How to Publish your Work

by Kay Millard

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Introduction

This handbook is intended for individuals or Unitarian congregations who wish to produce a publication and make it available in permanent form for others. It is not primarily concerned with ephemeral material such as newsletters or blogs, although some of the advice given here may be useful for any kind of publication.

The practicalities of going into print have changed dramatically over recent decades, mainly because the use of computers is now common at all stages of the publishing process. Whether the final result is intended to be printed and bound or published online as an e-book, computers are essential tools. Nevertheless, there are some aspects of publishing that remain constant, and the human element is also vital.

By issuing a complete revision of an earlier handbook, the Lindsey Press hopes to assist Unitarian authors to produce quality publications that will reflect well on the denomination.

Having the Idea for a Book

There are many reasons why a congregation or individual might wish to produce a book. It might be to raise money for a charitable purpose, or to provide various kinds of faith material, or to add to local history. These are some of the possibilities:

- Collections of prayers or poems (with various contributors)

- Collections of sermons (by one person or several)

- Histories of chapels and their congregations

- A biography of a famous local person

- Stories or plays for children

- Books for sale – recipe books, books of photographs, etc., to raise funds

There are others, but these are probably the main categories.

Having decided that a book should be published, there are some practical questions to consider. If the book is to contain original contributions from various authors, someone needs to be in overall charge – to act as editor. The editor's job is to ensure that contributions are submitted to an agreed timetable, are of consistent quality, and adequately represent the theme of the book. Where a book is a history or a biography, however, a single author is to be preferred to ensure that that the style is consistent. In that case it is a good idea to have a "referee" who will read the manuscript and advise on accuracy.

Such tasks are not to be undertaken lightly, as they involve considerable amounts of work. It is always worth asking at the outset whether the time and effort involved is in reasonable proportion to the potential results. If it is, then get it into print!

Preparing the Manuscript

This is the most important phase of publishing. The original manuscript (ms) must be worked on as a piece of writing until it is as close to perfect as is humanly possible. Once it is in the hands of the printer it cannot (with a few very minor exceptions) be altered. It is therefore worth investing time and care at this stage to avoid disappointment later.

A manuscript should be prepared in Microsoft Word if using a PC, or in Word for Mac if using Apple. These can easily be transferred between one computer and another. If alternatives are used they can be translated, but sometimes lose formatting in the process.

If the manuscript is to be worked on by more than one person it is useful to have it in double-line spacing (or at least 1.5) so that interline marking (e.g. highlighting) and editing is easy. Once any corrections have been made the text can then be put into single-line spacing very quickly.

A hard copy need only be produced if it is wanted by a third-party for checking, or by a designer; most submissions are now made in the form of documents attached to e-mail.

A Single-author Publication

If you are the author, then the work is your own creation. If you are publishing a collection of prayers or poems, which you have written yourself, then you will need to do comparatively little in the way of preparation, other than to organise the material and ensure that it is exactly as you want it. If, on the other hand, you are producing a history or biography, you will need to ensure that facts are correct and that sources for your statements have been properly cited. If you are publishing a collection of other people's published work, or using it to a substantial degree, then you will need to ensure that copyright permission has been obtained for its use. Photographs and music are subject to copyright as well as texts.

The following checklist may be useful for those unused to writing.

- Is what you have written clear to the reader?

- Have you used enough breaks in the text, with appropriate sub-headings (or are there too many?)

- Have all facts been checked, and are the sources for them reliable?

- Is the work a coherent whole, moving logically from introduction to conclusion?

- Has anything significant been left out, or alternatively are there any irrelevancies?

- Have you complied with copyright rules, and referenced the work?

- Have you personally checked for spelling and grammar errors, in addition to using the computer?

For anyone who struggles with the vagaries of the English language there is a useful website:

www.englishgrammar.org

Editing for a Group of Authors

It is useful to lay down Author's Guidelines at the outset. These may be relatively simple: the date by which a contribution must be submitted; the approximate length; the style of referencing to be used. Professional publishing houses have lengthy guidelines to establish a universal style, but for a single publication this is probably not necessary. However, the Guidelines issued to authors by the Lindsey Press can be made available to Unitarians on request.

It is up to the individual authors to check their own citations and copyright permissions, but (since it is the publisher who will be sued in the event of a breach of copyright) wise editors will ask for proof of permission being granted where relevant. Authors should also be asked to confirm that nothing in their work is libellous.

It is often a challenge to ensure that contributions from different people are of an even quality. If there is any question about this it is useful to have an "outside" referee who can advise on how contributions may be improved or rewritten. Once a piece has been accepted for inclusion, it is one of the chores of editing to make sure that it follows the style of other contributions, for example with consistent spellings (ageing or aging, organise or organize), and the use of capital letters, and in styles of formatting.

The Editor of a collection usually writes an introduction setting out the purpose of the book and a brief overview of the various contributions, and also a conclusion drawing together the disparate threads.

Copyright

Copyright protects original work from being used without permission. If a passage from a previously-published book, or a photograph, or a piece of music, is used in another publication, permission must be sought from the publisher of the original work in which it appeared. If permission is granted, a fee may or may not be charged.

There is a common misunderstanding that if a published work is given away free of charge it does not infringe copyright if someone else's work is used. Dismiss this thought. There are circumstances in which permission does not have to be obtained from the original author, but the fact that a book is given away free is not one of them. The exceptions to the requirement to obtain permission are:

- Private research and study

- Copying for educational purposes

- Criticism and news reporting

- Incidental Inclusion

It is usual to be able to quote short passages from published works without copyright permission, provided the passage is in quotation marks and attribution is fully given, but the passage must not be the "key" passage of the earlier work. Prayers and poems, however short, are regarded as complete works for copyright purposes and permission to reprint them should always be sought. If in doubt, seek permission. When requesting copyright permission from a publisher, give the details of the volume in which the quotation will appear, the likely number of copies that will be printed (this can make a substantial difference to any fee) and the full passage that you wish to copy, in its context.

Material on the Internet is also subject to copyright, and this includes artwork as well as text, and also recorded podcasts.

For a full breakdown of current copyright rules, see www.copyrighthub.co.uk

Bibliographies and References

Even if another author's work is not directly quoted, you may be using an idea gained from your reading and putting it in your own words. Where this occurs, it is necessary to reference that work by using one or other of the accepted methods available, to avoid any suggestion of plagiarism (i.e. passing other people's ideas off as one's own).

There are two basic methods of referencing. The first involves placing a superscript number against the relevant passage in the text, and then giving a numerical list at the end of the work with full details of the original publication. The second involves placing the author's surname and date of publication in the text, then providing an alphabetical list at the end of the work with full details. Either system may be used, but it must be employed consistently throughout.

If material has been obtained from a website, rather than a book, that should be cited by naming the website in full and giving the date on which it was accessed.

For a useful explanation of references, see www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/citation

A Bibliography is a list of books for further reading on the subject in hand, which may or may not have been mentioned in the text. It is presented in alphabetic order of the authors' surnames. A full entry includes: author(s) name(s), date of publication, title, publisher, and place of publication.

Indexing

An index should be included in a non-fiction work if the work is of more than "booklet" length. It may be a straightforward list of names and places, or it may become more complicated with a system of sub-entries. There are computer programs for indexing, but they tend to be unsubtle. They do not, for example, cope well with the thematic nuances of religious history!

In books of poems or prayers different kinds of index are helpful: First Lines; Authors; and Subjects. The last of these is only necessary if the contributions are not grouped under subjects; if they are, then the Contents page should suffice.

For advice on indexing see http://www.ugapress.org/upload/indexing.pdf

Final Preparations

Once the manuscript is complete, there is still work to do before a book can go to press.

For advice on all aspects of final design see
https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2010/01

Page Layout

Most computers have design features and templates to enable a variety of page designs and layouts. These can, however, bewilder as well as help. If you are not confident about pagination, typography, and other design features this is probably the time to involve a local printer. The printer can take your manuscript and use appropriate software to produce a proof copy that you can then accept or reject.

There will be a charge for design services, and if you are keen to keep costs down then you can produce your own "camera ready" design – so called because all the printer then has to do is copy it. The key decision before you begin your design is the size of the finished book. While it is easier to use a standard size, such as A4 or A5, it is more professional to use one of the traditional publisher's sizes, such as quarto or octavo.

For details of the various book sizes see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_size

Once the size has been decided the same page margins should be set throughout the document: margins should be wider at the centre than on the outside, and deeper at the foot of the page than at the top. Text can then be inserted into the new document automatically, with manual adjustment for breaks between sections or chapters. Once this has been done, pages can be numbered automatically and "headers" added. Headers run along the top of every page, with the title of the work on one side and the author's name on the other.

Illustrations and photographs can be easily placed within the text; ideally they should be as near as possible to the text that they illustrate. Alternatively they can be grouped together in a group of four or eight pages. Colour printing will increase the cost. Always double-check captions and make sure photographs have correct attribution and copyright permission where necessary.

Typography

This aspect of formatting should be decided before the text is inserted into the template, because different typefaces take up different amounts of space, even if they are the same point size. The typeface for the main body of text should be chosen primarily for readability. In large blocks of text a "serif" type (such as Times) with the small hooks on the letters is considered easier to read than a "sans serif" type (such as Calibri). On the other hand, the sans serif types are considered more modern-looking. As a compromise

you might choose to use a serif typeface for the text, and a sans-serif typeface for the headings.

Chapter headings and section headings can be made to stand out by the use of larger type sizes, *italics*, or **bold** type. The important rule is to be consistent throughout the manuscript, and within the text use such devices for emphasis sparingly. Where a book title is given it should always be italicised.

For assistance with typography, see www.practicaltypography.com

Preliminary Pages

Before the main text there should be several preliminary pages. In spite of their name, it is easiest to prepare these last. They should include, in the following order:

Title Page, giving the full title and name of the author

Copyright Page, giving:

Country of Publication

Name and address of the publisher

Copyright Notice, with author's name and date (year)

International Standard Book Number (ISBN)

Name and address of the printer

Contents Page

For help and advice with the copyright page see
https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2010/01

Title and Cover Artwork

Most self-published books are paperback rather than hardback, and an attractive basic cover design is both easy to achieve and – in spite of the old adage about not judging a book by its cover – an attractive selling point. A background photograph or drawing superimposed with the title and author is a common choice. There are some obvious (but occasionally forgotten) points to consider.

When choosing a title, make sure it reflects the subject of the book. A snappy title may be desirable, but it should not mislead the potential reader. Titles themselves are not copyright, but it is considered bad practice to copy someone else's in order to increase interest. If necessary use a subtitle to give more information about the book.

Make sure the title is easily readable. This applies both to the typeface chosen – it should not be too ornate, condensed, or thick – and to the background colour. A grey title on a pale blue background, for example, will not stand out.

Use artwork for the background of the cover that reflects the content. A photo-portrait of the subject of a biography, or a picture of a chapel for a history, are obvious examples, but there are more subtle choices for, say, books of prayers or poems. If the title has been chosen well to represent the content, then it is sensible to use the title as a starting point in any search for artwork. If you do not have your own artwork in the form of a photograph or drawing, there are numerous websites where you can find images. Some offer them free of charge, others require a modest subscription for use of the website. Bear in mind that even clip-art, which is usually available free, is subject to copyright and will need acknowledgement.

The back cover of a book is just as important as the front. It should contain the "blurb", which gives a précis of the contents. This should give a clear and comprehensive indication of what the book is about, preferably in a lively style. A standard length would be around 150 words. The back cover should also contain the price, the ISBN, and any attribution regarding the cover design.

Finally, consider how the book is to be bound. Only a comparatively short booklet (64pp maximum) can be bound successfully using staples ("saddle-stitched"). Most commonly, a longer book will be "perfect bound" – that is, the pages will be glued into the printed cover, which will be made of card (in spite of being called a paperback) and possibly laminated. If there are more than about 64pp, but preferably at least 80pp, the book will have a wide enough spine to include the title and author, which is always desirable for a book that will be kept in a bookcase. In some cases spiral binding is preferred. This is particularly the case where the use of the book requires it to be opened flat – examples are books of prayers, or books of recipes.

For further information on design, see https://www.thebookdesigner.com/2010/01

Print and/or Digital Publication

So far this has been all about print, and many people still prefer to have a book that they can hold and read without an e-reader. Nevertheless it is becoming more common for authors to self-publish using one of the digital platforms such as Kindle, and many publishers are now making books available in both formats. Preparing the manuscript is almost identical for both print and e-book, but there are some additional considerations regarding the finished product.

It is important to prepare the manuscript in Word, HTML, or Mobi, as these are the easiest to convert to digital format.

Uploading your finished manuscript to Kindle is free, but during the preparation process there are charges for services such as editing and design if they are provided by Amazon. After the book has been published it can be purchased and the author is paid a royalty (usually around 70 per cent) of the sales price.

E-publishing has several advantages. One is that the final text and illustrations can be changed more easily. A "second edition" is therefore very much easier to produce, and any errors can be put right.

There are ways of marketing an e-book online for very little cost, and it is available worldwide.

If a paperback copy of a digital book is required, it can be produced (charges vary), so that work can be supplied in both formats.

For initial information on e-publishing see https://kdp.amazon.com

Selling the Book

Marketing a title is difficult for self-publishers. If a book is of local interest, local bookshops may agree to stock it on a sale-or-return basis, and it may also be given valuable publicity in local newspapers. However, it is a sad fact that most books of local or specialised interest will not sell very many copies. To avoid having large numbers of copies to store, yet to ensure that there are enough copies to satisfy the potential readership, a difficult decision has to be made about the print run.

Assuming that the decision results in an initial print-run of 100, pricing the book is then based on this figure. There are two elements to the cost of printing a book: fixed costs, and variable costs. Fixed costs are those that apply even to a single copy, while variable ones are affected by quantity. Any costs such as copyright fees, artwork, the purchase of software, and the cost of preparing the manuscript, are fixed. The printer will also make a fixed charge for "setting up" prior to printing. The costs of printing, binding, and trimming the volume will vary according to the print run. Printers will also usually quote a "run-on" charge for additional copies. In the end, to establish the unit price of the book, all costs will need to be added together and divided by the number of copies printed. The sale price should cover this and produce at least as much again, because booksellers will require a discount from the price when they sell it; commercial publishers usually work on the basis of unit cost x 3 to arrive at the selling price.

The difficulties of estimating demand in advance and settling on a definite print run can be avoided in two ways.

First, e-publishing has no print costs, and therefore the only costs involved are those incurred in preparing the book. Sales of e-books produce royalties for the author at a percentage rate agreed before publication. Every sale therefore generates income, and once initial costs have been covered every sale is profit. Alternatively a book can be uploaded to a website. Most Unitarian congregations and districts now have their own website, and can host substantial documents. The catch is that charging for reading the book is almost impossible unless it can somehow be linked to a credit card sales system. In practice, publishing on a website is to publish for free, but this may be a service to the community that is supported financially by the organisation. Just make sure that if you do this the document is translated into PDF (portable document format) or otherwise protected from editing by outsiders, before you upload to the Web.

Second, the book can be published on the basis of "print-on-demand" by using one of the commercial companies that offers this service. Usually an initial print-run is required of 50 copies. After that, a book is printed when a purchaser orders it, either through one of the online booksellers such as Amazon, or via a local bookshop. While this is a very useful development for short-run publications, it has several drawbacks. The first is that the book has limited formats – it must be of a particular size, and have enough pages, and so on. The second is that the pricing process is, if anything, even more complex

than estimating a specific print-run. It is therefore quite difficult to establish a selling price that will cover costs. The third is that establishing a contractual agreement with a print-on-demand publisher is a time-consuming process that requires a degree of familiarity with the terms and technicalities of publishing. However, some e-publishers now offer a print-on-demand option for their digital titles, which may be worth investigating if you have taken the e-book route.

Postscript: Hybrid Publishing Services

Numerous online companies now advertise publishing services of varying kinds, in many cases offering to take an author's manuscript from origin to publication and marketing. They charge a fee for this, of anything from £99 to £2,000. Before approaching such companies, it is advisable to read the following article:

http://www.publishersweekly.com/pw/by-topic/authors/pw-select/article/66658-not-all-hybrid-publishers-are-created-equal.html