

Be your own publisher, see your book in print

Judith Jones
Senior Scene

Admit it. In your heart of hearts, haven't you always dreamed of seeing your "Great American Novel" in print?

What are you waiting for? I can't get an agent or publisher to accept my book, you say. Here's the good news: You can be your own publisher. Technology has made it easier than ever to make your publishing dream a reality.

While traditional publishers have fallen on hard times, self-publishing is booming. More and more aspiring authors are using Web-based print-on-demand (POD) services to produce their books. Print-on-demand means that books are printed only when ordered; neither the publisher nor the author has to bear the costs of printing and storing an inventory.

Why self-publish? Maybe you have a built-in niche market. Maybe you're writing in a genre unsuited to traditional publishers. Maybe you need just a few copies of a memoir, family history or church history.

In these cases, self-publishing offers tangible advantages. It's easy, affordable, fast, and the quality of POD books has improved dramatically. You receive a higher royalty than you would from a traditional publisher, while retaining all rights and full control of your work.

Self-publishing won't bring you the sales of a Dan Brown or a Stephen King. It's not likely to make you a fortune. But if you are looking for the satisfaction of seeing your words in print, self-publishing may be right for you.

Local author Charlie E. Brough, 78, has self-published three books. With his first book, in 1994, prior to the advent of POD publishing, he paid \$12,000 to print 1,000 copies and still has hundreds of copies left. Charlie has published his subsequent books through iUniverse. He says, "It's pretty easy. You let the publishing company know you are ready to publish, and then they ask for all the parts of the book."

Okay, you say. I'm convinced. How do I get

started? The first and most important step is to be clear about your publishing goal. That goal will help you choose the service that's best for your book.

For example, maybe your goal is simply to publish your poetry, or your best recipes, for a small audience of family and friends. CreateSpace (owned by Amazon) and Lulu are the most affordable choices. Both have basic do-it-yourself options with no upfront charges. You pay only for your proofs and the number of finished copies you choose to order, all at an author rate.

If you need more than a few copies, are planning on doing some serious marketing and/or attempting to reach a specific niche audience, you may opt for a more sophisticated and costly service package. A little comparison shopping is worth your time; spend some time investigating self-publishing options on the Web. See the sidebar for some suggested links.

How does it work? At CreateSpace and Lulu, the basic process is simple. Following the company's guidelines, you choose a size for your finished book, format your completed, edited manuscript to fit that size, and then turn the formatted manuscript into a PDF. For the cover, both services offer templates that you can download and customize. If you choose to create your own cover art, you'll turn that into a PDF as well. Upload both PDFs to the self-publishing service of your choice, and within a week or two you will be holding a proof of your book.

What if you're not computer-savvy enough to turn your work into properly formatted PDFs? Assistance is available, for a fee. You may choose to work with a local editor and/or book designer, or purchase those services from your self-publishing company. Virtually all these companies offer a range of services, from basic editing and formatting to custom design, even marketing and publicity campaigns.

Once you've approved your proof, your book becomes available for sale. CreateSpace's basic plan, for example, provides a free, customizable e-store for each title it prints, and automatically

makes its titles available on Amazon.com. You set the retail price for your book. The royalty you receive depends on where the sale is made; the rate is higher for e-store sales.

Is there a downside to self-publishing? Best-selling author Robert Fulghum (*All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*) was asked recently whether self-publishing is a second-rate option. His emphatic response? "No! Use it to create a first-rate book."

It's true that the self-publisher lacks the professional editing, distribution and marketing support of a traditional publisher. Making your book look professional is entirely up to you. And being your own publisher also means being your own marketer: The number of copies you sell depends directly on your own efforts.

Is it worth it? Only you can answer that. Charlie Brough takes personal satisfaction from getting his books into print and says that his family and friends are happy he wrote the books, "which are all historic and mostly follow family."

Charlie Brough did it. Isn't it time to make your publishing dream come true?



www.selfpublishing.com
www.parapublishing.com
wwwcreatespace.com
www.lulu.com
www.iuniverse.com
www.xlibris.com

Ferne Carter Chapman-author, baker, artist



Ferne Carter Chapman in her home in Tacoma.

People say that to live longer you have to eat right, learn something new on a regular basis and find the good in the world around you. Anyone doubting that needs to spend a little quality time with Ferne Carter Chapman. This 80-something dynamo didn't start out life with much gusto but along the way she's learned a thing or two and has worked her way up to whirlwind.

Chapman, the middle child of a family of twelve was born in North Dakota. She'd always been sickly and the family's poverty probably contributed to her health problems. Those health problems and the death of three siblings from food poisoning would eventually cause her to develop a keen interest in nutrition.

When Chapman was 17 and still known as Ferne Carter, she moved to Tacoma and became a meat cutter at Safeway. The Japanese had just bombed Pearl Harbor and her future husband left to be in Patton's Third Army. "When my boyfriend left, a bunch of us girls thought 'that'd be fun' and decided to join up." Life sized posters showed women in uniforms and the four women literally decided to join the military based on the uniforms in those posters. Chapman joined the Spars, the

Women's Coast Guard. "For a country girl you can imagine how much fun that was," she said. She wanted an office job but was sent to school for cooking and baking.

She resumed her career at Safeway in the meat department in 1951 but she still had health issues. "I was just kind of a sickly kid," she said. "I was 23 pounds underweight." While passing a natural food store one day she encountered someone who introduced her to the concepts of health food.

Her interest in nutrition eventually led her to volunteering at the county extension for 13 years and acting as a judge at the Puyallup Fair and the grange. During that time she wrote several cook books and a memoir of life in the 20s and 30s. The Tacoma News Tribune called one night to tell her they were sending a photographer over in the morning. She stayed up all night long baking and the feature page shows a picture of Chapman surrounded by loaves of bread, which the photographer never knew had involved an all-nighter.

She stays busy as a member of a singles group that meets at the Elks, paints beautifully and in her spare time she's learning to play the organ.