, your copyeditor can give you a fresh opinion. Having a manuscript assessment performed may allow you to avoid a developmental editing stage, because in some ways they are similar – they both look at the overall macro issues of your book.

Developmental editing

The editing process proper begins with a macro view of the content of your book, called a developmental edit (or sometimes a structural edit). This is where the editor reads your book and provides feedback on the content and overall structure.

A developmental edit is usually done in Microsoft Word, although it can be done on hard copy as well. Your editor will read your book and provide feedback such as the following:

- highlighting where your book may benefit from additional information
- pointing out any repetition
- suggesting re-ordering, addition or removal of chapters
- suggesting any significant areas of text that could be removed.

Editing at this stage is done on a macro scale, looking at chapters and moving, adding or deleting significant portions of text. At this point, your editor will not be focusing on spelling, grammar, punctuation and the finer details of your book, although the editor may make some corrections here and there. Further refining, adding, moving and deleting will often be done at the copyediting stage as well.

In my experience, about 5 to 10 per cent of books need substantial developmental editing. I worked on a book recently that came to me at 150,000 words. The author had basically just written down everything he could think of on his topic and vaguely arranged it into a book. We went through four rounds of development and ended up with a very well structured 100,000 words. We moved chapters, deleted repetition, added some case studies, and rearranged his various sections, parts and chapters into a more coherent form.

I find that about 30 to 50 per cent of books need some level of development editing when they come to me, and the remainder go straight to the copyediting stage. Keep in mind that your book may still require some rearranging during copyediting, but not usually major surgery. If just very minor developmental work is required, this is often combined with the copyediting.

Copyediting

This is where your editor will start to focus on the text in a bit more detail. By this stage you should have the basic content and structure sorted out, either after a manuscript assessment, developmental edit or simply because your manuscript was in good shape to begin with.

I'm going to outline here how we work with our authors; while every editor works a bit differently, the process you go through will generally be similar whoever edits your book.

The first edit

The things your editor will be looking at during the first edit of your book are:

- consistency of spelling and styles
- improvements to suggest
- clarity of the writing
- spelling and grammar
- basic fact checking.

In the first edit of your book, your editor is going to look at structural issues as well as the more detailed copyediting. If your book needed substantial developmental work, you will probably have

had a developmental edit done (see preceding section), but some fine-tuning of the structure and content are still usually required at the copyediting stage.

Most likely, your editor will provide your first edit in Microsoft Word. One of the best things to happen to editing in recent years is on-screen editing. Microsoft Word is very bad for layout but, funnily enough, as a word processor it's very good for ... word processing! Most editors these days use Word and its excellent 'track changes' feature.

With track changes turned on, *every single change* the editor makes is highlighted in the file. This is the strength of tracked changes. In the old days, an edit was done on hard copy. The editor would make changes and then highlight the more comprehensive changes for the author to check. This was both laborious and not ideal because, while the author could easily see the highlighted major changes, not all of the smaller changes were marked, which meant the author had to read the book very carefully to make sure they were happy with everything. Even a comma in the wrong place can change the meaning of the text, but an author checking, say, 250 pages could easily miss this.

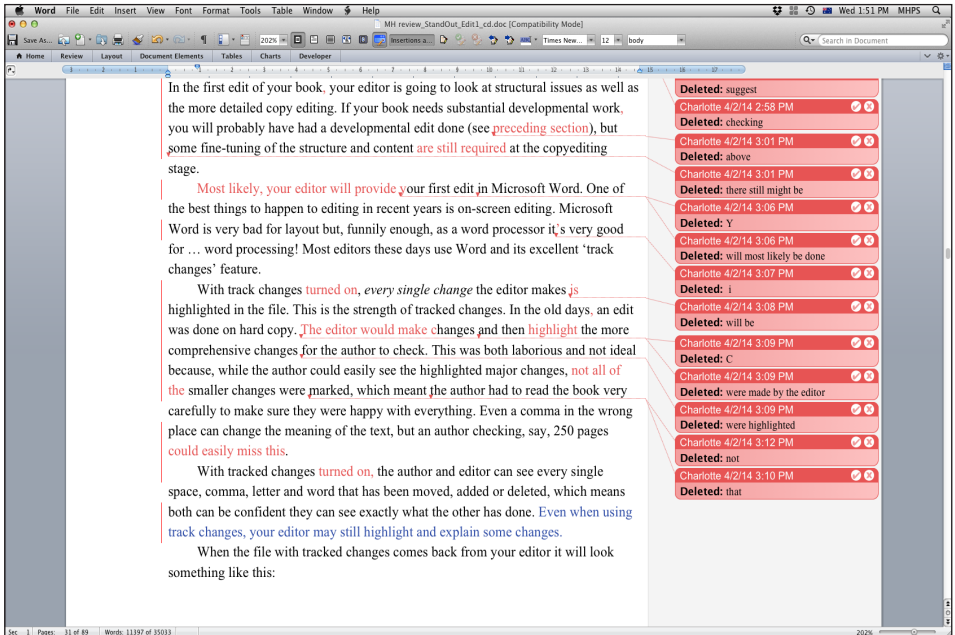
With tracked changes turned on, the author and editor can see every single space, comma, letter and word that has been moved, added or deleted, which means both can be confident they can see exactly what the other has done. Even when using track changes, your editor may still highlight and explain some changes.

It's up to you to go through this file very carefully and check what has been done. You'd usually be well advised to take on board most, if not all, of the changes made by your editor. I find that most authors accept about 80 to 90 per cent of the changes we make, and sometimes more. From time to time I have an author who doesn't

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even return the edited file to me – they just email back and say, ‘Fantastic – I accept everything you’ve done’.

When the file with tracked changes comes back from your editor it will look something like this:



As well as suggested changes, your editor might have some queries for you. For example, they might not have understood something and be asking for clarification, or suggesting some additional text or you move a heading, sentence or paragraph.

When you receive the edited file from your editor, you have another chance to go through your book, making changes in response to your editor's suggestions and queries, or perhaps based on something you've been thinking about yourself. This is usually your last chance in the process to make significant changes, although keep in mind that if you start making too many changes

you will probably be charged extra by your editor because you may be undoing work they've already done and they'll have to check the new material.

The text in the edited file will most likely have been 'styled' by your editor. This means that each heading, paragraph and so on has been 'tagged' to identify what type of text it is, such as a main heading, a normal text paragraph, a bulleted list or an example. This styling is used to identify text during the layout stage, but it doesn't reflect how your book will look when the layout is done – it's simply a representation of the different elements of the text of your book. (We also use colour in our text styling to help us identify what's what; I always remind authors that these colours will not be included when the book is printed.)

Once you've carefully checked the file from your editor and responded to any queries, you send the file back. Some back and forth with your editor may occur at this stage as you discuss some of the changes.

If you're not happy with anything your editor has done, don't be reluctant to raise it. It's your book and it will have your name on it. You need to be absolutely confident about everything your editor has done. Your editor will be more than happy to discuss any issues with you. He or she will be able to explain to you why any change has been made, and if you disagree on any changes, some discussion will usually be able to come up with a compromise.

Sometimes your book will go through a number of rounds of editing in Word if it needs a bit of extra work. At the outset of your project your editor or self-publishing provider should assess your manuscript and work out how many rounds of editing they think will be needed and discuss this with you.

The second edit

The second edit will be done after the layout is complete. Your editor will go through the book one more time checking for the same issues as during the first edit and making any final corrections and refinements, and also checking the layout. This is the point where your book really starts to come together and is starting to take its final form. This stage doesn't usually involve substantial changes – it's more of a 'tidying up' phase.

You'll receive from your editor a hard copy or PDF of your completed layout to check. This is usually the second-last time you'll see your book before it's printed and your last chance to make any changes (except for any absolutely essential last-minute errors that need to be fixed at later stages).

You need to read the book very carefully at this stage. This is your chance to check it thoroughly from start to finish and pay very close attention to details. Most authors I work with usually take about a week to read and carefully check the book at this stage.

You should also be checking the layout at the same time. If a reference to a diagram on page 27 is included, go to page 27 to make sure the diagram is actually there and not on page 28. Check that any diagrams, images and tables are in the right place. Make sure all the elements of your book have been included, such as the 'about the author' or a 'further reading' list. Going back to your original manuscript and having a quick flick through to make sure nothing has been left out is a good idea.

Your editor and proofreader will be checking all of these issues for you as well, but keep in mind it's your book. It has your name on the cover. You've been working on it for months. You need to take responsibility and do your bit to make sure your book is published

exactly as you want it to be. That's part of the responsibility you take on as a self-publisher.

Proofreading

Proofreading is the final step in the editing of your book. It's the final check for errors by a person who has not previously read the book. This provides a fresh set of eyes, which is essential because at this point you, your editor and your designer will have been working on the book for many weeks – or months – and will therefore be less likely to spot any problems.

Even the best of editors won't pick up every single mistake in your book, so proofreading is essential. Proofreading is Step 4 in the publishing process, so we won't go into any more detail here.

There will probably *still* be a typo or two in your book

I'm going to warn you about this now because it often upsets authors unnecessarily: despite all of the above, the odd typo or minor error may still be in your book when it comes out. Editors and proofreaders are human too, and if the above process gets rid of 99.999999 per cent of the mistakes, that still leaves a few minor errors in there.

If you go into any publishing company in Australia, you will find a corrections shelf with books marked with errors for correction when the book is reprinted. Elizabeth Flann, an icon in Australian editing and co-author of the excellent *Australian Editing Handbook*, has even admitted two mistakes appear in that book!

Finding an error in your book can be a bit disappointing, but don't let it get you down. It's really a common part of the publishing process. If you've had your book thoroughly edited and proofread, you can't do anything more. Just fix it when you reprint!

Copyright (a publishing minefield)

Copyright is something you may have to consider during the editing process. Copyright is a minefield, and certainly something you need to be well aware of lest you blow yourself up. It's also a very commonly misunderstood area, and you can get into a lot of trouble if you use copyright material that you didn't have appropriate permission for. If you do this and get caught, you can be required to pulp your books, or in a worst-case scenario you could get sued – after you've had to pulp your books. Nobody wants that (except the lawyers), so let's have a look at some common copyright issues.

What do I need permission to reproduce?

This question is easy to answer: any material that's going in your book that isn't yours! Okay, so it's not quite that simple, but that's a good basis to start from.

How much can I reproduce of somebody else's work before I need permission?

Not even a copyright lawyer can definitively answer this question for you, and I'm certainly not a lawyer! You've probably heard figures such as it's okay to reproduce 200 words without permission, or 150 words, but this is not exactly correct. No word limits are included in copyright law.

What is central to whether copyright has been infringed is whether a 'substantial part' of a work has been used. What's a substantial part? Nobody knows! There is *no definition* of a 'substantial part' in copyright law.

So, then, how does it work? If you reproduce 200 words of a 300-word poem in your book without permission, that will be

considered a ‘substantial part’ and you will have infringed the poet’s copyright. If you reproduce 200 words of a 120,000-word book, you’re probably fine. The context of the material used is important, not just the length.

What if I change a few words?

Contrary to popular belief, changing a few words here and there in material you wish to use isn’t enough to avoid copyright issues. You can’t copy three paragraphs from the internet and change seven words and think you’re free to use the material. So, make sure your work is your own. If you didn’t write it or they’re not your ideas, don’t use it without permission. You could get yourself in trouble, and it also won’t reflect well on you or your business.

How do I ‘register’ my book for copyright?

You don’t! Authors are often under the misapprehension that they somehow need to ‘register’ their book before it is protected by copyright. In many countries – such as the US and the UK – this is true, but not in Australia (which puts us in the minority). Here, the second your fingers hit the keyboard and turn your thoughts into something coherent on a page, it’s protected by copyright. Hey, it’s even protected if it’s incoherent. You don’t need to submit your manuscript anywhere or register it somehow. You have full and immediate protection from somebody infringing on your work as soon as you have written it down.

What is the ‘public domain’?

‘Public domain’ is another term that’s often misunderstood. (You’ll notice a lot of misunderstanding is going on here – that’s why it’s a minefield!) People often take this term to mean anything that’s

available to the public, but this isn't the case. Work is only in the public domain when copyright has expired.

The laws have changed over the years so you have to be careful, but in Australia copyright generally expires 70 years after a work is published or the death of the author, whichever is later.

How do I go about obtaining permission to use somebody else's material?

It's simple: you ask them!

This is usually done via email these days. Track down the person who holds the copyright in the material you want to use and write to them outlining your request. Include such information as what your book is about, where it will be sold, how many copies will be printed, and a bit about yourself. I usually also include the relevant pages from the book, so the person can see exactly how the material will be used. (If you don't do this, the person may ask to see it anyway.) Give them as much info as you can so that they fully understand what material you want to use and how. Remember, you're asking them to help you out so make it easy for them.

It is then entirely up to the copyright holder if they want to allow you to use their material. Some people aren't at all fussed and will say yes with no hassles. Other people might request that you make changes because they're not happy with what you've done. Of course, if permission is refused you will have to remove the relevant material from your book.

The other hurdle you might face is a fee. It's not at all unreasonable for people to ask for a payment for you to use their material. They went to the time, effort and expense to prepare it. These fees can range from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand for large requests. It is your decision whether you're prepared to pay such a fee. If the material is important to your book, you would be more likely to.

The copyright holder may also have specific requests for how they wish to be acknowledged; for example, they may insist that you provide their website in the acknowledgement.

Getting the approval in writing is absolutely vital. Email is usually okay, but if you want to be extra careful or large amounts of dollars or materials are involved, get a signed hard copy agreement that states very clearly what material is going to be used and how.

Your editor or self-publishing company may be able to assist in this area. We highlight any potential areas of concern for our self-publishers, and also provide advice on how to apply for permission to reproduce material. But, we do not make the permission applications. Why? Because this is a complex legal area and it's the responsibility of the self-publisher to ensure all adequate permissions have been secured. It's not in their interests or ours to take on this responsibility. As a self-publisher I suggest you ask for advice if needed but that you make the actual applications yourself. You can get into a lot of problems if it's not done right, so even if you are using a self-publishing company, look after this side of things yourself so that you can sleep at night knowing it's been done properly.

It is customary to offer a free copy of the book to anybody whose material you use.

Isn't just an acknowledgment okay?

No! Definitely not. This is another common misconception: that you can use other people's material as long as you acknowledge where it came from. This is completely untrue. Acknowledging a source is no substitute for obtaining permission.

You may have seen a book with a note along the lines of, 'Reasonable attempts were made to contact the copyright holders of material used in this book. If you have copyright concerns about

material in this book, please contact the publisher'. I've never used this and I don't think it's a good idea. It's no replacement for permission and will provide no protection whatsoever if somebody is upset about use of their material. If you're not sure, leave it out.

Will anybody even notice?

Authors sometimes think that applying for permission to use material is just alerting the copyright owner when otherwise they might never have noticed. This is quite possibly true. I've seen authors use material without permission and have no problems at all because the copyright holder was not aware of the book. It happens. But I have two major concerns about this approach:

- First and foremost, is this the way you want to do business? Using other people's material without permission just because you think you can get away with it? If you ask me, that's not cool.
- Secondly, why would you take the risk? Major copyright disputes only occur occasionally in publishing, but when they do it can be very costly and damaging to the reputation of a business.

If your permission request is knocked back, you should be glad that you asked because it means the copyright holder would not have been happy if you had used their material without permission.

Defamatory material

Another legal issue that can get you into trouble is if your book is defamatory. If your book is controversial in any way, having a lawyer go through it for you can be a very good idea.

People often think that if they're a bit vague and change a few names or details they can get around any potential defamation issues, but this is not the case. If you, for example, accuse one of your competitors of dishonest conduct without naming them but provide enough so a reader could easily figure out who it is, you can still be sued. Also keep in mind that something being true might still not be enough to protect you from defamation charges.

Lawyers

Yep – we have to go there. If you have any concerns at all about your book from a legal standpoint, get a lawyer to look at it. Your editor may highlight any potential issues, but the final responsibility for your book lies with you. If a problem arises you will get sued, not your editor. I'm more than happy to give general suggestions about these issues to self-publishers but I always conclude with a reminder that I'm not a lawyer and they should see one if they have any concerns.

ISBNs

The editing process is a good time to sort out your ISBN and a few other such issues. If you're managing your project yourself, this is something you will have to organise; if you're using a self-publishing company, they will most likely handle this for you.

ISBN stands for international standard book number. It's a unique 13-digit number that identifies not just your book but each version of your book. What do I mean by each *version*? Each different format of your book requires a different ISBN. So, if you do a hardback and a paperback, you need two different ISBNs. You also

need a different ISBN for each different file format of the ebook (see Step 6 for more on file formats).

As a minimum these days three ISBNs are usually needed for a book: one for the print edition, one for the EPUB ebook and one for the Amazon ebook. (Many people will tell you that you don't need an ISBN for your Amazon ebook, which is technically correct, but I still use one. You'll read why later.)

You'll also need a new ISBN if you reprint your book and make some changes (although a few small corrections don't require a new ISBN).

Do I need an ISBN?

I'm often asked by authors if they need an ISBN. If you're selling through bricks-and-mortar bookshops or other retail outlets, or want your book to be stocked in libraries, you most definitely need an ISBN and a barcode for the print edition. Or if you want to sell your ebook on sites such as iBooks and Kobo, you need an ISBN.

If you're *not* going to sell your book through such outlets, you can get away with not having an ISBN; however, I still always suggest to my clients that they purchase one. There are two main reasons for this:

- An ISBN looks professional; remember, we're going for a high-quality book.
- If you have an ISBN, you can always change your mind and sell it through bookstores later, even if you hadn't planned to at the start. You never know what sort of reaction your book is going to get. Maybe it will be popular and you'll regret not having the option to sell it in stores. You can always add an ISBN later if and when you reprint, but you'll have to wait to do this.

Amazon ebooks and ISBNs

If you upload through the Amazon Kindle Direct system, you actually don't need an ISBN for this version of the book because Amazon will format your book for you and allocate a unique number to your book, but I prefer not to do this. I like to control as much of the process as I can, so I have the Amazon file formatted before uploading and assign this version an ISBN. This ISBN won't even actually appear on the Amazon site, but you might find other uses for this version of the book and professional publishing requires that each version of your book has an ISBN, so that's the way we manage it. If you want to have different ebook formats available for sale on your own website, for example, you should have an ISBN for each. ISBNs are not costly so it's not an area to scrimp on.

You'll find more on ebook conversion and uploading in Step 6: The ebook.

Where do I get an ISBN?

In Australia ISBNs are sold and administered by a company called Thorpe-Bowker, which provides numerous services to the bookselling and publishing industry, including magazines and newsletters, databases, sales figures, ISBNs and barcodes.

You can order ISBNs and barcodes direct from Thorpe-Bowker online, or your self-publishing expert will probably be able to provide your ISBNs and barcodes for you. This is usually the better option, for two reasons:

- It's easier. As with most things online you'll have to set up an account if you do it yourself. If you purchase it as part of your publishing pack, you don't have to worry about this. One less password to remember!

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- It's usually cheaper. When you open an account with Thorpe-Bowker you have to pay a new publisher registration fee before you can purchase ISBNs. Your self-publishing provider will have done this already, so you should save a few dollars. Some services offer ISBNs for free.

If you're managing your project yourself, some ebook services offer a free ISBN with your ebook uploading; however, a couple of drawbacks are involved. Firstly, you won't know what your ISBN is until you're ready to upload your book, and I think this is too late. You want to be able to give people the ISBN for your book earlier than this, to help them order when it becomes available. You also want to have it for any publicity material you're preparing, and you'll be working on this before your book is ready for uploading. Also – and this is a very small point – when you purchase your ISBNs from one source the numbers will usually be similar and almost sequential, which I like to think is a small touch of professionalism. You'll look like a professional publisher who needs lots of ISBNs.

Make sure you buy from a reputable service provider. I've heard stories of authors being sold ISBNs that have already been allocated to other books. This will create all sorts of chaos and lost sales.

Barcodes

We all know what a barcode is and you can obtain one for your book in all sorts of ways. You can buy them from Thorpe-Bowker when you buy your ISBNs, or your designer, printer or self-publishing company might provide them.

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