

Praise for  
Köehler & Coccaro's  
***POCKET GUIDE TO PUBLISHING***

"*Pocket Guide* represents a huge shortcut for emerging writers. Becoming an author requires full understanding of everything John and Joe have offered here, and rest assured, this is state-of-the-art wisdom."

—**Bud Ramey**, author of five non-fiction books,  
including *The Familiar Physician* and *No Bullies*

"This pocket guide is essential for anyone who wants to write a book, and will help new writers fulfill their dreams with a good dose of reality. An excellent resource for aspiring writers!"

—**Angela Correll**, author of *Grounded* and *Guarded*

"It's hard to learn the details of publishing. I know because I've been studying it for years. *Pocket Guide to Publishing* is a concise, straightforward primer for every author. John Köehler and Joe Coccaro have worked with hundreds of authors and know their craft. I highly recommend this book."

—**W. Terry Whalin**, acquisitions editor and author  
of more than sixty books including *Book Proposals  
That Sell*

“*Pocket Guide to Publishing* is a must-have for anyone thinking about publishing a book.”

—**Heather Weidner**, author of *Secret Lives*  
and *Private Eyes*

“What should every aspiring and experienced author know about publishing? Koehler & Coccaro’s *Pocket Guide to Publishing* lays it all out with love, care and respect for writers seeking publishing deals, the readers they strive to indulge, and the publishers and agents they aim to wow! A most timely and relevant set of professional insights that’s sure to endure as an industry classic.

—**Nora Firestone**, journalist and acquisitions editor

“John Koehler and Joe Coccaro know what they are talking about! More importantly, having gone through the publishing process with them on my first book, these guys do what they say they are going to do, which is hard to find in today’s business world. *The Pocket Guide to Publishing* explains in layman’s terms all that you need to know to be a successful author.”

—**Christopher Bowron**, author of *Devil in the Grass*

“Publishing a book is not for the faint of heart, but if you know what to expect and what is expected of you as a writer, success can be yours. I wish *Pocket Guide to Publishing* had been available when I started out.”

—**Betsy Ashton**, author of The Mad Max Mysteries,  
president of the Virginia Writers Club

“A valuable resource for all who travel the winding road to publishing success.”

—**Maggie King**, author of the Hazel Rose Book Group series

“This pocket guide will not only lift the fog that blankets the publishing world, but prepare a new author on what to expect while avoiding the expensive pitfalls.”

—**Lynn Yvonne Moon**, author of the Agency Series and award-winning *10 Rules About Monsters*

“Koehler and Cocco’s *Pocket Guide to Publishing* is written in plain English, making it easy to read and user friendly. I would consider the guide a ‘must-read’ for new authors.”

—**D.W. Rawlings**, author of *Peckerwood in the Hood, Misadventures of a Kansas City Cop*

“Writing is easy, well—sort of. Publishing, well, that is another thing. If you want your writing to reflect your best and the end result—the book—to both look good and sell, you need help.”

—**Al Sikes**, author of *Culture Leads, Leaders Follow*

“An invaluable companion for authors on every stage of the publishing journey. The collective wisdom of Koehler and Cocco brings a cutting edge take on the dos and don’ts that every author needs for success in today’s complex world of publishing options.”

—**Margaret Philbrick**, author of *A Minor*

*“Pocket Guide to Publishing: 100 Things Authors Should Know* by Köehler and Coccaro delivers the basics of the publishing industry in clear, brisk, and fun-to-read prose. All but the most seasoned of pros will benefit from owning a copy. The information is up-to-date and accurate. This little primer will stand virtually alone at the top of its genre.”

—**Larry Rogers, MD**, author of *M. Gazi Yasargil: Father of Modern Neurosurgery*

“As a recently-published author, I was guided through the publishing process by John and Joe using email and the telephone. As well as that worked, it would have worked better in conjunction with the *Pocket Guide to Publishing*. Having just read the pocket guide, I now understand better what I was doing and why. I will keep this book on my shelf for reference.”

—**Richard J. Smith**, author of *Life After 80*, Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

“John and Joe simplify the publishing ordeal by providing you with a menu of options to help you determine the best path for your manuscript; whether you go the traditional route or decide to self-publish, the key is to publish a *quality* product.”

—**Harris Kern**, author of *On Being a Workaholic* and over forty other books

“*The Pocket Guide to Publishing* is a comprehensive and concise guide, explaining the many questions an emerging author might ask. I highly recommend reading it before embarking on the journey to becoming a published author.”

—**Bruce T. Jones**, author of *The Lost Reflection* and *Invierea*

“Koehler and Coccaro’s *Pocket Guide to Publishing* provides new authors with just about everything they need to know before sending off their cherished manuscripts to strangers, namely editors and publishers. This is a book that every new author should read and keep handy.”

—**Barbara McLennan**, author of *Wealth of Jamestown* and *Wealth of Virginia*

“A real no-nonsense guide for authors that cuts to the chase about publishing. This guide is indispensable for the self-published or published author with its insights and lessons.”

—**William Hazelgrove**, best-selling author of *The Pitcher* and twelve other books

“Like many, I felt that there was a book inside me! I took the steps to spew all that I thought was relevant into a manuscript. I met with John Koehler and simply had a candid conversation about steps forward. Those steps eventually led to me publishing ‘the book’ inside of me, and I am grateful and thankful for the expertise and mentorship.”

—**Al Midgett**, author of *Normal to Noble*

“Before you venture into publishing, be sure to read this book. It will save you a few sleepless nights wondering if there is something you are missing. It’s all here ... from one of the best in the business.”

—**Ed Tracy**, editor of *Fearful Odds* and other books, Roxbury Road Creative

“Climbing a mountain without a guide book can be full of surprises and adventures. But a bit of advice and direction may keep you from falling off a cliff. Koehler and Coccoaro now provide a splendid explanation and perspective for authors up front—stuff I learned from them bit by bit while writing four books. They’ve done it very well. I recommend it!”

—**Lloyd Philip Johnson, MD**, author of  
*Where’s Frank?* and three other books

“With their *Pocket Guide to Publishing*, John and Joe have boiled up all the main ingredients of book publishing into a digestible feast for all writers, and they’ve served it up with understanding and passion.

—**Mike Herron**, author of *The Book of Testosterone*,  
publisher at *Inside Business*

“I would recommend this book to any writer—new or seasoned—who intends to see a book in print.”

—**Dean Robertson**, author of *Looking for Lydia*;  
*Looking for God*

“For those who are in the early trenches of buying into a career in publishing this guide will serve as an indispensable set of instructions sure to increase their chances of success. For those more seasoned authors who are a bit deeper in the trenches this will be a great refresher course now and in the years to come. Regardless of what kind of author you are, you’ll never want to leave home without this gem of a book.”

—**Leticia Gomez**, CEO & Founder, Savvy Literary  
Services

“Yes. Just say yes and select Koehler Books, especially if you are a new author. They helped me publish my first book, bringing experience, direction and leadership to a process I didn’t know anything about.”

—**John Wagner**, author of *Perfect: Sacred Stories From the Heart of a Dad*

“Here is the handiest little volume that one can take to a desert island, or on a blind date, and find useful treasures. Here is a team that tells us how they do it.”

—**Terry Lindvall**, author of *A Mirror for Fools*, and  
C. S. Lewis Professor of Communication and  
Christian Thought at Virginia Wesleyan College

“Koehler & Coccoaro’s *Pocket Guide to Publishing* is a must-have guide for anyone who plans to become a published author. Invaluable insights and recommendations are presented in a simple and easy to understand manner. This pocket guide is a treasure that will be by my side for each book I write.”

—**Melanie Bragg**, author of *Crosstown Park*

“A clever and candid look under the hood of today’s publishing vehicle, with useful and seldom-shared insider tips on everything from publishing options to contracts, the publishing process, editing, book distribution, author marketing and more.”

—**Shari Stauch**, CEO and creator of Where  
Writers Win

*Pocket Guide to Publishing*  
*100 Things Authors Should Know*

by John Köehler & Joe Cocco

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# POCKET GUIDE TO PUBLISHING

100 THINGS  
AUTHORS SHOULD KNOW

KÖEHLER & COCCARO

with a foreword by Robin Cutler, director of IngramSpark



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## FOREWORD

IT HELPS A lot that I've been in the publishing world for what is approaching four decades. During that time, I've seen and done a lot, starting as a fledgling book designer at a university press, to owning my own publishing company, to working for two of the most significant organizations in the publishing world—Amazon and Ingram. In this rather brief span of time, I've experienced seismic shifts in an industry that hadn't changed much in the 560 years since Guttenberg created his first Bible. What was once a stable, orderly publishing world is now disorderly, inventive, challenging, and exciting. I'm so happy that people like John Köehler and Joe Coccaro are not only helping authors to make sense of it all, but actually training them to thrive during these times of chaos and confusion.

I met John and Joe just before the launch of IngramSpark three years ago. They were literally some of the first people to see Ingram's new self-publishing platform. They immediately recognized how IngramSpark could benefit authors looking for global book distribution while reducing the risk of bringing their content to the marketplace through a pay-as-you-go, print-on-demand (POD) and eBook solution. As a result of their vision, Köehler Books is one of IngramSpark's premier service providers. We refer to Köehler authors needing assistance with editing, design, and the marketing of their books. More importantly, Köehler teaches authors about the business of publishing with the goal of helping them steer their own independent paths to success.

John works with the IngramSpark team to help us continuously improve what we do and to suggest services that we should offer. He is the first one to notice the slightest change to our website and to give feedback to what works and what needs more refinement. I know if something passes John's high standards, we are on the right track. Recently, I asked John to join me in panel discussions for authors at the 2016 Book Expo America (BEA). John wowed the crowds with his industry knowledge, good humor, and sincere concern for authors and their struggles.

In this well-written, concise, and much needed guide, John and Joe share not only their knowledge, but also present a no-nonsense view of how the publishing industry works, and exactly how authors fit in. I encourage you, the author-reader, to lap up every word, because if you do, you will better understand what publishing is really all about. You will evolve from novice author to a publishing professional who is taken seriously by booksellers, librarians, distributors, the media, and by your fellow authors and readers. And you'll be a happier author because these guys will help you avoid the cracks and potholes that line so many publishing pathways.

I sincerely encourage you to soak in all the love and wisdom that John and Joe so graciously offer.

I wish you much success in all your writing and publishing endeavors.

**Robin Cutler**

Director, IngramSpark  
Ingram Content Group  
June, 2016



## INTRODUCTION

ALL WE WANTED to do was create a long list of the things that writers should consider before publishing a book, things they needed to know if they were going to self-publish or if they were courting a traditional or hybrid publisher. We firmly believe in transparency, not tricks or upselling or sleight of hand or editing services from dubious sources. We figured that sharing knowledge about the book trade—both the bad and good—would spawn healthier collaboration between writers and the team of editors, designers, and distributors who ultimately give a book life. There should be a feeling of trust and shared ownership when the printer's ink finally dries on their pages.

We figured a list of dos-and-don'ts would be especially eye-opening for debut authors. We've learned a lot about this business and figured we

would offer our collective mistakes and wisdom as a compass to guide aspiring authors through the tricky, sometimes treacherous seas of book publishing and decipher the industry's mumbo-jumbo jargon. We often ask those considering self-publishing a book, *Really, are you sure you want to tackle this?*

If you do it right, publishing can be rewarding and maybe even fun. To avoid the dark side, you need to know yourself and your limitations and interests. Not everyone has the skill or temperament to fix a leaky sink. Sometimes it's wisest to hire a plumber.

\* \* \*

Our company has published hundreds of books since 2010 and has, through trial and error, by mistake and by luck, experienced the perils and rewards of publishing. We've helped scores of authors, some with traditional publishing contracts, some with hybrid deals, and others with self-publishing. In fact, we embrace all three forms of book publishing. Each has its place in the world; each has its benefits, and each has pitfalls.

There is no *right* solution to publishing, but there are *best* solutions.

We have had many conversations with writers who think there's not much to publishing—that anyone can do it. They think that automation, computers, and all the rest will get it right and do



their job for them. They are convinced that they really don't need to know all that much because others will know it for them. Ignorance is bliss, but bliss will not craft a high-quality book.

There are two kinds of ignorance among debut or emerging authors: those who think they already know it all and those who know they have a lot to learn. Hopefully this little pocket guide will serve both camps, though we have seen some—a very small minority—who truly think they have it in the bag. It's like someone who changes the oil in their car and then decides they can rebuild the engine. Publishing is complex and difficult to master, but it can be understood by all who enter with open minds and hearts.

We started the list for writers as a way of showing there's a lot of engineering that goes into publishing a high-quality book that properly brands an author and attracts readers. As we pondered this, our list of wisdom and warnings became more of a litany as we filled out each section and began to write and clarify and explain things in more detail.

So we begin with a mission to inform, a calling that is consistent with our publishing philosophy of transparency and of serving writers. Part of that service is to educate them, coach them, and show them the way. There's a whole lot of ignorance spread around out there in the world of writers, and ignorance

is good for nothing but darkness and mistakes. Our hope is to help authors get it right. It ain't brain surgery, folks, just a lot of hard work and applied intelligence tempered by realistic expectations.

We have found that ingredients for the secret sauce of success include authors and publishers who embrace solidarity, cooperation, and collaboration. That means improving a book—not just judging it. That means being honest with authors about what they can *really* expect in terms of sales. That means setting realistic goals and, above all, crafting and shaping books that make the author proud. *Good books last forever; so do crappy ones.*

There is no substitute for quality.

\* \* \*

Since the launching of Koehler Books Publishing, we've had a singular focus on *quality*. It became painfully clear to us that many books—far too many—were poorly written, loosely edited, or amateurishly designed. What was most shocking was that many of the less-than-mediocre titles were being released not only by the big self-publishing mills but also by the behemoth mainstream houses in New York.

Bigger doesn't translate to better. That's a common misconception. In fact, sometimes bigger means *worse*.

We're not here to rail against the New York publishing behemoths or the giant self-publishing mills that crank books out like cheeses through a grate. Random House, Simon & Schuster, HarperCollins, Macmillan, Hachette, and a few others have storied writers and editors—some of the greatest in the world. They set a literary standard, just as Warner Brothers and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, Paramount Pictures and MGM are considered the gold standard of movie distribution and production.

These are the elites, and like any big names or stars, they have their groupies. In book publishing we call the devout orthodox the *litterati*.

Entrenched in the book publishing world are scores of high-minded, often well-intentioned advocates disdainful and dismissive of any book not traditionally published. That means that unless a publisher pays a writer for a book, or at least publishes it on their behalf, the book is illegitimate and unworthy. It's the same argument used in the music business, the same naïve path newspapers and magazine blissfully traipsed. It assumes that only a few gatekeepers—the traditional publishers—should determine what gets into print. That assumes that only the traditional publishers recognize quality.

That old-school model has been blown into confetti. It's no longer relevant or true. And traditional

publishing is often a lousy deal for authors. To get a *deal*, they have to assign all of their publishing rights to the publisher in exchange for a thin sliver of royalties—sometimes just a crumb. The ugly truth is most traditionally published authors rarely see a dime in royalties.

What most don't realize is that the biggest stars in writing receive the big bucks, the best editors, and the most promotion. The so-called B-list writers languish, are treated shabbily, and oftentimes are assigned editors whose college diplomas in English literature have barely dried. One of our writers, a woman who had been with a big publishing house, signed with us. She said, "I'm tired of working with child editors or speaking to someone from overseas who I can barely understand. I can't get anyone to return my phone calls."

Several writers in our stable who were B-listers with major publishers sound a familiar refrain. "I was treated like a leper," one said. We have worked with agents who abhor the big houses, too. They complained of being ignored and never seeing a royalty statement. Others who went the self-publishing route with the *majors* complain about poor quality. One of our clients who self-published with a big-name company said the pages fell out. The website of one of the self-publishing giants that offers

editing services actually says that writers and editors will have no *personal contact*. Imagine that!

Some of the most heartbreaking stories we have heard come from self-published writers who spent \$10,000 to have books printed and produced; some of those books were shockingly amateurish—rife with typos, poor grammar, misspellings, and loose plot construction. Not to mention paying thousands of dollars for marketing programs that did little or nothing to sell the book.

\* \* \*

That's why we decided to get into the *quality* business. We decided that our niche would be to assist *emerging* authors by providing them rigorous editing, coaching, and a final product that can stand with the best titles hitting the market. We became true partners with our authors and often tell them, "It may be your name on the cover, but our name is on the book, too. It's your reputation and *ours*, so we only want to release work we can all be proud of."

Joe often says that for a book to have a chance at commercial success, it needs to be of the best quality. "Quality doesn't guarantee success, but without it your chances are greatly diminished."

Plus, there is the legacy factor. "Lousy, poorly edited and written books live forever, just like the good ones."

We work our writers hard and make them a part of the team. We are small, so they feel the love—sometimes tough love. We coach them, push them, and more than anything else we collaborate with them.

That is what we are known for, and it is the essence of our *Emerging Author Program*. New authors want to be treated with respect and integrity. Even though they may not be a big-league author yet, they want to be treated like a pro. They want to be part of a team and given a chance to succeed. That's how they learn; that's how they grow. They want to be taught how to get it right so they can become a branded, intelligent, professional author. We show them the ropes and provide loads of encouragement and enthusiasm; but we never overpromise.

The economics of book publishing can be stark. Most books, many of which are self-published, rack up sales of less than 100. We tell debut writers that a commercial success at our house is closer to 3,000 books sold; books that do 10,000 or more are a smashing success. We've had sales exceed that threshold, and the authors behind those successes are typically terrific writers and unrelenting marketers. While sales may always be uncertain, what we know for sure is that the days when writers just *write* are now folklore.

We turn away writers, especially newbies, whose expectations are in the clouds. We tell them that it usually takes two, three, or sometimes more books for an author to build a tangible and robust audience. Success rests upon a three-legged stool of creative *quality*, *marketing*, and great *distribution*.

As our business grew, self-publishing authors started asking us to get their books ready for prime time. They wanted professional-level creative development and help with marketing. They also wanted to keep more of the royalties on their books and bring them to market a heck of a lot faster than they could through our more conventional distribution channels. Large conventional publishers often have a one-year to eighteen-month publishing window. That seems silly to us, especially in this lightning-fast Internet age and presses that can deliver large orders in less than a week.

Self-publishing companies will certainly get your book published *fast*—but often regardless of quality. And they will also help you prepare it, design it, edit it, and market it. But often they will upsell you to buy a bigger marketing package, or a book purchase package, or the *extra-special* editing package. They charge by the word, so the more the better. They want you to be verbose. *Cha-ching!* As mentioned, they often subcontract editing, copyediting, and design

work to low-cost agencies in low-wage countries where English is a second language.

"I'm tired of dealing with some person from the Philippines . . . I can't understand half of what they're saying," one of our writers lamented. And the print quality on some of those books was lousy. Worse yet, bookstores and other outlets refused to sell these self-published gems because they don't use a distributor the bookstores will buy from.

\* \* \*

Faster printing presses and the ability to edit, design, and distribute books from just about any place with Internet access has exploded barriers that once funneled nearly all book publishing to those who owned presses and fancy buildings lined with rows of designers and editors. This liberated industry is also a Wild West with boundless opportunities but fraught with danger. Sometimes you need a guide or marshal to give you safe passage through that dangerous canyon.

Hopefully this little book of advice will make it a little easier and less perilous for you to understand what it is you are wading through and how to arrive safely.

We tell nearly all of our writers the same thing: If you can get yourself a traditional deal from a trusted publisher that will pay you a fat advance for your book and foot the bill for editing, marketing, and



distributing, then by all means take it. But know at the outset that traditional deals are very difficult to land—even with an agent—unless you’re an established writer with some commercial success. Sometimes a debut author with a stellar piece breaks through. We’ve certainly signed a bunch of traditional deals, typically about twenty percent of all deals we sign. But there are Vegas odds against it for the most part. Land a hybrid deal and your financial outlay will be much higher, but you should have much more involvement with the process and have a chance to work with highly skilled professionals. Hybrid deals, at least the way we do them, provide the same levels of creative development and editing as our traditional deals; distribution is largely the same, too. But we calculate realistic odds of commercial viability and ask writers to share some of the risks. The investment we require depends on the quality of the work, its genre, a writer’s marketing chops, and, to some degree, attitude. We prefer collaborating with those open to coaching, especially those hungry to learn.

Our goal for our emerging authors is for them to be successful enough to land a traditional deal with us or another publisher on subsequent works. We’re the springboard, the chance to play in the majors.

If you choose to self-publish, hopefully this book will make you fully aware of things to consider

and look out for. No one expects you to become an editor or designer or distributor or printer. But your success depends on you getting to know all of them and knowing what they do for you and your book.

\* \* \*

If I had to choose one word to describe what publishing a book is like, it would be *orchestration*. An orchestra conductor must control all of the individual musicians and their accompanying instruments in order to create a cohesive and pleasing creative output. It is the same with self-publishing—and all publishing, for that matter.

The points we cover in this book may individually seem unimportant, but if you do not integrate them into the whole of the book, the net creative output will suffer. Remember, you and your book are part—the most integral part—of the orchestra. If you wish to publish your book, you must acquaint yourself with the artists there to support you; you must watch the conductor and follow the score. There are many logistical and technical components, but in the end it is all about making art. That's the point of crafting great books.

Whether you do it yourself or work with a publisher, make it great. Hold yourself and your work to the highest literary and publishing standards. Don't

skimp on editing and cover design. Market! Reach for the stars to make your book desirable and to make yourself a professionally branded author.

So, roll up your sleeves. Hard work and an open mind result in great beginnings. If you want to be proud of your work—which is an extension of yourself—don't take shortcuts. Do it right!

— *John and Joe*

## **PUBLISHING EVOLUTION, REVOLUTION**

FROM JOHN

CREATING, DISTRIBUTING, AND publishing a book is a very complicated process, with many things that must be done well in order to achieve the best quality book. You can have a beautifully written manuscript, but if you marry it to a poorly designed cover, it will be dead on arrival. Conversely, a beautiful book package and interior layout probably will not sell if your editing is substandard.

Therefore, a serious author must be aware of the entire process of taking your book from manuscript to a finished book distributed to the masses. Simply writing a wonderful book is not enough, especially if you decide to co-publish or independently self-publish your book. The better you understand the entire process, the more likely you will be able to participate in and manage the entire process. Whether you receive a traditional deal or a hybrid deal or you self-publish, do your best to become acquainted with all aspects of the publishing process so you can be a

better and more intelligent partner in the process.

Our aim is to help writers and authors develop a better understanding of what is involved when preparing and publishing a book. It will especially help writers and authors who are considering co-publishing or self-publishing and managing their own books. This is a reminder to all authors about the importance of upholding the highest standards of literary, design, and publishing excellence, regardless of how you are going to get your book out to the world. Regardless of how you publish, make it great and do it well. That is your mission.

\* \* \*

Not long ago, traditional publishing was the only show in town, and big publishers controlled what happened with books and what readers could choose from. A traditional publishing deal is generally given to only the finest works, often those that come through an agent, which signifies higher quality. The author generally receives an advance against royalties, royalties based on list price or net, and pays no expenses or fees. The publisher takes all financial risks.

Publishing changed with the advent of self-publishing around the year 2000. It created an opportunity for more writers to get professionally published—or poorly published, as was often the case. At first, in the rush to get published, writers and

the companies they hired did not follow the highest standards of literary and publishing excellence. Writers refused to have their work edited and allowed sloppy design standards to be used.

The resulting outcome was a mess. Brick-and-mortar stores cringed when new self-published authors came through the door with thin books that had awful covers and terrible editing. The literary world and book critics reacted negatively and essentially said that self-published books were bad, calling them acts of vanity and publishers who put them out vanity publishers. Big publishers agreed and continued to dominate the landscape.

But then something strange happened: people started reading a lot of the self-published books. Readers, after all, are the final arbiters of which books will succeed. Collectively, they are brilliant and hold the keys to publishers and authors selling books. Amazon and other online booksellers said, "We will give you a chance no matter who you are," and books began to sell. Millions of them. Some self-publishing authors became rich, and the word got out, driving yet more writers to publish their work.

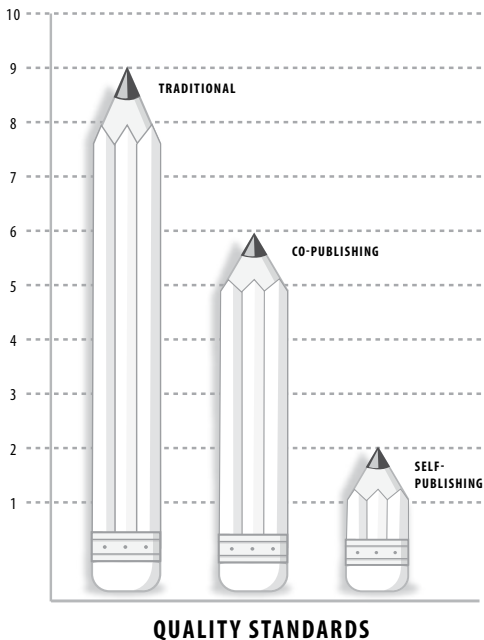
CreateSpace, iUniverse, Lulu, and many other self-publishing companies sprang up to serve the growing demand to be published. Quality gradually improved. Small publishers jumped in to offer hybrid or co-publishing deals to authors-fee-based but with

more hands-on collaboration and a higher level of creative development.

Then an amazing thing happened. The big publishing companies made the jump into fee-based publishing and formed or bought companies that catered to the growing market of authors who wished to be published at any cost. Case in point was the acquisition of Author Services, Author House and other imprints by Penguin Books. While Penguin was excoriated by this decision, some think it was a smart financial move to get in on a growing market.

It is worth noting again that the main reason a book sells well is the quality of the work. Readers may be taken in by a fancy cover and a well-written description, but make no mistake, the readers will accept or reject your book primarily based on the *quality* of the writing and how compelled they are to keep reading it. Marketing is important. Editing is *huge*. Your website and social media are also important. But they all are a distant second to the overriding importance of quality writing. Regardless of the art form—music, painting, sculpture, or writing—only a small percentage of artists will make their way to the top of the heap. But they can still create great art.

So, let's assume you have your masterpiece—or at least the first iteration. Now what?



In order to obtain a traditional deal from a publisher, a writer must produce a manuscript of the highest quality. The story is compelling, the voice clear and distinct, and the work is well crafted.

Co-publishing work will also carry the publisher's imprint, so quality is still important. But the standards are lowered in order to provide a chance for emerging writers to achieve success.

Self-publishing authors call the shots with regards to quality, thus the output can range from good to bad.



## **PUBLISHING OPTIONS**

### **Traditional Model**

Traditional publishers typically pay advances to purchase the rights to the work and also pay royalties on the work. The author typically pays no fees of any kind. This is the method that has been around the longest and is the most sought after by writers. Agents and publishers take only the highest quality work for these types of deals, because the risks are so high and the competition is so good. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to acquire a traditional deal, especially for new and emerging writers.

### **Hybrid Model**

Hybrid publishers often handle traditional deals as well as some kind of fee-based or author-investment deals. This is sometimes referred to as co-publishing. Some publishers come up with even fancier terms like entrepreneurial publishing. Many of the big publishers have self-publishing imprints, including Penguin Books (through Author House and iUniverse) and Harper Collins (through Thomas Nelson and Westbow Press), typically in different divisions or imprints. The Emerging Authors Program is the fee-based arm of Köehler Books, and the author services division is Köehler Studios.

Hybrid publishers are similar in nature to self-publishing firms because they charge the author a fee, but legitimate and respectable firms can do a much better job of working collaboratively with newer authors to help them become branded professionals. The quality level is higher than most self-publishing models, too. Typically, the author will pay for some or all of the pre-publication costs to prepare and package the work, with fees ranging anywhere from \$1,500 to \$10,000. In many cases the publisher shares the costs with the author—hence the term co-publishing.

### **Self-Publishing**

The vast majority of self-publishing companies are legitimate and will get you published. Self-publishing has such a taint that some in the business now use the term independent publishing. We actually prefer that descriptor because it more closely depicts the spirit of publishing your own book. Regardless of the label, you have to be vigilant about getting what you asked for with regard to quality and customer service. Talk to other writers and authors before you make a decision. Your goal is to get a high-quality book that looks and reads great and will position you as a branded author. Then it's on to the next book.

Joe and I strongly advocate independent publishing for go-getters with lots of business experience or an established brand. A division of our company called Koehler Studios provides the editing, design, and production, helps with marketing, and then hands the keys over to the author.

Our self-publishing partner is IngramSpark, which handles all the distribution and printing for those choosing to go it on their own. IngramSpark is a division of Ingram, one of the world's largest book distributors and printers. It is, in our view, the gold standard of self-publishing. We were honored to be named one of IngramSparks preferred vendors for full-service publishing.

IngramSpark does three things incredibly well: easy integration, terrific printing, and spectacular distribution to almost 40,000 booksellers. Amazing. Not just Amazon, but thousands of online booksellers like bam.com, barnesandnoble.com, and more. And not just Kindle, but iBooks, Nook, Kobo, and many other digital providers.

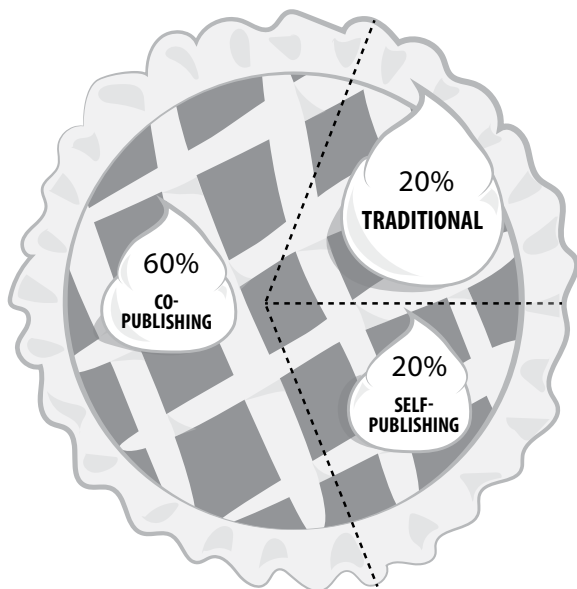
Whereas many self-publishers won't or can't get you into brick-and-mortar stores, Ingram's distribution network has them built in. If you choose that option and set your wholesale percentage correctly and make your title returnable, your book can be ordered by bookstores across the country.

And the printing? The best in the biz. Whether soft or hardcover, matte or gloss, black-and-white interior or color, pocket size up to 8.5" x 11", Spark provides the same high-quality printing that we give our big-shot authors. What really excites me is how IngramSpark interfaces the entire system, from signup to ordering books. It's seamless, intuitive, and downright easy.

\* \* \*

One of the biggest differences between self-publishing and traditional or hybrid publishing is that the author generally makes the decisions regarding art, editing, and other important decisions that will affect the outcome of the book. The *self* part comes into play, sometimes with devastating effects because most new authors simply do not have the experience to make the best calls.

With experienced authors who have published a few books and have been through the publishing experience more than once, self-publishing is more of a familiar world, and making the right calls is much easier than for a new or emerging author.



Though there are other types of publishing deals available, the three above show a good cross-section of deal types. About 20 percent of our deals are traditional. Very risky and we only take the best manuscripts. 60 percent are co-publishing deals where we manage the author and the work. And 20 percent are self-publishing deals where we prepare the work, create proofs, and then transfer the files to the author's IngramSpark account, where they manage their own book.

### **Our Model: Emerging Authors Program**

The Emerging Authors Program (<http://www.koehlerbooks.com/publishing-services/support-services/emerging-authors/>) is designed primarily for debut or emerging writers who have the talent but not necessarily the experience or platform to merit a traditional publishing deal. This is a competitive program aimed at those considering multiple books or those with manuscripts that show lots of potential but have a lack of professional polish. Our aim for EAP is to place authors on a path to getting traditionally published someday. In fact, several of our EAP graduates have been offered traditional deals on subsequent books published by us.

The program grew out of a perceived need among emerging and new authors to get treated with respect, to be given first-class creative development and distribution, and to be able to collaborate on all aspects of the publishing of their book. We heard so many horror stories of authors mistreated by self-publishers who treated them like numbers and authors jerked around by a bigger publisher who shut them out of the entire process.

To be clear, our publishing house is firmly in control throughout the entire process and will make the tough calls if agreement with the author cannot be attained (a rarity). But the process is so transparent

and collaborative that our authors learn publishing by way of the symbiotic relationship we have with them. It is in fact mutually beneficial because we get their expertise about their title, and they get everything we have to offer.

\* \* \*

### **Author Relations**

We offer our expertise primarily in two ways: through the actual creative and production process, and through the coaching and hands-on training we give our authors. They are not treated like idiot newbies incapable of doing a thing but as intelligent authors capable of learning, collaborating, and helping make decisions along the way. This synergistic buy-in is part of the co-publishing concept. True enough, they have to *buy in* financially with a large investment, but they also take on the mantle of becoming a professional author capable of promoting and selling their own work.

## **CONTRACTS, ROYALTIES, AND RESPECT, OH MY!**

OF ALL THE horror stories we have heard from authors, most have to do with the way they were treated by publishers—or not treated, in some cases where publishers simply had nothing to do with the author after the contract was signed.

Most publishers, whether traditional or hybrid, use contracts which give the publisher rights to publish the work in the manner that the publisher chooses. To a certain extent this means that the author loses the right to be involved with the book unless the publisher grants those rights by including the author. This is a bit of a catch-22, because the publisher must be free and clear to publish the book according to its methods, experience, and needs.



The big question then becomes how does the publisher work with and treat the author? Our attitude has always been that while we are the publisher and we are the experts, the author is the expert about the book. The author knows more than anyone alive about the book. The authors are the creative force, and we want them to be involved throughout the process.

A collaborative discussion about cover design, editing, and layout can help to create a better product. We also advocate and practice author collaboration throughout the entire process as the best way for the author to learn publishing from top to bottom. And to give them buy-in.

A collaborative author actively involved with the creative development of his or her book is much more likely to get behind it during the marketing and publicity phase of the publishing process. A happy author will sell more books—plain and simple.

\* \* \*

The foundation of your relationship with a publisher is cemented in your publishing contract. It sets the ground rules for who controls what and what the finances are.

After you get through the negotiations with a publisher and have met each other on the phone or in person and they have studied your query and

manuscript, they may offer you a contract. Any contract you receive will tend to provide stronger legal protection for the publisher than for the author. We always recommend that our prospective authors consult an attorney or counselor and note any questions or suggested alternative language. Don't be afraid to ask questions; don't wilt from negotiations.

Make sure you're clear on the definition of a royalty. Different publishers use different formulas. Royalty is at its most basic a percentage of sales proceeds. Some publishers base it on the net proceeds—which is what's left after all expenses are paid, including printing and distribution fees. Others pay a percentage of gross receipts. Have your publisher do the math with you.

It's also important to fully comprehend how publishers handle returns. What most novices don't realize is that most books sold through bookstores and chain stores are returnable. In fact, they're often returnable *forever*. That means books sent to stores can sit there for years before they're shipped back.

Returns are the bane of a publisher's existence. High returns can wipe out profits—in fact, even result in huge losses on a book. Here is the real kicker—brick-and-mortar stores like Barnes & Noble, Books-a-Million, and other large retailers account for less than 20 percent of all book sales. Yet, from our

experience, they account for 90 percent of all returns. For every four books ordered by one of the mega-retailers, expect one or two to be returned. Big chain book buyers cavalierly order hundreds of books at no risk to them. If they don't sell, they box them up and ship them back. We've had return rates of up to 55 percent on some books. That means we printed two for every one sold. The only one who makes money is the press who printed them and the distributor who delivered them. They get paid no matter what.

Authors may like the prestige of their book sitting on a Barnes & Noble shelf, but the economics of that consignment sales arrangement can be crushing. That's a big reason why we prefer selling books on-demand. Printing and shipping technology is so fast and advanced that a good distributor can have books delivered from the warehouse to a store in a day or two. For most books, there is simply no need to print a bunch of copies that may never sell. It's old school and, quite frankly, dumb.

So, ask lots of questions. Publishing is a complex business. Better to be cautious on the front end than to get burned on the back end. We have negotiated hundreds of contracts, often with lawyers representing authors, authors who are lawyers, or aggressive agents. Avoid publishers who won't negotiate and allow ego to suffocate common sense.

## **SAMPLE CONTRACT**

Below is a sample contract of our Emerging Authors Program. No two contracts will ever be the same, but this gives you a look at what we use, which is indicative of a typical publishing contract. This example covers all the basics of publishing, including the term, royalties, and expectations of the publisher.

### **PUBLICATION AGREEMENT**

This publication agreement (“Agreement”), made this 19th day of May, 2015, between \_\_\_\_\_, whose address is \_\_\_\_\_ (“Author”), and Köehler Books (“Publisher”) with respect to the work provisionally entitled \_\_\_\_\_ (“Work”).

#### **Article One**

##### **Rights Granted To Publisher**

**Section 1.1:** The Author grants to the Publisher during the Term (as defined below) of this Agreement the exclusive right to:

- A. Publish and market the Work in printed book form (“Book Form”), including soft

- and hard cover, throughout the world;
- B. Publish and market the Work in electronic book form (“e-book Form”) throughout the world;
  - C. Publish and market the Work in audio book form (“Audio Form”) throughout the world;
  - D. License the Work for publication and sale in Book Form in any translation throughout the world;
  - E. Store, use, transmit, and distribute electronic copies of the Work as required in facilitating the printing and distribution process, such right to extend to Publisher’s vendors and affiliates;
  - F. Make no more than twenty percent (20%) of the Work viewable on the Publisher’s website, or partner websites that have entered into agreement with the Publisher, in order to facilitate sales of the Work;
  - G. Post pertinent information regarding the Author or the Work, including elements of the author questionnaire or additional information that will help promote the Author or Work;
  - H. Decide on the final public release date, with input and consideration from the Author,

within \_\_\_\_\_ months of the execution of this contract. Tentative publication date is \_\_\_\_\_, 2016.

Any of the above uses may be made for publicity purposes without charge to benefit the sale of the Work.

**Section 1.2:** Author will retain copyright ownership in the Work and does hereby license to Publisher the rights described above.

**Section 1.3:** All rights in the work not specifically granted to the Publisher are reserved by the Author. Further, Author retains rights to any derivative Work arising from the original Work, including but not limited to screenplays, adapted screenplays, teleplays, television serials/series, and stage plays.

## **Article Two**

### **Publication and Procedure**

**Section 2.1:** The Publisher agrees to publish the Work in print and e-book in the manner and format, and at the prices, the Publisher may deem appropriate, subject to the following procedure:

- A. Galley or page proofs, or both, shall be forwarded to the Author for the Author's corrections and changes within a reasonable timeline. Author shall deliver the final manuscript within 30 days of the execution of this agreement unless otherwise agreed with the Publisher.
- B. This agreement shall only be in effect upon completion of the terms in Attachment A provided by Koehler Studios.
- C. Author shall complete and execute all relevant additional instruments reasonably requested by Publisher, including preparation of the work according to the Publisher's style guide, Author's Questionnaire, etc.
- D. Author shall publicize the Work on the Author's website and use social media, acquire endorsement quotes and reviews, and actively market and publicize the Work in partnership with the Publisher, using the items listed on the Publisher's website marketing page.
- E. Publisher shall publicize the Work on their website and through numerous methods mentioned on the Marketing page of the Publisher's website, and to the booksellers and distributors in Ingram's network.

- F. If the Work sells \_\_\_\_\_ or more combined copies of print and e-book units, the Author shall receive a traditional publishing deal from the Publisher on her next acceptable work of equal or greater quality than this Work.
- G. This agreement will be void after \_\_\_\_\_, unless it is signed or an extension is verbally agreed to by both parties.

### **Article Three**

#### **Author's Royalties**

**Section 3.1:** The Publisher agrees to pay the Author royalties as follows:

- A. Royalties due and owing shall be determined on the Net based on the Publisher's paid invoices for the Work, less all reasonable expenses including printing, distribution fees and special channels, and a reasonable reserve for returns from all sales. Royalties shall be computed under the following categories:
- i. On the sale of the Work in printed and e-book Form, the Publisher will pay the



- Author \_\_\_\_% of the Net proceeds.
- ii. On the sale of the Work in Audio Form, the Publisher will pay the Author \_\_\_\_% of the Receipts.
  - iii. On the sale of the Work via foreign rights translation, the Publisher will pay the Author \_\_\_\_% of the Receipts.

**Section 3.2:** The Publisher shall make quarterly royalty payments and statements to the Author beginning six months after date of publication, so long as there are Proceeds available for payment to the Author. If the amount due for any accounting period shall be less than \$ \_\_\_\_\_, the balance shall be applied to the next calendar quarter until the royalty payment due equals or exceeds \$ \_\_\_\_\_. The Publisher may deduct any overpayment to the Author from any royalties due and owing the Author on the Work.

**Section 3.3:** The Author shall have the right to examine, through the Author's accountant and at the Author's expense, the Publisher's books and records containing entries relating to the Author's rights under the terms of this Agreement. This right may be exercised no more than once annually, with thirty (30) days notice

to Publisher, during Publisher's regular business hours. This right shall extend twelve (12) months past the termination date of this Agreement.

**Section 3.4:** The Publisher shall present to the Author 20 paperback copies of the Work. Publisher shall permit the Author to purchase further copies at print cost plus 50%, which do not count as sales or pay royalties. Unless otherwise agreed to in writing by the parties hereto, all fees and compensation due and owing as a result of performance under this Agreement are quoted and payable in U.S. Dollars. All orders must be prepaid and are non-returnable or refundable. Shipping charges are not included. If Work is taken out of print, Author may purchase inventoried books at cost.

## **Article Four**

### **Copyrights**

**Section 4.1:** The Publisher shall (subject to the representations and agreements of the Author) imprint a proper United States copyright notice in each copy of the Work sold or offered for sale by the Publisher in the United States, in compliance with the United States copyright law

and the Universal Copyright Convention. If the Author chooses, at his or her own expense, to obtain a copyright certificate from the Library of Congress, the Publisher shall include the number on the copyright page.

**Section 4.2:** If the Publisher supplied artwork at its own expense, it shall own it and may copyright the artwork in its own name. The Author may use the cover art in any manner that is related to the marketing of the Work.

**Section 4.3:** If the copyright in the Work is infringed by a publication or production of a kind that invades any of the rights in which the Publisher has a financial interest under the provisions of this agreement, Publisher shall have the right to commence an action for infringement of the copyright ("Action"). Author shall not commence any Action without Publisher's prior consent. Action pursued by the Author or Publisher shall share expenses and settlement equally. If the Publisher shall elect to join in the Action, all expenses and the net amount of any recovery or settlement resulting from the Action shall be shared equally. These rights shall extend twelve (12) months past the termination date of this Agreement.

**Article Five**  
**Warranties and Indemnification**

**Section 5.1:** The Author warrants as follows:

- A. That the Work is entirely original, except for portions thereof for which legally effective written licenses or permissions have been secured, or verified to be in the public domain;
- B. That Author is the sole owner of all the rights granted to the Publisher in this Agreement, and that Author has the full right and power to enter into this Agreement;
- C. That this Agreement does not conflict with any arrangements, understandings, or agreements between the Author and any other person or entity;
- D. That no part of the Work has been published, and that no right has been granted by the Author;
- E. That if published, it will not infringe upon any proprietary right at common law or any statutory copyright or any other right whatsoever of third parties;
- F. That the Work is not defamatory or obscene, and contains no matter that

is libelous, in violation of any right of privacy or is otherwise in contravention of law, and will not be injurious to any reader, user, or third person.

**Section 5.2:** The Author agrees to indemnify and hold the Publisher and its Affiliates harmless from any claim, demand suit, action, proceeding, or prosecution (and liability, loss, expense, or damage in consequence regarding text and material provided by Author) asserted or instituted by reason of the publication or sale of the Work or the Publisher's exercise or enjoyment of any of its rights under this agreement or by reason of any warranty or indemnity made, assumed, or incurred by the Publisher in connection with the exercise of any of its rights under this agreement. The Publisher shall have the right at its option either to defend the claim, demand, suit, action, proceeding, or prosecution by counsel of its selection, or to settle the same on terms it deems advisable; or, with the prior written approval of the Publisher, the Author may defend or settle. In the event of a final judgment dismissing any claim, demand, suit, action, proceeding, or prosecution without liability to the Publisher, the indemnity of the

Author shall be limited to reimbursing the Publisher to the extent of one-half of the net expenses incurred by the Publisher. The Publisher shall have the further right to withhold and apply any royalties or other sums due the Author under this or any other agreement in payment of the Author's obligations under this paragraph. The rights and obligations in this Section 5.2 survive the termination date of this Agreement.

## **Article Six**

### **Termination and Breach**

**Section 6.1:** The Author may terminate the agreement if the Publisher fails to publish the Work in print and e-book within 1 year of the execution of this agreement, or sold no copies of print and e-book through Publisher's distribution. Upon termination all rights revert to the Author.

**Section 6.2:** If the Publisher gives written notice to the Author of its intention to discontinue publication of the Work, or if the Publisher fails to keep the Work in print, and, the Author having given notice to the Publisher to reprint the Work, the Publisher has failed to do so within six (6)

months after receipt of notice, then the Author shall have the right to terminate this Agreement by notice delivered to the Publisher and have all rights revert to Author. The Work shall be deemed in print if it is on sale by the Publisher or under license granted by the Publisher, or if it has sold more than 200 e-book editions or more than 200 books through Print On Demand.

**Section 6.3:** Either Publisher or Author may terminate this Agreement immediately upon written notice to the other in the event of the other's insolvency, fraud, willful misconduct, filing of bankruptcy, or other material breach of this Agreement. In the event of any breach, whether material or not, of any of the Author's warranties or promises or indemnities, the Publisher or Author shall have the option to terminate this agreement by 30 days' advance notice in writing, stating or describing the breach, and indicating Publisher's intent to terminate if the described breach or default is not cured within that time.

**Section 6.4:** Either Publisher or Author may terminate this Agreement upon mutual agreement of the parties by 30 days' advance

notice in writing. The termination of this Agreement under this Section or otherwise shall be subject to:

- A. Any license, contract, or option granted by the Publisher to the Publisher's subsidiaries or to third parties before the termination and the Publisher's right to its share of the proceeds from such grants after the termination; and
- B. The Publisher's continuing right to sell all remaining bound copies and sheets of the Work and derivative works which are on hand at the time of termination.

## **Article Seven**

### **Term**

**Section 7.1:** The Term of this Agreement shall extend for \_\_\_\_\_ years after the publication date, or until the termination of this Agreement in accordance with Article Six, whichever is sooner. At that time all rights and files shall be transferred to the Author, and this agreement will be void with the exception of any royalties that are still due.



## **Article Eight** **Miscellaneous**

**Section 8.1: Binding Agreement.** The terms and provisions of this Agreement are binding on and enforceable by and against the parties, their successors, legal representatives, and assigns. There is no other agreement between the parties that deals with the subject matter of this Agreement.

**Section 8.2: Conflict with other Agreements.** This Agreement shall alter and amend any other written or oral agreement of the parties as needed to comply with the terms and conditions herein.

**Section 8.3: Modification or Amendment.** This Agreement may not be modified or amended without the written consent of all persons who are parties on the date of such amendment.

**Section 8.4: Notices.** All notices required or permitted to be given to the Company under this Agreement must be given in writing, and will be deemed given when personally delivered or, if earlier, when received after mailing by registered or certified U.S. mail, postage prepaid, with return receipt requested.

**Section 8.5: Severability.** The provisions of this Agreement shall be deemed severable, and the invalidity or unenforceability of any provision shall not affect the validity or enforceability of the other provisions hereof. If any provision or clause of this Agreement, or portion thereof, shall be held by any court or other tribunal of competent jurisdiction to be illegal, void, or unenforceable in such jurisdiction, the remainder of such provision shall not be thereby affected and shall be given full effect, without regard to the invalid portion.

**Section 8.6: Waiver.** Any term or provision of this Agreement may be waived at any time by the party entitled to the benefit thereof by a written instrument. The failure by any party to enforce any term or provision of this Agreement shall not affect the validity or enforceability of that term or provision.

**Section 8.7: Force Majeure.** Neither party shall be in default or otherwise liable for any delay in or failure of its performance under this Agreement, where such delay or failure arises by reason of any act of God or any government or any governmental body, war, terrorist act,

insurrection, the elements, strikes or labor disputes, or other similar or dissimilar cause beyond the control of such party.

**Section 8.8: Applicable Law.** This Agreement shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**Section 8.9: Attachments.** All attachments referred in this Agreement and attached hereto are incorporated in this agreement by reference.

**Section 8.10: Construction of Terms.** Wherever the context requires, the singular includes the plural, and the masculine includes the feminine and neuter.

**Section 8.11: Headings.** Headings are used in this Agreement for convenience only and will not be used to interpret this Agreement or any part of it.

**Section 8.12: Assignment.** Author may not assign this Agreement, or any rights or obligations hereunder, by operation of law or any other manner, without the Publisher's prior written consent. Upon the death of Author,

assignment of Author's rights may transfer to legal heirs.

**Section 8.13: Advice of Counsel.** The parties acknowledge and agree that each has had the unrestricted opportunity to consult with independent legal counsel of his/her own choosing, that any decision not to be so represented was voluntarily and independently made by that party, and that the provisions of this Agreement will not be construed in favor of either party.

**Section 8.14: Arbitration.** All claims and disputes arising under or relating to this Agreement are to be settled by binding arbitration in the state of Virginia. If arbitration is used, both the Author and Publisher shall agree on the selection of the arbiter. An award of arbitration may be confirmed in a court of competent jurisdiction.

## PAY TO PLAY

EVEN IF YOU land a traditional deal, it is likely that you will spend some money for services through the life of your book. From getting professional editors to polish your work in the early stages prior to submission, to hiring a publicist to paying for creative development and publishing services, writers should be prepared to invest wisely in their book.

An author paying for professional services is a bone of contention in the writing world, as many critics, writers, and editors think that a writer should not have to pay for anything at all, that the publisher should handle all costs associated with the publication of the work, and if the author has to pay any fees, then he or she should seek publication elsewhere. This kind of thinking is less prevalent today, as the reality of the situation for authors has become clearer and more reliant on the authors to invest in their own success along with the publisher.

Many writers submit manuscripts to publishers or agents that have already been professionally edited and proofed. The associated costs can be considerable. They do this with the understanding that the publisher will most likely edit their work again. Professional editors typically charge by the word and may cost anywhere from \$1,000 to \$3,000

or more to edit a fairly well-written manuscript of normal length and with good grammatical usage. That charge may go up considerably if the manuscript needs developmental work.

We evaluate manuscripts being considered for traditional deals and our Emerging Authors Program more holistically, based upon their quality, genre, length, and, most importantly, need. We try to give every book what it lacks, be it voice, characters, anecdote, or structure. Editing entails much more than word count in a top-flight professional publishing house. When you charge by word count, that assumes all words are equal. Truth is, some words are more equal than others.

The bottom line for writers who get their work edited prior to submission is that it increases the quality of the work, therefore increasing the chances of it being accepted for publication. A writer may avoid all editing and simply take his or her first draft and self-publish it as is, but that path leads to destruction because the resulting quality of the work will most like be subpar and will not attract readers. Remember that collectively readers are brilliant, and they will be the final arbiters of whether your work is a success. If you want them to fall in love with your book, get it professionally edited.

Some authors also hire a designer to do the

cover design prior to seeking an agent or publisher. While editing your work is always a good way to make it better, coming to the table with a cover design may not be accepted in the same way by an agent or publisher. This is because the cover design is completely subjective, and the publisher will need to establish the look based on many things that will be determined during the discovery phase.

Having said that, bringing a cover design to the table is another way of showing the seriousness of the author, in that he or she has gone to the trouble of creating a cover that the author thinks would solve the problem. Again, if you are self-publishing, then you are done, but if you are looking for a relationship with a traditional or hybrid publisher who will have creative control of the work—collaborative or not—then you should submit your cover design as author input, part of your collective query materials.

A professional cover design may cost anywhere from \$400—\$1,500 or more for an illustration or with a celebrated and accomplished designer or illustrator.

For those strictly interested in more boilerplate services, we offer various editing and design through our Koehler Studio website at <http://www.koehlerstudios.com/> The Studio is our pre-publication editorial and design services division of the firm, created to assist authors who are planning

on independently publishing their own work through IngramSpark or another distributor.

But be advised that there are many places you can go to obtain professional services. Buyer beware! Be warned and be careful, ask around, and do your best to craft a trustworthy relationship.

### **Paying for Publishing**

Whether you hire a large self-pub firm to do the creative development and publish your work, or you hire a hybrid publisher to co-publish your work you will have to invest a considerable amount of money to have your work prepared and published.

Prices for a turnkey publishing deal can range from \$1,500—\$10,000, depending on the firm and depending on what the author signs on for. A few words of caution: *Beware of the upsell!*

Some of the most common horror stories we have heard come from authors who hired a large self-publishing firm and then signed on for a marketing package that added several thousand dollars and delivered little or nothing. Authors should not include any extraneous add-on elements such as marketing, publicity, website, social media, etc., to the publishing package. And be wary of publishers who require you to buy books—in addition to your publishing costs. Your expense should just be for publishing, from editing,



design, author prep and training, distribution, ARCs.

The list of what we offer, either through Koehler Books or Koehler Studios, is rather long, but we like to be as detailed as possible so the author can see what we are going to do on their behalf and for the purpose of selling their book. Every publisher will offer different things in its packages. Here are some of the items on our list:

- Turnkey, managed distribution
- Award-winning custom editing and design
- Publishing contract with a one-year or more term
- ISBNs for print and e-book
- Cooperative team treatment of author
- Contracted offer to publish your next book as a traditional deal if a sales goal is met
- Full print and digital distribution through Ingram to 39,000 bookstores and online retailers
- 50-70% author royalties on print and digital sales
- Inclusion in Ingram's catalogs
- Publisher marketing program includes title tip sheet, media releases, book web page, cover polls, and more
- Twenty copies of your printed book

- Author may purchase books below or near wholesale

Regardless of whom you are approaching, make sure that you are clear on what you are getting. Things like the number of books you will get as part of the deal, how collaborative the process will be, if you will get any marketing help or coaching, and how the publisher will market your work. If the publisher cannot clearly elaborate what you will get, move on to the next.

## EDITING: TOUGH LOVE

FROM JOE

ANYONE WHO OWNS a guitar can, I suppose, call himself a musician. Anyone with a rake and shovel can say he's a gardener. Anyone with a stove and a few pots can call himself a cook. The same is true of writing and editing. Just about anyone with a PC can stake a claim as a wordsmith. There are no licenses to get, no state boards to pass, and the level of expertise is like judging gymnastics at the Olympics—suspiciously subjective.

Unfortunately, I've been horrified when reviewing manuscripts that were ostensibly *edited* only to find a structural and grammatical wreck. More than once I politely asked submitting writers to identify the editor who assisted them. And, to my chagrin, I often hear things like, "My English teacher from high school." Another doozy, "My spouse. She's a real good speller

and used to be a proofreader.” And one of my favorites, “Some people in my book club. We all critique each other’s work.” I have about a hundred similar examples.

This sounds a bit harsh and somewhat elitist, so I apologize in advance. But here goes: Never, ever rely on friends, family members, associates, or anyone dear to be your editor. *Never*. They can inspire you, challenge your premise, or be a great sounding board. But don’t expect them to be completely honest.

Did you ever have a friend, niece, or child in a school play or a sporting event who performed badly? Did you tell them? Probably not. Don’t expect your book club buddy to be entirely honest, either. He or she wants to make you feel good, hence the word *buddy*.

Editing needs to be clinical and objective. It’s like going to the hospital; sometimes you need surgery and sometimes just a few nips and tucks. When I was a deputy managing editor at a major newspaper, we had a saying. If a story needed a lot of work, we’d say, “Looks like this one needs to go up on the lift.”

Professional editors—at least the best ones—focus on the work, not personality. Editors are not cheerleaders; if they do their job well, the cheering will come once the work is buffed, shined, and published. Now, that doesn’t mean editors can’t be supportive and empathetic. The best ones are. Berating a writer

serves no purpose. Writing is deeply personal, which means feelings can get hurt. Writing is a mirror to someone's intellect and creativity. So smart editors are compassionate ones who acknowledge the frailty of egos.

Okay, you get the point. So how do you find someone who is nice but mean, who trims with a razor and draws very little blood?

Due diligence, just like anything else. Here are a few tips:

- Work with someone who has a track record of editing many books.
- Check testimonials from other writers who have worked with the editor.
- Speak with writers or agents familiar with the editor.
- Find someone experienced in your book's genre.
- Find someone interested in you.
- Find a collaborator—not a dictator.
- Find an editor who is busy. Yes, *busy*. That means he or she is in demand.
- Look for maturity, humor, and humility. No one knows it all.
- Find someone you're comfortable with but who makes you uncomfortable.

Editing is a push-pull exercise. The worst editors do neither. They merely fix typos and bless what's been submitted. The bullies push writers around, trying to impose their style or will on a writer. The best editors preserve and enhance the writer's voice and objective; they don't step on them. The editor's work, in the end, should be invisible.

I worked in major newspapers for three decades, my first dozen years as a reporter. Some of the worst editors were the most insecure. They felt like they had to leave what I called "their little yellow stains" all over my work to justify their existence and confirm their superiority. My best editors improved my work instead of just changing it. They made my writing crisp; they plugged holes in my stories; they weeded out verbosity and redundancy; they pointed out where I was being self-indulgent; they made me sound smarter and more eloquent.

Book editing is no different. Great writing is great writing; slop is slop. Books are obviously more nuanced and detailed than magazine and newspaper articles. A writer's voice is much more pronounced in books—and book authors must have a point of view. But great writing in any medium is, first and foremost, profuse with clarity and efficiency.

So, a word to the wise: make sure the editor you hire or work with has chops—*real chops*. If they're

mediocre, expect no more from your end product. If they're inexperienced, they'll be learning on your dime. If they're a friend or family member, expect no more than kindness and support.

Editing is a dance, folks. Find a partner who knows the steps.

## TYPES OF EDITING

I'm not going to get too deep in the weeds here, but it might be helpful to chat briefly about types of editing. When you submit a manuscript for publication, it will be evaluated in part on which level of editing the publisher thinks the book requires.

### Line Editing

The most involved and time consuming is what we call a structural edit. Some publishers call it a substantive edit; others say line edit or developmental editing. Make sure you're clear on what your editor or publisher is providing.

A structural edit for fiction typically involves the big stuff. That's primarily what I call taking a 5,000-foot view of the work. I focus on things like:

- Plot
- Pacing
- Narration and voice
- Character development

- Sequencing
- Transition
- Verb tense
- Dialogue development and structure
- Redundancy

Nonfiction is much the same as the imagined world. Above all, the writing must be clear and the organization cohesive. The biggest difference is standards of accuracy. Fiction is invented and often has disclaimers of *real persons* or events. Nonfiction work is ostensibly fact-based, therefore implying truth. Most often inaccuracies result from laziness—not intent.

The best way to avoid mistakes is to double check—make that *triple check*—the spellings of names and places. You may also want to consider reading the manuscript out loud to help catch errors. Misspelled names erode author credibility. That goes for dates as well. If you make a historical reference and the date is wrong, someone will notice. And if that someone is antagonistic, he could spread the word about your gaffe. The Internet is unforgiving.

Be very, very careful when disparaging *identifiable* people in a nonfiction book. You can be sued. I have found that many writers simply don't understand the tenets of slander. If you accuse or allege in a nonfiction work that someone committed a crime, acted unethically, or did something that would



embarrass them or hurt their standing in society, you better be able to prove the damaging statement is true. You had better have a legal document or court record backing up your assertion. And if you lift such an accusation from a newspaper or other source, you had better attribute the source.

Be careful when discussing a business or company, too. If you allege a company is corrupt or intentionally selling shoddy products, you better have proof—a government report, a lawsuit, a scientific study.

One of my key jobs as a senior newsroom editor was making sure we didn't get sued. I spent countless hours in meetings with reporters and our lawyers scrubbing a story line by line in libel reviews. It's a complex exercise and very nuanced. I was often astonished at how a seemingly innocent phrase or reference was flagged by the lawyers as potentially "actionable."

- Is it defamatory to say someone was raped?
- Is it defamatory to say a city's mayor is a crook?
- Have you slandered the principal of a high school if you say she had sex with a student, but you don't name the principal?
- If you say someone has "allegedly" committed a crime, are you protected from being sued if the accusation proves to be false?
- Can you defame a dead person?

- Do you know the difference between being malicious and merely inaccurate?
- Can you say a popular musician lip-synchs at concerts?
- Can you say your ex-husband was a lying, cheating wretch?

I'm not going to give you the answers. Instead, I would strongly recommend that you study a libel review manual to discern the answers. One of the best libel law sources can be found in the *Associated Press Stylebook*.

Being accurate and ethical in nonfiction writing is serious business, folks. One newspaper I worked for required reporters and editors to sign a statement each year attesting that they had read the company ethics policy. The staff was also required to attend, each year, libel review sessions sponsored by the newspaper. Even those things didn't prevent some frivolous lawsuits.

The perils of libel law is another reason to work with an experienced editor. You need someone watching your back—and your words. You need someone knowledgeable to help you assess which risks with words are best taken and best to avoid.

Remember that your reputation is on the line when you publish a nonfiction book. Inaccurate and unsubstantiated words diminish your stature and the significance of your work. Reviewers and critics

often look for reasons not to like something. Don't give them one. Here's a checklist to help make your work bulletproof:

- Double-check spellings of all proper names.
- Double-check accuracy of dates and places.
- Don't sacrifice clarity for style.
- Learn the basics of libel law.
- Work with an editor familiar with libel law.
- When criticizing, use understatement. It's far more effective than bombast.
- No cheap shots.
- Have documents to support controversial facts or personal attacks.
- Attribute the sources of criminal or ethical violations.
- Be reasonable; few people are completely evil or angelic.
- Avoid absolutes, words like "always" and "never."

Entire books have been written on the topics of plot development, storytelling, and libel laws. In fact, some writers spend two years in college creative writing and journalism programs studying these subjects. I mention them here to simply alert you to what to expect during a structural edit and what to ask yourself before that process begins.

## Copy Editing

The in-the-weeds version of editing is what I call a copy edit. Some call it a line-by-line edit; others say word edit. This second level of editing typically comes after the structural edit. A line edit is what I describe as a “scrub.” The copy editor goes word by word, line by line to vacuum from the manuscript typos, misspellings, extra spaces, incomplete sentences, and grammatical inconsistencies. But the biggest job of all is making sure the manuscript complies with one of the major style guides being used. There are a few. The main ones are *The Chicago Manual of Style* and *The Associated Press Stylebook*. Both set forth a litany of rules for things like use of italics, capitalization, numerals, titles, etc. *The Chicago Manual of Style* is cumbersome—no, make that a pain. The 16<sup>th</sup> Edition is 1,026 pages. It’s why copy editors are paid. So when discussing copy editing with a publisher, here is what you should expect:

- Grammar, spelling, punctuation check
- Style guide compliance
- Scrubbing out typos
- Fixing any lingering issues of clarity

When working with a copy editor, a few words of advice: Love them, appreciate them. They are nitpickers by trade and, as such, can be annoying at times. But

they can save you from much embarrassment. They're your safety net. They catch the lingering issues missed by you and your structural editor. And, believe me, there are *always* lingering issues. It's not at all unusual for a copy editor to vacuum up 200 to 400 "typos" and mistakes in a 75,000-word document. So, just as with a structural editor, it's imperative that you work with an experienced, diligent copy editor.

Quick story: John Koehler and I have *fixed* many books for authors who have self-published. One spent more than \$10,000 on editing, cover design, and layout with a big self-publishing firm. The book was a flaming mess; the cover was awful and nearly every chapter was rife with mistakes. And the editing? All I will say is that this writer was done a grave injustice. This instance, and many like it that I have witnessed, are what gives book publishing a taint. I was disgusted.

## **Proofreading**

The final layer of editing is simply proofreading. This is another chance to spot typos in a manuscript. This typically occurs after the book has been placed into layout but before a book is published. Most professional publishers, like Koehler Books, provide authors with advance reader copies (ARCs), which is an actual book. We normally provide about ten to

twenty ARCs to authors, who use them to get reviews before a book is released for sale. We also provide digital ARCs prior to the printed ARCs, which are great for acquiring endorsement quotes.

ARCs are also great for spotting mistakes and making any last-minute changes. They're yet another safety net. We always recommend that the author provide ARCs to an eagle-eyed associate or friends good at spotting mistakes. (This is a good time to get your spouse or book club buddies to have a look.) When you're about to publish tens of thousands of words, there are bound to be a few rascals in there.

When you're a new author, all of this fuss over editing and style guides can be exasperating. Unfortunately, there are no justifiable shortcuts. However, your publishing path doesn't have to be arduous or intimidating if you have skilled professionals guiding you on this trail ride.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

FROM JOE

JOHN ALREADY SPOKE, at some length, I might add, about the realities and rigors of landing a publishing offer. It's tough, no doubt. Snobby editors like me closely scrutinize manuscripts, looking for potential but honing in on weaknesses.

Manuscripts that come in *clean* obviously stand a much better chance of being favorably considered. Those that are *dirty*—not so much.

An editor looks at a manuscript as if he is buying an old house. Does it need a new roof, gutters, and windows? Are the walls cracked? Is the carpet worn? Is the foundation solid? Any needed fixes equate to work for the editor, which in turn equates to expense for the publisher who pays the editor.

Book editing is no different than most other service professions. Time is money, so don't expect

services for free. How much you pay for editing depends on what's needed and the manuscript length. The self-publishing mills often charge by the word. That presumes all words are equal, which is silly and condescending. We evaluate books holistically and individually, assessing what each one needs.

The very best books, those that garner traditional deals, typically require a lot less work. They are professionally edited and presented with a well-articulated plot and of a popular genre. Pretty basic, right?

We review or consider several hundred submissions a year. Plus, I have written a couple and edited upwards of a couple hundred manuscripts myself. So I've learned a few things along the way. I can pretty quickly size up a manuscript, its strengths, and its flaws. Writers, especially those new to the game, tend to make some of the same categorical mistakes. I am not exactly sure why; I think it's partly due to the way people—as a species—think. I also suspect too many writers read too many “how-to” books espousing formulaic constructions. Their writing often feels forced or as if they're assembling Lego blocks.

Poor writing results more from laziness than a lack of skill. Many writers rush their work, just pounding out something, seeking instant gratification.



The best writers will tell you how they labor for years. I certainly don't advocate that kind of suffering, but suffer we must. Dorothy Parker nailed this sentiment when she said, "I hate writing; I love having written."

I can instantly tell how much love or hate a writer plowed into a manuscript. There are lots of markers, but the most telling is *clarity*. Clear thinking comports clear writing. If a writer is muddy about a character or scene, the writing will be dark and cloudy as well. The only way I know to filter the pond is to keep writing until the light shines through; option two is to hire someone to do it for you.

Another telltale is word efficiency. Too many writers slather words on a page like a hungry eleven-year-old spreading peanut butter on bread. Sentences are lumpy, uneven, and too thick in places. Select words with precision; compress; get to the point quickly. The three most profound words about writing came from the master E.B. White. "Omit needless words." There is nothing I can impart on the topic of great writing that White hasn't already articulated in *The Elements of Style*, which he co-authored with William Strunk, Jr. Anyone who can master half of what that little book professes vaults to the upper echelons of writing.

Some people have told me that *The Elements of Style* is outdated or for fogies. That could be said of many masterpieces, including Shakespeare, Twain,

and the Bible. Those who lightly dismiss Strunk and White's compact little book either haven't read it or don't want to adhere to its rules because they're lazy.

Okay, I'll dismount my high horse now and return to the practical. What follows is a list of some commendable and abhorrent writing attributes. That's a pompous way of saying *Dos* and *Don'ts*.

- Omit needless words. (Sorry, I can't resist.)
- Omit needless characters. Preserve only those personalities integral to the story. That goes for fiction and nonfiction. Too many names and characters dilute the impact of those most important.
- Omit clichés, especially dumb ones.
- Omit gratuitous vulgarity. It's okay to drop the f-bomb, but it should be used sparingly to attain full impact.
- Consistent verb tense. Switching verb tense is tricky business and can be very confusing to readers when poorly executed.
- Do not describe the mundane. You don't have to tell a reader that someone walked to the car, opened the door, put the keys in the ignition, stepped on the gas pedal . . . Keep it simple. "They drove away."
- Avoid flourish. Description can be powerful when used sparingly. You don't need to

portray every leaf of every tree or every droplet of sunlight beaming in from the bedroom window. Describe the profound and important, not the routine. We all know what a sunray looks like.

- Give characters voice. Every character should sound distinctive. A reader should know who is speaking, even without attribution. Too often all characters sound the same.
- Separate dialogue and narration. Some may argue this point, but stacking dialogue improves pacing. Dialogue loses impact when buried in narration.
- Don't interrupt dialogue with asides. Let the characters converse uninterrupted.
- No furrowed brows, *please!* A scene or dialogue, not a twitching eyebrow, should convey emotion.
- No "smile on her face." Where else do smiles happen? No "tear in her eye." Where else do tears come from?
- Spell and capitalize pronouns correctly. If you're not sure of a name, look it up. Don't be lazy.
- Don't invent your own punctuation. There are already rules for everything. A dash is not a comma, which is not a semicolon,

which is not a period, just as a watermelon is not an orange, which is not a banana, which is not a grape.

- Avoid parenthetical statements. If it's worth mentioning, make it a sentence.
- Noun, verb, noun. Master simple declarative sentences before getting into the fancy stuff.
- Don't repeat information. I repeat, don't repeat information. It's disrespectful to readers.
- Use attribution when multiple characters are conversing.
- Use numbers, numerals, and italics correctly.
- Avoid zigging and zagging. Keep the story chronological. If you break the time sequence to flashback, make certain you do so seamlessly. Bouncing back and forth in time gives readers whiplash.
- Show me, don't just tell me. Far more interesting to take a journey than to be told about one.
- Use all of your senses—taste, touch, smell. We do much more than see and hear.
- Use section breaks when changing venues or characters.
- Do you really need a prologue and epilogue? Jump right in and jump right out.

There you go—just some of what I look for when giving a manuscript a cursory read.

Of course, a great book needs a great plot. Great words lacking a great story are empty calories. There are libraries stuffed with books on how to create plot and characters. Go read a few. Better yet, read books by great authors. Mimic them until you find your own style and voice. And remember the golden rule: Writing is hard work, and the best writing takes a lot of it. Mark Twain conveyed the same notion more eloquently. “The time to begin writing an article is when you have finished it to your satisfaction. By that time you begin to clearly and logically perceive what it is that you really want to say.”

So, what do you want to say? What’s your story? My advice is pretty basic: *Show me something new. Surprise me.* Too many movies and books are predictable and, therefore, boring. They accomplish the same things in the same ways. Ask yourself a few questions about your plot:

- Does it surprise?
- Does it outrage?
- Does it titillate?
- Does it make the reader care?
- Does it expose something hidden?
- Does it make me contemplate something larger than myself?

- Who is this written for?
- What world does it open?
- Is it relevant?
- Will readers remember it?

## **MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION: LOOKS MATTER**

How your manuscript is presented weighs heavily in how it's perceived. Submissions that are properly formatted have a much better chance of being favorably noticed. If they're a jumble, that could be taken as a sign that the writing is equally as convoluted or disorganized. So here's a formatting compendium from John.

### **Formatting Your Manuscript**

Before you send your MS Word manuscript to an editor, you should make sure that it is well formatted according to a style guide. We have taken what we think are the most important elements and put them in a simple 1-page style guide.

The ten key items are listed here:

1. **File type:** The entire manuscript must be submitted as one Microsoft® Word file.
2. **Font type and line spacing:** The text in the body of your manuscript must be 12-point

Times or Times New Roman type, double-spaced.

3. **Page numbers:** Use the header/footer function for page numbers. Do not enter them manually.
4. **Margins:** Submit your manuscript in an 8.5 X 11" letter-sized portrait format. Use the default margins, which are typically one inch.
5. **Spacing with punctuation:** Use just one space after all ending punctuation marks, including periods, question marks, exclamation points, and colons.
6. **Paragraph indentation:** Do not use the space bar or the TAB key to indent paragraphs! Instead, use the First Line Indent tool on your ruler (for a Mac) or open your Paragraph window for Windows. Set it to .25.
7. **Page breaks:** Do not use the Enter key or the TAB key to start your chapter or a new page. To start a new chapter, section, part, volume, or book, use the page break function.
8. **Quotation marks:** Only use curly quotation marks (" ") with no space after an opening mark and before a closing mark.

**9. Dashes and hyphens:** Hyphens and both types of dashes (em dash and en dash) should be flush with the text on either side.

- An em dash (—) is often used to denote a shift in thought that causes an abrupt change in a sentence. It can also be used to indicate a sudden break in dialogue: Eric—having just discovered the letter—ran down the street.
- An en dash (–) is shorter than an em dash, but longer than a hyphen. The principal use of the en dash is to connect continuing, or inclusive, numbers—dates, times, or reference numbers: 10:00 AM–5:00 PM.
- A hyphen (-) is used to separate numbers that are not inclusive (such as phone numbers) as well as some compound words: the well-known writer.

**10. Photos and graphics:** All photos and graphics intended for use in the book should be a minimum of 300 dpi in resolution and a minimum of 4” on its shortest side. Vector graphics do not apply.



## **Submitting Your Manuscript**

If you plan on seeking representation by an agent or a publisher, you will have to prepare your manuscript according to their standards and also follow their lead. Do your research and find out what kind of genre they prefer. Be friendly. Be persuasive and be accurate. Treat your query letter as if it is as important as your manuscript. Because it is. A poorly written query can cause a beautifully written manuscript to be rejected without being read.

- **Follow the guidelines and instructions—**

Most agents and publishers will have a detailed call to action in terms of how to prepare your manuscript and what accompanying items should be included. Those items typically include the following:

- Book title, genre, number of words
- Synopsis of your story, typically one page or less
- Complete contact information
- Properly formatted manuscript
- Marketing and promotion plan—tell them how you plan on promoting your book. Include information about your website, your social media, whether or not you plan

on hiring a publicist or marketing pro, and any other details of your plan

- Past experience, meaning any previous books that you have published, awards, etc.
- Sales details for any books you have already published
- Author bio

Köehler Books submissions details may be reviewed at <http://www.koehlerbooks.com/submissions/>.

## DESIGN

FROM JOHN

WHILE THE QUALITY of your writing is the main determiner of commercial success, your book design, or package as it is called in the industry, is also important. Many well-written books have been relegated to the trash bin based on a poor cover design. In the same way, readers may turn away from a book that is poorly formatted on the interior, rendering it difficult to read. It must *feel* right to the reader, who instinctively recognizes the right look for a book. E-books can change the type size, but printed books are “stuck.”

As with any designed item, book design is a combination of form and function. The form relates to the creativity, to the way it makes you feel, to the strength of the design and how pleased the reader

feels looking at it and reading it. The form is the beauty and art and creativity rolled into one that altogether produces a pleasant, excited, or compelling reaction from the reader.

The function relates to the ease of the reader's experience. For example, the type of a printed book is typically eleven or twelve points with a line spacing or leading of fourteen or fifteen points. That is what readers expect, and if you go too far outside of that comfort zone, readers will find another book.

Without question, the cover of your book is its most critical and important design element, for it is there that the readers first meet you and your story. If they like what they see, they will continue the journey. When they turn to the back cover and then open the book, the design must continue to make them feel comfortable, in the presence of a "real" book in every way. The cover design may be loud, but typically the interior design is quieter or refined so as not to intrude upon the reader, but simply to make it right and easy for them to simply read the book. Good form and function work together.

Whether a strong cover design or pagination or drop caps, the overall design of your book weighs heavily in its ultimate success. As is the case with editing, websites and marketing, engaging professionals to handle your design is critical. Do not

make the mistake of many self-publishing authors who hire a professional editor but then have their book designed by a family member with little or no book experience.

## FRONT COVER

After they read your book, we hope that a reader says “Wow!” But the WOW factor starts with the front cover. It is the place where readers first meet your book, your story, and you. It must clearly convey “good book” and invite them in to take a look. It must draw them in by delighting their eye with a title and imagery and type that look like something they would like to read. It must attract, not push away.

Knowing your audience is a key component of cover design. If you do not, then you are simply shooting wildly at readers and hoping for the best. An award-winning cover design targeting romance readers won't work if the book is historical fiction. Before the cover design is initiated, it is therefore important to establish the audience for the book so that the designer has a clearly defined target and direction.

In some cases with larger publishers, the author will have little or nothing to do with the cover design of his or her book. But we prefer to engage our

authors at this level, because even though they are not professional book cover designers, they are the expert on their work, and they have some idea about what might make a good cover.

This kind of collaboration between the author and the designer is important. We ask our authors to write descriptions of cover ideas, to make sketches, and to download cover designs from Amazon or elsewhere that they like. We are not asking them to solve the cover for us but simply to participate in a brainstorming process that will take our design team places we might have otherwise missed.

After the collaboration with the author and the brainstorming and samples are in hand, the design team initiates designs. Book cover designs can run the gamut from extremely simple literary covers to complicated and realistic layered imagery to type-only cover designs. Designers try to strike a balance between paying homage to what bestselling covers in a genre look like and creating cutting-edge new and compelling cover. It can be an intriguing dance to find the right balance.

After we present several cover designs to the author, we ask them to help us narrow the choices down to two by grading the covers from favorite to least favorite. At that point, we normally create a cover poll and put it on our website (<http://www>.

koehlerbooks.com/) with a post that has the story synopsis and larger covers. The author sends that out to their network, as do we, and readers vote for their favorite cover.

We do not conduct these polls to let the readers decide for us but to get some scientific evidence of readers' tastes. Most of the time the readers' top choice mimics our own, but some of the time we are surprised and then have to question and in some cases change our final cover choice, in consultation with the author.

Covers are typically the first creative component to be completed, as they are needed for the author's website and pre-launch publicity, as well as for pre-sales and pre-orders online. With the cover in hand, the author can seek out endorsement quotes and reviews using their clean manuscript. They can also build their author website, blogs, and other social media directly related to the book.

In addition to the title and author's name, the front cover will often include a genre subhead, such as "A LEGAL THRILLER." This functions as a telltale focus device so the reader can have no doubt. There may be a subhead or even more information if it is a nonfiction book. Finally, the cover is an excellent place to put an endorsement quote by a reviewer, author, or VIP. Endorsement quotes are important to

readers and let them know that someone else thinks highly of the book.

## **BACK COVER**

After you have grabbed the reader's attention with a great front cover and they have grabbed your book, what next? Well, of course, they turn the book over, if they are holding a printed book, or they read about the book if they are looking online. Readers are accustomed to seeing certain things in certain ways on back covers. Endorsement quotes, synopsis, author's biography, pricing, and more all go into the information typically included on a back cover.

### **Description**

While there may be an endorsement quote or two on the top of the back cover, the main element is the book description, or story synopsis. This is one of the most difficult forms of writing for most authors to take on, as the description must tell the story in a compelling, informative way. It is always a good idea for writers to study the descriptions of bestselling books in order to learn the cadence and the feel of the language.



## Author Biography

Readers like meeting the author and knowing a little about the person they are going to be spending time with through his or her book. Therefore, most books include an author biography and even a photo of the author. The bio should lead with information about the author's writing, such as previous books, articles, and awards. Information about the author's education and personal data such as where he or she lives is often included at the end of the bio.

In most cases, the author's biography is written third person so as to make it appear more professional and less personal.

## Pricing and Bar Code

An often-overlooked element on the back of printed books is the pricing and bar code area of the book. Typically, this box holding the bar code and ISBN is placed at the bottom of the book in a subservient position to the description, endorsement quotes, and author's biography.



We make our bar code boxes work harder by including the pricing of the book in the bar code and below it in clearly marked text. This is important, as readers typically look down for the box to see the price of the book. We also include the genre at the top of the bar code box as another way to help focus the book in the reader's mind and to make it easier for bookstores to place the book in the correct location.

## **Spine**

The spine of a printed book is intended to show the title and author in a way that can be easily read on a bookshelf. Often the book will also carry the imprint or logo of the publisher at the bottom of the spine. Typically, the designer will use the same typefaces from the cover on the spine, though the limitations of the spine width may force the design to modify that design to fit the space.

In some cases a design element will be included in the spine design, and sometimes the front cover will wrap around the spine so that it is one continuous feel. The key is that it looks good AND that the title is easily read. Both form and function must always be realized.

## **Cover Wrap**

The cover wrap is one design that shows, from left to right, the back cover, spine, and front cover. In

a softcover book the cover literally wraps around the individual pages of the interior text. The cover wrap is the way that an author will review his or her book and typically will come by way of a pdf file.

Each of the three elements—front and back covers and spine—must be considered as stand-alone designs, but they must also work together to create a unified comprehensive design by the use of color, design, typography, and the overall feel.

Most POD distributors such as CreateSpace and Ingram will provide cover wrap templates for the designer to use, most often in Adobe InDesign or as a pdf file. Ingram's templates include the style of binding, number of pages, and also the ISBN and bar code box.

A screenshot of a web form for configuring a POD (Print-on-Demand) product. The form is set against a light gray background and contains several sections, each with a small asterisk icon and a label. The sections are: 1. '13 Digit ISBN' with a text input field. 2. 'Publisher Reference Number' with a text input field. 3. 'Trim Size' with a dropdown menu. 4. 'Interior Color and Paper' with two radio button options: 'Black & White' and 'Color'. 5. 'Binding Type' with two radio button options: 'Paperback' and 'Hardback'. 6. 'Laminate Type' with two radio button options: 'Gloss' and 'Matte'. 7. 'Page Count' with a text input field. Each label has a small question mark icon to its right, suggesting help text is available.

\* 13 Digit ISBN

Publisher Reference Number

\* Trim Size

Interior Color and Paper ?

☐ Black & White

☐ Color

Binding Type ?

☐ Paperback

☐ Hardback

Laminate Type ?

☐ Gloss

☐ Matte

\* Page Count

Ingram's cover wrap template generator is found at <https://myaccount.ingramspark.com/Portal/Tools/CoverTemplateGenerator>. The designer must fill out the trim size and book type, including color or black and white, paperback or hardback, gloss vs. matte, page count, file type, etc. The page count will be shown after the interior text layout is completed and determines the width of the spine, which is critical for the printing and folding of the covers around the spine.

The price is also included in the cover template generator. To determine the price of your book, we use the Ingram Publisher Compensation Calculator, found at <https://myaccount.ingramspark.com/Portal/Tools/PubCompCalculator>. You fill in the same information you used for the cover template generator, plug in your list price and the wholesale discount, and the calculator will give you the expected compensation based on the number of pages, the size and type of book, and whether black and white or color.

## Cover Styles

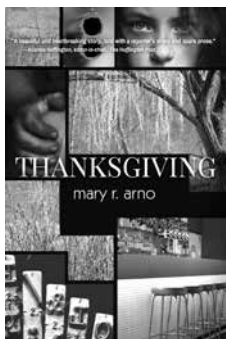
There are many different styles of printed book binding, but for the sake of this discussion we will show the three primary book styles used by many publishers, including Koehler Books.

- 1. Perfect Binding.** Perfect binding is what is commonly referred to as softcover. The cover is typically a much thicker cover-weight paper

stock with a matte or gloss coating that protects the cover from scratches and fingerprints. The pages are printed and/or cut to single pages printed front and back and stacked in order of the pagination. Those stacked pages are then glued along the spine edge, and the cover wrap is folded around the text pages, using scoring equipment to create the fold.

**2. Cloth Hardback with Dust Jacket.** This is the most well-known type of hardback cover. The hardback text has a cloth skin glued to it. Typically, foil stamping is used for the title information on the spine, and custom covers may also include foil stamping or printing on the front cover. The dustcover is similar to the perfect binding cover wrap, though typically the paper stock is not as heavy. The cover flaps wrap around the front and back cover edges, which holds it to the book.

**3. Case Laminate.** Case laminate is similar to a cloth hardback in terms of the hardened cover material, but instead of it being covered with cloth and with a loose-fitting dust jacket cover, the cover wrap is glued to the hardback along with the final gloss or matte coating. Case laminate binding is usually less expensive than a dust jacket type of cover.



When working on your cover design, try opposing options and solutions. Try illustration and photography. Try complex and simple. Try it all and see what happens. Then narrow it down to the top two and take a poll. Our cover polls do not select the cover for us, but they do provide terrific feedback and show us trends, sometimes surprising. Oh, and which cover above do you think was used? To find out go to [koehlerbooks.com](http://koehlerbooks.com)

## INTERIOR TEXT DESIGN

It is easy to dismiss the importance of the interior design of your book and concentrate solely on the cover. But if you do, the net effect may be to create an unfriendly hard-to-read experience for the reader. And that is never a good idea.

- **Book size**—After you establish what size you want your book to be (eg., 6 x 9 inches), you can proceed to lay out the interior text pages. After you have finalized the layout and the number of pages is locked, that number will be plugged into the cover template generator.
- **Margins**—Margins are key elements in the interior design of your book. The top and bottom margins may indicate where the text begins and may include page numbers, book title, etc. Left and right margins are often visually identical, but usually the gutter side margin is wider to allow for the bending of the pages into the gutter.
- **Typefaces**—Consideration of the typefaces used on the cover may be given for primary interior elements such as chapter headers, subheads, etc. But for interior design the most important type decision is the body copy text. Readability and functionality are the rule,

which limits the choices to typefaces or fonts that are proven to be easy to read. Times Roman, Georgia, Warnock Pro, Bookman, and Baskerville are a few easy-to-read typefaces that work well for body copy. The standard size of type is around 11 to 12 point, with 14 to 16 points of leading, or space between lines.

- **Pagination**—Page numbers and other supporting elements such as the book title may be added to the top or bottom of the book. Often they are smaller than the book text and treated in a manner that does not interfere with the reading. Most design programs include some kind of an automated pagination template to keep track of the interior pages.

- **Copyright page**—This is typically the location of all legal information in the book. This information will include the ISBN, the date, © symbol, and copyright information with the author's name. Legal information may include all rights reserved and warnings about illegal reproduction. Works of fiction will also include language to absolve the author from any real damages. Often there is information about the publisher, other releases as needed, and any other copyright or permission notices for works that are included.



- **Front matter**—Some books include a foreword or introduction that comes before the main body of the text. This “front matter” may or may not be included in the main pagination or page numbering. They may be treated slightly differently than the main text, or not. Dedications typically come in the front of the book, with the specific location to be determined by the designer with input from the author. The same is true of the acknowledgments, which normally appear after the main body of the text.
- **Chapter pages**—More design attention and creativity are often given to pages that start a new chapter. With books of fiction, it is common to use a larger font for the name of the chapter and to give it a more defined treatment such as centering and using a different typeface than the body text. The first few lines of the text may be capitalized, or the first letter may be enlarged as a drop cap to help identify the starting point of the chapter for the reader and to create a nice pause.
- **Back matter**—Back matter content is generally all text and graphics found after the main body of the book. This includes indexes, footnotes, endnotes, acknowledgments, author’s notes, bibliographies, book club questions, reader’s guide, and other sections. For works

of fiction this material will typically be quite limited, but for nonfiction books, especially those with academic, historical, or heavily researched content, the importance of the back matter becomes greater.

Because it is the last thing to appear, it can be tempting to treat the back matter with less importance than the main body of the book. That would be a big mistake! Always treat your back matter content with the greatest respect.

- **Fiction vs. Nonfiction**

Generally speaking, the stylistic, design, and formatting rules for fiction will be different than nonfiction. The use of pagination, drop caps, the way captions are used, or even the typefaces used will tend to be different. It is always a good idea to study other books similar to yours to see how they are formatted and treated on the covers and interior.

While styles may vary as well as rules of design and typography, regardless of the style you use, the key is to be consistent. For instance if you decide to use the *AP Style Guide*, use it throughout, as that will effect everything from paragraph formatting, pagination, grammar, numbers, and so much more.

## THE PRODUCTION PROCESS

AFTER THE AUTHOR completes the author questionnaire, we schedule a “welcome and creative” call. During that call we walk new authors through the entire production process, including manuscript formatting, creative development, marketing, ARCs, distribution, and so forth. We use the schedule and written material on our Production Process page at <http://www.koehlerbooks.com/learn/the-process/>.

We are sharing it below as it appears on the website. Every publisher will be different in the way they approach the schedule and logistics of publishing your book. Self-publishing companies will have a shorter production cycle, and the author can facilitate that to suit a particular event or promotional launch period.

The table shows the entire schedule at a glance, with each section spelled out in more detail below the table.

## **CHECKLIST AND TIMELINE**

The following checklist and timeline are intended to show you the process of preparing and publishing your book, as well as the approximate amount of time required for each step. Release times vary and depend on whether a title is to be included in an Ingram seasonal catalog. These times are shown as a guide, not an absolute.

|   |
|---|
| TITLE PREPARATION 3–4 weeks                                   |
| o Signed and executed contract                                |
| o Author questionnaire  |
| o Manuscript formatted according to Koehler Books Style Guide |
| o Welcome and creative call                                   |
| CREATIVE & PRODUCTION 3–6 months                              |
| o Front cover design  |
| o Marketing call  |
| o Editing   |
| o Copyediting and proofreading                                |
| o Text layout   |
| o Cover wrap and text layouts                                 |
| o Client approval of all layouts                              |
| o Tip sheet   |
| PRINTING & ARCS 2–4 weeks                                     |
| o Advance review copies (ARC)—Publisher provided              |
| o ARCs—Author optional purchases                              |
| o ARCs—Digital ARCs   |
| DISTRIBUTION  |
| o Online print pre-sales 4-8 weeks prior to launch            |
| o E-book 4-6 weeks prior to launch                            |
| TOTAL PUBLISHING TIME 6–12 months                             |

## **TITLE PREPARATION**

### **Signed and executed contract**

During this period the author and/or agent/attorney will discuss the contract so that all parties are in agreement. The author may sign and mail the contract or sign it electronically via approved methods.

### **Author questionnaire**

The author questionnaire is one of the most important documents created during the publishing process. The author will provide basic contact information, an author biography and photo, back cover marketing text, BISAC categories, sales hook, and other marketing information. See Author Questionnaire sample at <http://www.koehlerbooks.com/dropbox/aq/Author%20Questionnaire.doc>

### **Manuscript formatted according to Köehler Books Style Guide**

Authors must prepare their manuscript according to the Köehler Books Style Guide, which will be provided. It will give exact formatting rules for preparation of the manuscript so that it complies with the formatting needs of the editor and design team.

**Welcome and creative call**

The welcome call will introduce the author to the Köehler Books timeline and provide a chance to go over the entire step-by-step process of developing the title for publication. This will include discussion of the technical marketing aspects of the book, including pricing, target audience, and release. The call will also include the creative process and include a discussion about the cover design.

**CREATIVE AND PRODUCTION**

After we have brainstormed with the author, we will proceed with the development of the book, including editing, design, and other elements that will round out a finished book.

**Front cover design**

The front cover design is the beginning of the creative development cycle. Our designers will provide two or three cover options based in part on the discussion with the author. The author may provide examples of covers they like during this process. Authors and designers will collaborate throughout the creation of the cover, and the publisher will make the final choice.

## **Marketing call**

This is a fantastic way for the author to begin preparing his or her promotional and marketing process. We may have a professional publicist or marketing professional on the call to discuss social media and ways to get reviewed or covered in more traditional media such as TV, radio, and print publications.

## **Editing**

This is the process where you will work directly with our executive editor Joe Cocco or an editor he assigns you. The process is collaborative, yet decisive. We will provide our edits as review items so you can see exactly what changes we have made or recommend. In some cases we may start the process by asking you to cut or alter specific sections of the manuscript.

## **Text layout**

After your manuscript is edited, it will go to text layout, where the words are flowed into the actual book format. The designers will handle all aspects of this phase, including title page, legal page, pagination, headline fonts, etc.



## **Copyediting and proofreading**

From layout the text goes to a copyeditor, who will follow our style guide with particular attention to grammatical usage and rules, as well as stylistic issues like spacing. The copyeditor will contact the author if there are any significant questions about the text.

## **Cover wrap and text layouts**

The cover wrap layout includes the front and back covers as well as the spine. The designer will ensure that the back cover synopsis reads well, along with author photo and biography. We also add the bar code and BISAC information and pricing.

## **Client approval of all layouts**

Once the proofreading and layout phase are complete, pdf proofs of the text and cover layout will be emailed to the author. The author marks up the layouts using Adobe Acrobat Reader directly on the files and returns the files to Köehler Books. After client approval the book moves to printing.

## **Tip sheet**

Tip sheets are essentially an information sheet that includes your cover, description, author bio,

and buying information, including price and ISBNs. Our authors use tip sheets in many ways, and we recommend they include them with any email or snail mail package about the book or when the author visits a bookstore or an event. The tip sheet prevents any chance that they do not have enough information about the title. See a sample tip sheet at <http://www.koehlerbooks.com/dropbox/tipsheet/The%20Pitcher%20tip%20sheet.pdf>.

## PRINTING AND ARCS

### **Advance reader copies (ARCs)— publisher provided**

These are the book copies that are promised by the publisher to the author in the contract. They are completed books but may be updated later with endorsement quotes and reviews, as well as corrections. We will also provide a digital ARC saved as a pdf file.

### **ARCs—Author purchases**

The author may buy books to send out for reviews, for personal use, or for tours and book events, at cost plus 25 percent, which is still well under wholesale (typically \$4 to \$6). Authors keep any profits from the sale of books they purchased,

but they do not count as sales nor do the authors receive royalties from those purchases.

### **Online print pre-sales**

As soon as the author questionnaire has been edited and the cover is completed, the title will be posted on Ingram's vast online title management system used by thousands of booksellers and distributors. The title will then become available for pre-sale online orders, which will typically ship four to six weeks prior to the pub date. This is an excellent way for the author to build awareness and search engine optimization.

### **E-books**

E-books will be processed after the final sign-off of the print files. Ingram Digital will then distribute the e-book to over twenty digital providers.

### **Print production**

Print production begins when the manuscript is approved and the layout of the printed book is initiated. Most professional book packaging companies and publishers will use a design and layout program such as Adobe InDesign to lay out the book and work with all of the elements involved: type, photos, graphics, and illustrations. This allows them to create and share

the cover wrap and interior text files for review by producing pdf files.

The pdf files are then marked up by the author and/or proofreader, using markup tools within Adobe Acrobat Reader, a free app that can open and mark up pdf files. The primary tools are Sticky Notes and Highlighter. When either tool is used, a mark is created at the exact point on the page, and notes related to that mark appear on the right-hand Notes column. These marked-up pdf files are sent back to the designer, who makes the changes and sends them back and forth until they are perfect.

After the cover wrap and interior text files are approved by the publisher and the author, it is necessary to create high-resolution pdf files that fit the specifications of the particular book distributor and/or printer. Each printer may have their specs, so it is important to follow them precisely or risk technical problems during pre-press.

The print-ready pdf files are then tested by the printer to make sure certain criteria are met. These include adequate resolution of graphics, proper naming of the files, proper treatment of colors, and typefaces. If the files do not pass the test, the designer/author may be asked to fix the files and resend them. Or the printer may offer to fix them for a fee or for free.

Once the files pass the printer's tests, e-proofs

are generated in most cases, such as with Lightning Source, the printing arm of Ingram. The e-proofs are pdf files that look essentially the same as the print pdf files, but they have been run through the pre-press systems of the printer and may have been altered as a result. Therefore, it is important to proof and double-check the e-proof, as it may show errors that were missed earlier in the process that need to be fixed.

## **ISBN**

The International Standard Book Number (ISBN) is a unique commercial book identifier that allows authors, publishers, distributors, booksellers, and libraries to track, order, and sell titles. Usually, unique ISBNs are given to each version of a book so that the softcover, e-book, and hardcover each has its own ISBN.

ISBNs are the most precise way to find a book on Amazon or any other bookseller. It can also be used to quickly find information about a book on tracking sites such as Bowker and Bookscan and ordering sites such as iPage. Since 2007, ISBNs are thirteen digits long. Your ISBN will be used to generate a barcode for the various versions of your book and is required for printed versions of your book.

## **IngramSpark**

IngramSpark is the best firm for self-publishing authors and indie publishers to use. This is partly because Ingram is one of the biggest book distributors in the world. This means that books published through IngramSpark are distributed not only to Amazon and other online booksellers, but also to brick-and-mortar booksellers.

IngramSpark provides an extremely easy-to-use interface, while providing world-class printing and distribution.

## **E-book production**

Typically e-books are produced after the print production is completed. The print files and cover are provided to the e-book production company who then process the files and creates an .epub and sometimes .mobi file.

We use a separate ISBN for our e-books and they are placed on IngramSpark as a separate asset so that sales can be tracked.

## DISTRIBUTION

AUTHORS AND AGENTS typically look for four critical things from a publisher: excellent creative development, good royalties, marketing, and great distribution. Distribution means the reach and accessibility of the titles to online as well as brick-and-mortar booksellers, retailers, and wholesalers. And, of course, in the end, distribution means getting books to the readers.

Our distribution is provided by Ingram. Some of our inventoried titles are with Ingram Wholesale, but most of our work is with IngramSpark. In our opinion they are the best in the business at printing and distributing books. Period. They handle everything for us, softcovers, hardcovers and e-books. They are the biggest and the best and they get our books out to the entire world. Any questions?

**Print**

Usually the publisher sells directly to a wholesaler, who then sells to a bookstore or retailer, who ultimately sells to a reader.

Here's how this breaks down, as a sample:

\$17.95—list price of book to reader (no discount)

\$8.43—Wholesale price @ 53% wholesale rate

\$5.43—Print price

\$3.00—Net royalty

Amazon and other online booksellers do not have the same overhead and storefronts as brick-and-mortar stores. So they are able to discount their titles more aggressively than the storefront booksellers.

All authors want to be in brick-and-mortar bookstores, but some of the bigger chains can be aggressive with orders. Very exciting as long as they don't return a lot of books! They can buy a book and hold on to it for a year or more and then return it to get their money back. They take on little or no risk, while the publisher takes on the risk of a return. This is especially important for an independent (self-pub) author who manages to move books to some big chains. Before you throw that party, check the return policy with your distributor. You may want to consider the smaller indies and the online booksellers, because they will produce fewer returns.



We are big fans of most indie or independent bookstores. One of the reasons is that they tend to work more creatively, are more open to new authors, and make careful buying decisions. They buy a few, and if they sell, they buy more. Smart.

We are also huge fans of the online booksellers, led by Amazon. There are two primary reasons. The first reason is that the online booksellers account for nearly 90 percent of our print sales, which actually means we love them very much! The second reason we are huge fans of online booksellers is that they return very few books. This is because they are final sales, not just orders. When readers buy a book, they tend to keep it.

Returns from online stores are less than 5 percent, indie brick-and-mortar stores are around 20 percent, and the big chain stores can have returns of more than 30 percent—sometimes much more. As an independent publisher, or as a published author, be aware of the great harm that returns can bring to your book and to your publishing company.

## **Digital**

E-book distribution can vary, depending on the distributor. Ingram Digital distributes their digital products (e-books) to around two dozen digital online booksellers. Some of the top e-bookselling vehicles

include Kindle, iBooks (Apple), Nook (Barnes & Noble), Kobo, and Sanyo.

E-book prices tend to be much lower than printed books. This has become a source of considerable discussion over the years. Some think that e-book prices should be low because the overhead is so cheap and easy for the publisher and retailer. Others think that e-books are just as important and valuable as the printed product and should be close in price. The reality is that most e-books are priced below \$10, unless they are top-selling authors and/or through bigger publishers.

While printed book prices are locked in place due to the physical aspect of the book and the fact that the price is usually printed on the back of the book, e-book prices may easily vary according to the whims and plans of the author and publisher. This allows for sales to be run and tied directly to promotions. Some of our authors have been accepted by BookBub (a paid program) for an email blast to run on a particular day. We drop the price before the day, and when the blast goes out, thousands of books can be sold. This type of versatility and flexibility is only available through e-books.

Currently, our e-books are priced at \$4.99 for fiction and \$7.99 for nonfiction. The \$4.99 is the current threshold price at which buyers perceive a good value and are more inclined to purchase the e-book.



Every author dreams of selling books in brick-and-mortar stores. But often they account for only 15-20% of sales compared to online sales. Does that mean you give up on them? Heavens, no. It means you want to make sure your distribution is accessible to bookstores. Read the fine print.

We use Ingram because they are one of the biggest distributors with the broadest reach and are well known by bookstores. That means our books are accessible everywhere. And that means sales, with a cherry on top.



Of the four primary components of book publishing, many authors believe that marketing is the most important. But it is just the tip of the iceberg, and in fact writing quality is by far the most important component to commercial success. Even with the best marketing, distribution, and creative development, poor writing quality will limit success.

## MARKETING

MARKETING IS ALWAYS top of mind for writers when seeking a publishing partner. Some have high expectations of what the publishing firm will do to promote the book and to actively market it. Publishers want their books to succeed, and most will have some kind of a marketing program.

One way that publishers initially market is by accepting certain types of titles and authors. Some publishers specialize in romance, or mystery and detective, or historical, or nonfiction self-help. That is one way to help target the books to a particular type of reader. Larger publishers will also do this by the creation of imprints, which are essentially new divisions that concentrate on a particular book type.

Generally speaking, publishers market upstream to booksellers and distributors who will be buying

their books, and the authors must concentrate on marketing downstream to the readers. Most publishers also reach out to readers through various types of marketing, including things that directly support the author, such as providing printed and digital advanced review copies (ARCs).

Köehler Books partners with authors to create comprehensive marketing programs that include conventional media, social media, and other ways to build a buzz and raise awareness about your book. We also train and coach emerging authors on the best methods for reaching out to readers, using low-cost guerilla marketing techniques as well as working with publicists and marketing professionals.

The following items are right off of our website and are from the list that we walk through with our clients as we develop their book and begin to deal with marketing the book. The first part lists what we, the publisher, do and the second part lists the things that we coach and train the author to do.

## WHAT THE PUBLISHER DOES

### **Book Web Page**

Each title gets a stand-alone web page on the Köehler Books website. It includes the cover, description, author bio and photo, as well as buying

and other optional information. We will also add you to our authors page.

### **Author's Questionnaire**

This is a comprehensive document that solicits the author for information about their title, the cover, marketing plans, description, comparative titles, etc. This information becomes the bedrock for Ingram's Title Management System (TMS). Download an author's questionnaire at [www.koehlerbooks.com/dropbox/questionnaire/Author\\_Questionnaire.doc](http://www.koehlerbooks.com/dropbox/questionnaire/Author_Questionnaire.doc)

### **Title Management System (TMS)**

Ingram's TMS provides title information and graphics to booksellers and distributors. This includes descriptions, endorsement quotes, marketing plans, and other information from the author's questionnaire. Booksellers can download tip sheets and package the information in a number of ways.

### **Tip Sheets**

Tip sheets are comprehensive single-page sheets that originate from the author's questionnaire. Tip sheets are invaluable for authors to send along with Advanced Reader Copies (ARCs) for endorsement quotes and reviews and also useful when visiting booksellers. They include ALL sales information, ISBN, pub date, etc. about your book and also include

Ingram's logo. Ingram is a known distributor and adds weight to your presentation. Always include a tip sheet! They are priceless and extremely useful. Download a sample tip sheet at [www.koehlerbooks.com/dropbox/tipsheet/The%20Pitcher%20tip%20sheet.pdf](http://www.koehlerbooks.com/dropbox/tipsheet/The%20Pitcher%20tip%20sheet.pdf)

### **Advance Reader Copies (ARCs)**

Each author receives at least twenty printed ARCs after the book has been approved for distribution. Authors are urged to use them for soliciting endorsement quotes and reviews and for their personal enjoyment. They are finished books in every way. The author will also receive a digital ARC, which is the entire text of the book saved as a pdf file with the front and back covers added. These are extremely useful for our authors and are accepted by many reviewers and endorsers. Download a digital ARC sample at [www.koehlerbooks.com/dropbox/digital\\_ARC/Passover%20digital%20ARC.pdf](http://www.koehlerbooks.com/dropbox/digital_ARC/Passover%20digital%20ARC.pdf)

### **ARC Author Purchases**

Köehler Books authors may purchase additional copies of their books at or below the wholesale price. Authors may sell those books for profit and also use them for promotional purposes. Author orders do not count toward royalties.



### **E-book Campaigns**

We work with our authors who have signed on with a legitimate e-book promotion such as BookBub. Typically, we lower the price prior to the event and then bring it back up to an agreed level afterwards.

### **Ingram Catalog Inclusion**

All Köehler Books titles are included in one or more of Ingram's catalogs, printed and online. The primary online catalog used by booksellers is iPage.

### **Vote the Cover Campaigns**

In most cases during the development of the cover, we will work with the author to narrow down the choices to the top two covers. This is part of our collaborative approach that treats the author as an important part of the team, giving them buy-in. At that point we will take the top two choices and post a VOTE THE COVER poll on the website to get the pulse on two opposing cover designs for the book.

Once we install the campaign on our website, we post it on Facebook and Twitter feeds and give the launch URL to the author to share with his or her entire network. This has become one of the best pre-launch publicity campaigns for our authors. They send the link out and ask their friends, readers, and

entire network to go and vote for the two covers the publisher has proposed. It is so easy to do, and readers love to cast their vote.

While this is not used as the primary method for deciding a cover, it can show trends and provide valuable insight, as well as stir interest in the book. It actually gives statistical data, and this data can sometimes be so surprising that it can push us in another direction or pick the cover we thought was the lesser of the two.

### **Audio and Foreign Rights**

Most publishers will acquire rights to the printed and digital (e-book), but many, including Koehler Books, will also acquire rights to an audio version of your book, as well as the right to sell your book to another country's publisher to have it produced in a different language.

We tend to be very active with the print and e-book production and publication, and we know that they will happen. Audio and foreign rights deals are more passive in the sense that we will only do them if a deal becomes available. In that vein, we utilize the services of an agent who specializes in finding deals for audio and foreign rights. She brings those deals to us to consider, and we make a decision based on the offer.

Typically, such a deal will include a decent advance and very low royalties. The advance is split with the author after agent fees are paid.

## **WHAT THE AUTHOR DOES**

### **The Right Mindset**

We are looking for team players: authors willing to learn and be coached and trained in new ways; authors willing to share information, ideas, and solutions; and authors willing to work with us to help make their book a success. We will be training and coaching you in some areas, but we do expect you to reach out and figure out the rest. We want you to become a marketing pro.

### **Marketing Coaching and Training**

Authors will be coached on guerrilla marketing techniques for promoting their title. Starting with their website and social media and progressing through book events and publicity, Koehler Books coaches you on building a good brand for your book and for you as an author.

### **Social Media**

Social media refers to the entire network of online tools, apps, websites, blogs, and networks you can use

to raise awareness about your title. Here is some of what we do and what you should expect from a responsible and progressive publisher.

### **Author's Website**

Your website is the linchpin of your social media program. It needs to look good and work smart. It needs to connect readers to the rest of your social media empire through Facebook, Twitter, etc. Köehler Books cannot build your website for you, but we can offer valuable feedback.

We recommend WordPress or another similar type web application, which allows the author to easily make changes, add posts, photos, etc. You can learn how to build your own site, or trade or pay a professional to build it for you. The key is that it looks professional, that it is loaded with the right information, and that it is accessible, searchable, and easy to use.

If you have a budget for creating your website, you may consider our list of publishing partners at <http://www.koehlerbooks.com/meet/publicity-and-design-partners/> They are independent contractors and trusted pros who have worked with some of our authors. You may hire them or another pro, but as always, author beware!

**Author website samples:**

<http://www.elizabethjarrettandrew.com/>

<http://www.marybilliter.com/>

<http://melaniebragg.com/>

<http://www.angelacorrell.com/>

<http://www.myhaleyauthor.com/>

<http://williamhazeltgrove.com/>

<http://www.emichaelhelms.com/>

<http://www.bruceetjones.com/>

<http://ron-mcmanus.com/>

<http://drcharlesparker.com/>

<http://margaretphilbrick.com/>

**Blogs**

We recommend that you add a blog to your website. The fewer the clicks, the better for readers; plus, it adds your voice to your work. Regardless of how you do it, this is the place for you to share your thoughts as a writer and author and reader.

If possible, try to use a plug-in or other tool that will automatically send all new posts to your social media network sites like Facebook and Twitter. That is a great way to easily expand your reach and save you time.

## **Facebook**

Facebook is king according to some book publicists. No doubt, it is important, and the author needs to have an author fan page. Instead of friends, you want “likes.” Make sure that your FB page is connected to your website and that you take the time to flesh it out with relevant information.

## **Facebook Forum**

Over fifty of our authors have formed a writers’ forum on Facebook. They trade notes about marketing tips and tricks and coach each other on the things that they are doing to market and promote their books. This shared wealth of intelligence can be very helpful, especially for newer authors. If you are a Köehler Books author, you can join the forum here: <http://www.koehlerbooks.com/author-central/authors-forum/>

## **Twitter**

Twitter is all about getting followers and making noise. Whereas FB is for friends and associates, Twitter is for complete strangers, so you can discriminate less with it. Come one, come all!

**LinkedIn**

An author once asked, “Isn’t LinkedIn for professionals?” To which we replied, “Aren’t authors professionals?” LI is the place to post your resume. It is another place you establish yourself as a professional author. After you post your information, you really don’t need to do much else.

**YouTube**

Don’t overlook YouTube. It is a great tool for sharing book trailers and author talks. Don’t overthink the production values. Readers want to hear from you, and they don’t expect heavy makeup and perfect lighting. You can do it on your computer. Keep them short, less than five minutes, and add the video to your site using the embed code.

**Amazon’s Author Central**

Amazon’s Author Central is a great way for you to see reviews, track sales, and pay attention to your activity on Amazon.

**Goodreads**

Goodreads is the Facebook for readers, a place authors want to be. You can create a profile, add your books, and even do giveaways, which Goodreads will manage and then provide you with the addresses and

names of the winners. You then ask the winners to post a review of your book.

### **BookBub**

BookBub is an online service that notifies millions of readers of deeply discounted e-books. If you manage to have your book selected by BookBub for a limited-time deal, then you are afforded the incredible opportunity to expand your fan base and sell a lot of books. Upon your selection, Köehler Books will discount your e-book in order for you to run your e-book campaign.

### **NetGalley**

[www.netgalley.com](http://www.netgalley.com)

Kristina Radke

[kristina.radke@netgalley.com](mailto:kristina.radke@netgalley.com)

Marketing and publicity service offering cultivated influencer communities; offering interesting and relevant marketing promotions; and providing rich, real-time data. NetGalley is the key pre-publication marketing channel for new books. The NetGalley member community, now nearing 300,000 influencers, submits more than 50,000 reviews per month, fuels over 3,000 LibraryReads nominations and 1,200 IndieNext nominations monthly, and generates over 4.6 million pageviews per month on book blogs we track. [As of



Nov. 2015]

Winner's Circle—(Koehler discount code: Koehle20) gets our authors a full year's access to resources for emerging authors, allowing them to source and pitch influencers including reviewers (vetted by genre), live book clubs, festivals, competitions and more. <https://writerswin.com/join-today/>

### **Conventional Media**

Newspapers, magazines, TV, and radio are all viable sources for acquiring reviews. They are tougher to navigate, but the results can be spectacular. This is an area where publicists or marketing pros can be especially helpful due to their established network.

### **Advance Review Copies (ARCs)**

We expect our authors to use print and digital ARCs that we will provide to acquire endorsement quotes and reviews. The quotes and reviews can be used on the book front and back cover and in the text. They establish validity and quality. We add them to the book prior to release. They are priceless.

We will provide an agreed amount of ARCs as part of our publishing agreement. Authors may also purchase additional copies for near or under wholesale prices. Our authors typically purchase 50 to 100 ARCs for personal and professional use. They may sell them, but the sales do not include royalties.

### **Book Talks, Signings, and Events**

Authors will often set up a series of talks and other events as a way to spread the good news about their book. These can be at bookstores, for book or readers groups, writers' groups and clubs, professional organizations that bring in speakers, and more. If the event is held at a bookstore, the retailer must purchase the books. Otherwise, authors may use their own ARCs.

### **Blog Tours**

A blog tour is essentially seeking out a number of blogs that are related to the subject matter of the title. Craft a relationship and follow their blog. Then ask them to review your book. Bloggers are like columnists, and they have a following of readers. Many publicists and book marketing pros have a list of bloggers they work with.

### **Share the Wealth**

When our authors set up a tour or a series of talks or anything else that would be considered newsworthy and relevant to readers and the industry, we ask them to send it to us. Köehler Books may then post it on the website and/or share it with Ingram.

## **Hiring a Pro**

If you have the budget, you may consider hiring a professional to help you with your website, marketing, or other aspects of your promotion. Our publishing partners are proven vendors who are or have worked with our authors. Talk to them, along with others, and then make the call carefully as always.

## **Author Questionnaire**

An author questionnaire (AQ) is typically one of the first things a new author will fill out after landing a traditional or hybrid publishing deal. Self-publishing questionnaires will vary, depending on the company, and may not include all of the material shown below.

We are including the author questionnaire below so that you can see the types of things that publishers or self-publishing authors need to know. The contact information includes the obvious street address, phone number, etc, but also includes website URL and social media links and handles.

The author's biography is an important section, as most books will include an author's bio along with a photo on the back cover or inside flap. It is important that good style and form be used. The author residence is of interest by booksellers who want to know where the author lives for events and sales.

The sales hook and main description are critical

components for creating the back cover synopsis. The AQ has good guidelines to follow. *Key Selling Points* are a nice bulleted short list useful for marketing. Same with the audience, which is a listing of the various types of readers who you think will buy your book.

There is a section asking for details about your cover. We like the author to pull samples that they like from Amazon and paste them into this section to help give our designers an idea of the type of covers that you like. Written descriptions are great and sketches are welcome. We will then have a discussion with the author and brainstorm about the cover.

The Marketing and PR section has some guidelines to follow. This is extremely important for the author to fill out in as much detail as possible.

## AUTHOR QUESTIONNAIRE

|                             |              |             |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------|
| Book Title:                 |              |             |
| Author's Full Name:         |              |             |
| Name on Cover if different: |              |             |
| Street Address              |              |             |
| City:                       | State:       | Zip:        |
| Country:                    |              |             |
| Home Phone:                 | Biz Phone:   | Cell Phone: |
| Fax:                        | E-mail:      |             |
| Twitter Handle:             | Website url: |             |
| Facebook page:              | LinkedIn:    |             |
| Other social media:         |              |             |

### 1. AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY:

This section should begin with the author's name and contain 2-3 sentences that mention his/her credentials for writing the book (education, work history, interests, or life experience). Include previously published works, such as books and magazine or online columns, as well as the author's career highlights, TV/radio shows and experience, or other publishing successes.

**Author Residence:**

Mention the author's city (or cities) of residence. This is important because the sales force wants to make certain they hit the author's region hard.

**Previous Edition Information:**

Include previous edition numbers, EAN, pub date, and life-to-date Bookscan sales data.

**2. ABOUT YOUR BOOK:****Sales Hook:**

This is your "elevator speech" and serves as a quick introduction to the book. This should be 2-3 sales-oriented sentences that describe what the book is, who it's for, and why your audience will buy it.

**Back Cover Description:**

This section should be 3-4 sentences that describe the book's concept, give a brief summary of the story or content, state the goal of the book, detail why it's unique and appealing, and say how it addresses a problem or interest of your audience. This is the copy that will go on the back cover, so study some back covers of books you like in your genre for style and substance and language. It must be descriptive and also have a strong marketing push.

**Guidelines:**

- ✓ Do not refer to the book as “the book.” Use the book title.
- ✓ Underlining and the use of all caps is to be avoided.
- ✓ Do not refer to the reader as “the reader.” Marketing text should be written in third person (self-help books being one of the only exceptions to this rule). No matter what voice is used, the copy should be written in a manner that incites the reader to take action.
- ✓ Break up the book description into paragraphs. One giant book paragraph is very difficult to read.
- ✓ Avoid clichés such as “a must read” or “this book will change your life.” The back cover description is not a book review. It is a preview of the exciting world within.
- ✓ The tense should be consistent (and preferably written in third person). Because present and past perfect continuous tense make the marketing text seem very passive, avoid using verbs such as have been, has been, had been, etc.
- ✓ If you need additional examples or ideas, search for books that compete with your title and read

the book descriptions on Barnes and Noble's website ([www.bn.com](http://www.bn.com)).

- ✓ Use a compelling quote from your book on the back cover if appropriate.
- ✓ The last paragraph of the book description should compel the reader to buy the book. Cliffhangers are good!

### **Key Selling Points:**

This is a bullet list of 2-5 significant features and benefits of the book. Be sure to mention the market size or other pertinent statistics. Key points can be about the work, the author, the marketing, and promotions.

### **Audience:**

Describe the readers who are likely to purchase this book – no more than four audiences should be listed. Be as specific as possible; “everyone” and “the general reader” are not helpful. So for instance if you wrote a murder mystery about a crooked cop who saves a teacher's life, you might list: murder mystery readers, law enforcement, teachers, fiction readers.



**Comparative Titles:**

Using Amazon, list three comparative titles that are in the same genre and price range as your book. Do not pick bestsellers. Only select print titles, not e-books. We need you to list the title, author, ISBN, price, publisher and date it was published.

Title 1:

Author:

ISBN:

List Price:

Publisher:

Pub Date:

Title 2:

Author:

ISBN:

List Price:

Publisher:

Pub Date:

Title 3:

Author:

ISBN:

List Price:

Publisher:

Pub Date:

**Suggest two alternate titles for your book:**

Please provide us with two alternate titles for your book.

**Cover Image:**

Please provide us the visual ideas you have for your cover. Be as descriptive as you can. Attach 2-3 examples of other book covers you like, using Amazon or other online sources to download, copy, and paste covers. This will help us to get inside your head and agree on a general design and look and brand prior to beginning our design. If you have sketches or designs, we want to see them. We will collaborate with you on the cover and text layout.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **3. BISAC SUBJECT HEADINGS:**

**Select three BISAC SUBJECT HEADINGS for your title.**

Our Ingram relationship allows us to maximize BISAC Subject Headings for best category placement.

Determine the three major headings which best describe the content of your book. Click on the link below for specific headings within your category at

<http://www.bisg.org/what-we-do-0-136-bisac-subject-headings-list-major-subjects.php>.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **4. MARKETING & PR:**

This is the section for you to list what you (the author) are planning on doing with regard to promoting

and marketing your book. Think about this in a professional manner, as if you are running a business. You are! This can include, but is not limited to,

1. Social Media. This starts with an author website. You need to build one if you don't already have one! Not a book site, but an author's site. They want to know about you AND your books. Plural.
2. Facebook page and Twitter. What about LinkedIn? Will you be using YouTube to post videos? A very good idea. Plus Goodreads, Pinterest and other social media to consider.
3. Next are the other conventional media, including TV, radio, and print. Are you going to be getting interviews lined up? Be specific.
4. Book tours, talks, and book signings. Any activity you are planning should be included.
5. Any ads you are buying or marketing packages you are purchasing. If you are working with a publicist or marketing professional, include information they are planning to do.

## IN CLOSING

FROM JOE

WE HOPE THAT you're not feeling overwhelmed and certainly not intimidated. Publishing a book can be a quagmire, but it can also be significantly rewarding and magical.

How much you're ultimately satisfied—or horrified—with the publishing experience depends largely on your expectations. You set those expectations—so you own the outcome. If you had a bad experience, it's likely that you got some bad advice or tried to take some shortcuts. It's likely you pinched a few pennies and did a book cheaply; it's likely you rushed the work or didn't have the guiding hand of a professional editor. In book publishing, as with so much in life, you reap what you sow.

We all remember the story of the *Three Little Pigs*. The houses made of straw and sticks blew over.

The brick structure stood strong.

Over the years, John and I have had hundreds of conversations with aspiring and seasoned authors about their motivations for writing. We like enthusiasm, energy, and authors who believe in themselves. We want them to sell tons of books and to get fat royalty checks. We do all we can to help them succeed.

Those who write with a singular purpose of making lots of money are those who become less than satisfied or feeling empty. If it's *only* about the money, then go sell cars or insurance. But if it's about creating something wonderful and lasting, if it's about artistic expression and hope, if it's about making your world better or leaving it a legacy, then follow your dream.

Writing a book, and doing it well, creates a tremendous sense of accomplishment and boosts self-esteem. It's cathartic. How many people would say, *I want to write a book* or *I should write a book*? The fact that you have or are seriously considering doing so puts you in rarified air. Yes, there are tens of thousands of books published each year. But there are seven billion people in this world. Being an author *is* special. It's an intellectual and artistic milestone that helps define you.

So, write for your soul, write from your heart, and write what you know. And once you've poured all

of those things into words, find editors and publishers worthy of your work and with the experience and passion to make it something you'll be proud of—forever.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Joe Coccaro, vice president and executive editor.** Joe is chief editor and

in charge of acquisitions, and the author of three books. Joe joined the company after nearly three decades as reporter, columnist, editor, and senior newsroom

manager at several major newspapers, including Virginia's largest and most widely circulated daily, *The Virginian-Pilot*. Joe holds an MA in writing from the S.I. Newhouse School of Communications at Syracuse University, where he also studied as an undergraduate. Joe has won dozens of individual writing awards and has edited work that has been nationally recognized. He has coached hundreds of news writers, novelists, and nonfiction authors and has taught writing at two Virginia universities. He also has ghostwritten books and has a novel underway. Joe is a competitive runner and cyclist, and five-string banjo picker. He lives in Cape Charles, VA on the Chesapeake Bay.





**John Köehler, president and publisher.**

John is the company founder and runs its day-to-day operations. He is an award-winning graphics designer and the author of seven books. He was awarded the lifetime achievement Silver Medal by the Advertising Federation of Hampton Roads in 2016. He earned a BFA in Communications Arts and Design from Virginia Commonwealth University and attended graduate studies at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. John's professional career includes being senior art director of a major advertising agency and running a design studio. John lives in Virginia Beach, VA and is active in his church. He has helped run a ministry dedicated to helping children with disabilities, a cause he is still very much dedicated to. John made an international splash in 1991 by winning the Boomerang World Championship in Perth, Australia and was a member of the Foster's Boomerang 2000 Team, a touring troop that taught professional athletes, and others, the gospel of boomerangs.

