Why & How Should Schools Self-Publish?

Speaker Credentials

Sheri McGuinn is a Master's in Education, Learning and Behavior Disorders, and 10+ years of teaching in rural, urban, and reservation schools. This presentation is part of her Master's project for another degree in Administration, Professional Writing emphasis. She started self-publishing in 2007 and formed Durare Publishing in 2012 to have more control over her work. She has written award-winning novels and *Self-Publishing for Schools,* which is available in both color and grayscale versions. While there are many manuals on self-publishing available, *Self-Publishing for Schools* is specifically designed for the needs of educators. She wrote it after helping a school on the Apache reservation produce a seven-dollar yearbook. She also assists other authors in manuscript preparation for publishing and teaches self-publishing workshops.

If you miss her presentation, you can catch her 5-6PM Friday at Andersons Booksellers, Booth #153, when she will be signing her books. You can look inside at her [Amazon author page](). If you miss getting them at the conference, check [www.durarepublishing.com]() for promotional discounts. She can be contacted through her website, [www.sherimcguinn.com]() if you have questions.

What would you publish?

Having an idea of what your school could self-publish will help you understand why you should and how you can create real books without financial risk for the school. You can self-publish almost anything you can think of, but a few examples to get your creative juices flowing include:

- A body of work by one student or teacher
- Anthologies of student and/or teacher work
- Teaching materials staff members develop
- Cookbooks or other fund-raisers
- Picture books
- Affordable yearbooks

Why? - For the students

Ownership and pride are terrific motivators, especially when you are working with under-achievers and other alternative students. Producing a "real" book makes kids realize they *can* do great things.

Develop lifelong tools: Self-publishing is here to stay.
Per Bowker, the source of all ISBN numbers in the U.S., more than 458,564 books were self-published in 2013. Many are non-fiction titles designed to help an individual or business establish credibility in their field, to broaden their customer base, or to offer a customer service. When students work on a self-publishing project, the skills they develop will not only be useful to them as they progress through school but also in their future workplaces. The link for this report is included below.

Help students who want to write. Help kids with a specific message get it out where it can do some good. Help those who want to be writers understand that audience is the key to marketing as well as voice. Help them start building skills that will make them successful in a highly competitive self-publishing world.

Preserve culture. Encourage students to use self-publishing projects to preserve the stories of their culture.

Skills that will be learned and practiced include but are not limited to:

- Writing, editing, formatting, and publishing
- Photography, creation of graphics and use of computer software to manipulate both.
- Promotion and sales
- Working and making decisions as a group

Affordable yearbooks. Students who might have to do without because of restricted family income can feel like they're part of things when they have their own yearbook to pass around with everyone else.

Fund-raising projects such as cookbooks can fund activities that have been cut and thereby keep students engaged in school.

Why? - For staff members

Meet common core requirements. Publishing is part of the common core curriculum each year K-12.

Make life easier by increasing student enthusiasm and parent support. This kind of hands-on project engages more students, including those reluctant to learn. Parents will also respond to the quality of the student projects.

Build on your own skills. Share your instructional techniques or your own creative expression through self-publishing. Advocate for professional development credit for any classes or workshops you may need.

Bring back the fun in teaching. Profits from fund-raising projects can be designated to provide advisor stipends and other funds for activities that have been cut. Possibilities include not only yearbook or a graphic arts club, but any club you would like to support. For example, if someone wants to advise a chess club and fund a stipend or travel to a tournament, they could raise funds with a self-published book designed by those students. It could be about chess or anything else. By choosing CreateSpace or a similar company to produce your books, you avoid giving the lion's share of any fundraiser to a corporation.

Why? - For the school

Meet common core requirements. Publishing is part of the common core curriculum each year K-12. Creating quality products will help your school meet the standards as you prepare your students for the future.

Engaged students learn more and misbehave less. Hands-on projects with quality products engage students, especially reluctant learners. When these students are engaged, they learn more and are more excited about school. This may result in less discipline problems and even higher standardized test scores (because they try).

Build community relations. Affordable yearbooks, student-created fund-raisers that help you bring back activities that have been cut, and quality books that display student achievements will all build good relationships with the students' families and the community in general.

How?

A Brief History of Self-Publishing

Offset printing – Back in the day, this was the only option. Set-up was the costly piece, so the only way for each book to be affordable was to buy large quantities. This was called Vanity publishing and most people got stuck with boxes and boxes of books. *If you're SURE you'll sell over a thousand books, this is still the cheapest way to print. However, most books sell less than five hundred copies and traditional publishing houses consider 10,000 a respectable number of copies to sell (unless you're an established star).*

Print on Demand (POD) – As this century began, computerized technology evolved that minimized set-up costs. Check out this history of the Espresso Book Machine - if you can locate one near you, it would make an awesome field trip. See if you can negotiate costs to make it reasonable to print 1-3 copies of kids' first books.

 Many companies developed to make money by selling writers packages to self-publish their books via POD. There are still many of them out there, getting uninformed people to spend hundreds or thousands of dollars when it's not necessary. This includes yearbook companies. The one McNary used the year I wasn't there does not make any pricing information public – you have to contact them first. This is a standard psychological trick to develop a bond with the customer – you are more likely to buy the more interaction you have with someone. They ended up with a $20 yearbook that was essentially the same as our $7 one through CreateSpace.

CreateSpace – Amazon blended two companies and started printing self-published books in 2008 as CreateSpace. They've gone from 11,498 books that year to 186,926 in 2013. Lulu, the company in second place, printed 70,895. None of the many other companies made 10,000. These statistics are from Bowker's report on Self-Publishing in the United States, 2008-2013 and would only include books published using one of CreateSpace's ISBNs. I've published multiple titles with them since 2012, but my books would be listed under Durare Publishing (my company) because I buy my own ISBNs.

Reasons CreateSpace is so popular and my favorite:

- You don't have to pay for uploading files – **you can only pay for copies ordered**.
- Their cost for regular perfect-bound books has always been the lowest I could find.
- They let you control distribution.
  - If you don't want the general public to have access to the yearbook, with CreateSpace you can set it up so only the school can order copies to maintain privacy.
  - If you have a book you believe will have wide appeal, it can be made available for purchase worldwide. Amazon will handle the online sales and send you royalties.
  - You can have any book for sale online and still purchase copies for resale at school. You can make more per book that way, if you don't over-order.
- The yearbooks and picture books I've helped publish with them have printed beautifully.

Researching other options. The publishing industry continues to change rapidly. Check the copyright date on any book you read on self-publishing. Books written before 2010 are likely to recommend "new" self-publishing companies that make money by selling writers expensive services. Those services are available but not required at CreateSpace. They make money when books are sold.

Reasonable alternatives for print books.
There are some print alternatives I haven't used myself, but have had recommended by other authors.

- If you have a sure audience and a fully developed marketing plan that you know will sell thousands of books, Lightning Source or a small press using offset printing might be a better option.
- If you want a spiral binding, check out Lulu. They're more expensive but offer more binding options. They were the #2 producer of self-published books in 2013.

There are also multiple options for electronic books.

- If you use CreateSpace, publishing with Kindle is free and relatively easy. Your files are converted to various formats, including Kindle and iPad. They do not offer or require ISBN use.
- BookBaby and Smashwords also have good reputations, but I have not used them myself. Smashwords utilized 85,500 ISBN numbers last year, more than any other e-book publisher.
- Lulu also has an e-book option. They were #2 in use of ISBN numbers last year, with 33,892. No one else came close, but many places/people chose to publish e-books without ISBN numbers.

Whatever option you use to publish an e-book, be aware that print and electronic books are formatted very differently. Once you have a print manuscript, it's not difficult to create an electronic manuscript, but it does demand knowledge of those differences as well as attention to detail. Kindle offers free e-books on how to build an e-book and there many other online resources.

Disclosure

These materials are derived from my book, *Self-Publishing for Schools* ©2014.

Links

Author Central

Amazon offers free author pages to any author. Here are links to mine, Stephen King's, and Mark Twain's. All of my books can be viewed at this author page.

http://www.amazon.com/Sheri-McGuinn/e/B008V65FOQ

http://www.amazon.com/Stephen-King/e/B000AQ0842/ref=sr_tc_2_0?qid=1416165134&sr=1-2-ent

http://www.amazon.com/Mark-Twain/e/B000APWHJ2/ref=sr_ntt_srch_lnk_1?qid=1416165208&sr=1-1

To find other authors, locate one of their books at Amazon and if their name is blue, it's a hyperlink to their Author Central page.

Publishing options

https://www.createspace.com/ CreateSpace

http://www.lulu.com/create/books Lulu

http://ondemandbooks.com/ The Espresso Book Machine

http://ondemandbooks.com/history.php The history of the Espresso Book Machine/POD technology

https://kdp.amazon.com/ Kindle Direct Publishing

http://www.smashwords.com/ Smashwords

http://www.bookbaby.com/ Bookbaby

https://www1.lightningsource.com/default.aspx Lightning Source - for offset printing of 1000+ copies

Other publishing links

https://www.myidentifiers.com/ Bowker: The source of all ISBN numbers in the U.S.

http://www.bowker.com/assets/downloads/products/bowker_selfpublishing_report2013.pdf Report quoted above.

http://copyright.gov/ Copyright office

Manuscript preparation resources

http://www.thebookdesigner.com/ Joel Friedlander provides lots of good free advice and also sells a lot of products such as templates. You probably want to build your own with tables, but if you don't these are probably more affordable than going with a subsidy or yearbook publisher.

https://kdp.amazon.com/help?topicId=A2MB3WT2D0PTNK Free downloads of how to build e-books.

http://www.writersdigest.com/ Main source of writing books and such, you can also access free articles online.

http://www.writermag.com/ The writer's magazine I prefer.

Presenter links

www.sherimcguinn.com My website. Includes a page with supplemental materials for my books and other links.

http://www.amazon.com/Sheri-McGuinn/e/B008V65FOQ My Amazon author page with all books listed.

www.durarepublishing.com Educator discount codes are on the Book List page.

sherimauthor@yahoo.com Email for questions regarding this presentation or my books.

Bibliography

This is an annotated bibliography with the newest copyrights first. Always check the copyright date on a self-publishing book. The industry is changing so rapidly that details may no longer be accurate by the time a traditional publisher goes to press, let alone a few years later.

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While there are many manuals on self-publishing available, I believe mine is the only one specifically designed for the needs of educators. I wrote it after helping the small school near me produce a full-color, thirty-six page yearbook that they could sell for $7. I published the color edition first. The Grayscale edition is essentially the same book, but much more affordable without color inside. Illustrations where color is essential are available for free at www.sherimcguinn.com along with other .pdf files – for classroom or personal use only.
My books are available at the NCTE Convention Bookstore (Andersons Booksellers Booth #153) through Sunday. I am signing books there 5-6PM on Friday. You can look inside all of the books at my Amazon author page. If you miss getting them at the conference, check www.durarepublishing.com for promotional discounts.

2014 Guide to Self-Publishing
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Also available as an e-book, no ISBN found.
I reviewed the paperback 2014 edition – the inaugural edition of this book. Based on other publications from Writer's Digest and comparison of the 2014 and 2015 tables of content, it will probably be updated annually with substantial amounts of material continued from year to year. This book is a series of articles by people working in self-publication. It is geared for the professional indie writer. It does include lists of publishing companies that work with indie writers, too. That would be a good resource if you are looking at multiple options.

A Detailed Guide to Self-Publishing with Amazon and other Online Booksellers Vol. 1
Chris McMullen
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Self-Published with CreateSpace
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Both volumes are also available in e-book format which has been updated through 2014. I reviewed the paperbacks and took a quick look inside the e-books. The paperbacks are packed with sans serif print and have a busy border that I found so distracting I had to force myself to really look at the content. The e-book has a less distracting border. Once I got past that, I found a significant amount of useful information. Much of it is geared to the professional indie using CreateSpace. However, you might find it a useful resource for specific tasks at CreateSpace. I'd buy the e-book as the more up-to-date version. Volume one covers more of the construction of the book while volume two has one section on proofing and the rest is about marketing.

The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing: 5th Edition
Marilyn Ross and Sue Collier
©2010 Marilyn Ross and Sue Collier
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I was disappointed in this edition. The index listed three pages for CreateSpace, but I only found mention on one of those pages, and it was described as "Amazon's new venture" (p. 27) and they made it sound like you'd lose money because you'd have to hire cover and interior designers. You don't need to do that – the objective is for your students to learn how to do it themselves. The book is out of date four years after the copyright date. That said, this is a useful text to familiarize you with publishing in general. I used an earlier edition for information on marketing and, while many links were obsolete, I learned a lot. There is an e-book edition as well, but page 27 hadn't changed. It doesn't seem to have been updated from the paperback.

Self-Publishing for Dummies
Jason R. Rich
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I liked the layout of Sander's book and how she begins with why you might self-publish, and both books have some good parts, but they are too old. And as I looked inside the e-book editions, they seem to be straight from the paperbacks. Too much information is now wrong – like the assumption you have to spend a lot of money to self-publish. When these were written, the only option was the companies that sell packages to writers instead of making their money selling books. I hope they each update.