

How to Self-Publish an Ebook

Instructor: David Marusek (david@marusek.com)

This is a six-hour course with an ambitious goal: to show you how to take a polished manuscript, convert it into an ebook (complete with cover and active Table of Contents), and publish it to the two largest online booksellers (Amazon and Barnes & Noble). Along the way, we will touch on the present state of the publishing industry (it's in turmoil), self-publishing (it's experiencing triple-digit growth: http://www.bowker.com/en-US/aboutus/press_room/2012/pr_10242012.shtml), marketing (social media and beyond), and the future of books (enhanced books, trans-media books).

Even if you wish to hire a service to self-publish your ebook, knowing the steps involved and the issues surrounding them will be helpful to you, and this course can be a stepping stone to that knowledge.

Because this course takes place between UAF semesters, there is no computer lab available during the evenings for our use. Therefore, in order for you to take full advantage of this course, you will need to bring your own, wifi internet-capable laptop computer to the meetings. This may actually be advantageous because it will mean that you have all of the software necessary on your own computer (most of which you either already own or is available for free). Those of you who do not have access to a laptop can still benefit from the course by taking notes and duplicating the steps on your computer at home. You do not need a Kindle, Nook, or other ereader in order to complete this course, but having one definitely helps.

If you intend to sign up for this course, I would like your current email address *before* the first meeting. This will allow me to send you last-minute notices and updates (without wasting valuable classroom time). Just drop me an email at david@marusek.com.

To make this course work for you, please complete the pre-course preparations below. If you have any questions, contact me at david@marusek.com.

Reading

You can get an overview of what we'll cover by reading a series of blog posts I did last spring for 49 Writers.

<http://49writers.blogspot.com/2012/04/david-marusek-much-ado-about-ebooks.html>

<http://49writers.blogspot.com/2012/04/david-marusek-quick-and-dirty-ebook.html>

<http://49writers.blogspot.com/2012/04/david-marusek-cover-story.html>

<http://49writers.blogspot.com/2012/04/david-marusek-tootin-your-own-horn.html>

First Meeting: Overview and Conversion

Bring your manuscript file. It should be polished, copyedited, and ready to publish. If your manuscript is not quite ready to go, you can still use it in class as a draft in order to learn the steps of conversion.

You will need the following software loaded on your laptop before you come to class:

- A browser app like IE, Safari, or Firefox.
- Microsoft Word or other word processor that can output to html or epub. In the Mac world, I recommend the latest version of Pages. If you have neither, there are free open-source word processors out there you can download, such as OpenOffice <<http://www.openoffice.org/product/writer.html>>.
- Flightcrew, an epub validator (free from <http://code.google.com/p/flightcrew/>)
- Kindle Previewer (free from <http://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html?docId=1000765261>) Note: this is the Kindle Previewer, not the Kindle Reader for PC or Mac! If you have an actual Kindle, that's even better. Bring it instead (don't forget the USB cable).
- Nook for PC and Nook for Mac (free from <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/u/nook-for-pc/379003591> and <http://www.barnesandnoble.com/u/nook-for-mac/379003592>) If you have an actual Nook, that's better. Bring it instead (don't forget the USB cable).

Second Meeting: Covers

For writers, designing a cover may be the most challenging part of the project, but with a little effort you can create one that works well for you. So bring cover ideas and images to class. An image file can be a photograph, graphic, or drawing as long as you have the right to publish it (i.e. you own it, it's public domain, or it's licensed under Creative Commons). It should be in JPG, TIFF, EPS, or other format that Photoshop can read. (Note: digital cameras usually save photos in JPG.) If you don't have candidate cover images yet, you can find some online. There are literally thousands of image sources, most of them charging fees or royalties. Two places to find free images are Wikimedia Commons (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page) and Flickr. In Flickr, go to the advanced search page (<http://www.flickr.com/search/advanced/>) and scroll down. Put checkmarks in "Only search within Creative Commons-licensed content," "Find content to use commercially," and "Find content to modify, adapt, or build upon." Then, when you enter your search terms, only free images will return.

You will need this software loaded on your laptop before you come to class:

- Photoshop or other image editing application (find free open source apps at <http://sixrevisions.com/graphics-design/10-excellent-open-source-and-free-alternatives-to-photoshop/>). As a UAF student, you can take advantage of the university's software licensing program to download a copy of Photoshop <<https://www.alaska.edu/oit/software/index.xml>>. If you don't know how to use graphics software, by all means, spend some time before class playing around with it. Open some image files and modify them. Use the text tool to create a title.

Third Meeting: Publishing and Marketing

During this meeting, we will go through the steps necessary to publish your finished ebook to Amazon and B&N. If your ebook or cover isn't quite ready, at the least we can create your account for later use. You will need to bring to class a "Book Description" and an "About the Author" bio. (Go to Amazon or Barnes & Noble and look up several books to see examples.) You will also need the routing number to your bank account where you wish the booksellers to send your sales income. (You'll share this with Amazon and B&N, not with the class.)