

Guidance Notes – Understanding the Publishing Process

These notes have been designed to assist you in completing the Author's Form (*missing numbers mean that we don't feel any guidance is required on some simple questions, not that we have missed them out!*). The purpose of the Author's Form is to find out as much as possible about you and your book together with any ideas you might already have about what you want it to look like. We will take your views, as outlined on the form, into account when we look at your manuscript. We appreciate that you will have stronger views about some things than others but when we submit our Outline Plan we will try to point out wherever necessary if something you have indicated you want is likely to prove particularly expensive. We will also provide recommendations that may differ from what you have indicated if we feel that there may be a marketing benefit or a cost saving. The form has been designed to assist all authors, so we apologise in advance if your own project is very simple and you feel a lot of the questions are not relevant to you.

Similarly, these notes are intended to assist those who may have very little knowledge of the publishing process and if you know a great deal already, please bear in mind that there are others who don't.

Question One and Two

If you have an ordinary straightforward typescript, we will at some stage have to put it on to a computer disk and there is of course a cost involved. Typescripts should be supplied as double-spaced typescript wherever possible. If you have material that is hand-written, we could also help you get it put onto a computer. The quickest method for us is if you have already had your material typed up onto a computer but it is important that you let us know what software has been used to do that, including the version. Familiar and popular software names include WordPerfect, Word, Claris, WordStar, etc. Most of them have lots of versions; e.g. WordStar might be in version 1.5, version 1512, version 3.24, version 4.0, version 5.5, version 6 or version 7 and we need to know this too. We also need to know whether or not the software has been used in a Windows application. Some computer disks are easier for the typesetter to use than others and therefore cheaper to typeset, so if you have not yet had your manuscript typed up do not pay someone to type something without talking to us first.

Question Three and Four

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Titles are quite important if you are trying to sell a book. The cleverest is not always the best! We will be happy to help with suggestions if you feel you need assistance.

Question Eight

If your manuscript has been typed up on a computer most modern software systems will provide a word count. If you need to do a manual count, there is no need to count every word. Simply find out how many lines fall on a normal typed page. Then take a line and count how many words are on it. Do this about five times, once for each separate line, and then work out the average per line (e.g. $12 + 15 + 11 + 12 + 11$ divided by 5 equals = 12.2). Multiply the average by the number of lines on a page and then multiply that figure by the number of pages, allowing roughly for incomplete pages. If you have lots of pages that don't conform (e.g. dialogue or lists, repeat this exercise separately for them. For example, if there are usually 40 lines on a page and you have roughly 160 pages that will be approximately 78,080 words.

Question Nine, Ten and Eleven.

Drawings, photographs and paintings always add to the cost of producing a book but may be an essential part of it. But do think carefully about how important they are before you decide whether or not to include them. Basically, black and white photographs, or half-tones, as publishers usually describe them, are more expensive to produce than line drawings; coloured photographs or paintings are the most expensive to reproduce but modern technology has made them cheaper than they used to be in shorter print runs. Colour can be used more economically by working out special configurations for placing it.

Question Twelve

Permission has to be sought to reproduce other people's drawings, paintings and photographs and reproduction fees usually have to be paid. It can take quite a lot of time to obtain permissions and reproduction fees can be quite expensive.

It is also possible to commission original work but you need to have some idea of the kind of thing you want and how much you are prepared to pay. Prices for original work vary considerably depending upon the relative fame or experience of the artist or photographer.

Question Thirteen

Before you answer this question, you might find it useful to look at the books on your shelf. Most books are produced on fairly ordinary paper, which bulks out to give width to the spine of the book. But some books, especially well illustrated books, are often produced on more attractive paper, which can be quite smooth, usually a cartridge, or shiny, usually an art paper. Sometimes the paper is ivory or cream and occasionally you may find a book printed on special coloured paper. The more unusual the paper the more expensive it is.

Question Fourteen

Hardbacks cost more to produce than paperbacks but they can be sold at higher prices providing there is a market. It is also possible to produce a hardback and a paperback at the same time. Libraries and book clubs will buy hardbacks (if they want to buy the book at all, that is!) and so will businesses and people who collect books.

Question Fifteen

Most books come in standard sizes. If you have a particular size in mind, it would be a good idea to find something on your shelf that looks roughly the size you want and measure it. Usually, the bigger the size, then the more expensive is the production. Odd sizes should be avoided because they are uneconomical to print. We will always advise on the closest most economical printing size to what you have in mind.

Question Sixteen

Some of the more modern printing systems can start as low as 25 copies and of course you can print thousands if you really want to. A lot of your costs are in the origination (copy editing, proof-reading, design, typesetting, etc.) so longer print runs can seem attractive because they make the unit cost look lower. But it is important to remember that you can reprint; your origination costs will not get any larger and reprint prices can be quite attractive. Also, think of your market. If it is a specialised market, you might only wish to print a few copies and charge a high price. If you've written a novel, even with the best marketing in the world, you are, to all extents and purposes, taking part in a lottery, so it might be better to keep the print run low to begin with, rather than dreaming of high sales and big profits. Two hundred and fifty to three hundred copies make good sense in many cases - enough to sell, enough to have some for life if it does not sell, and prices are not horrendous. For example, the printing costs for the text for 250 copies of a 96 page paperback, page size 216 x138 mm would cost about £338.

Question Seventeen and Eighteen

There is an enormous variety of covers and jackets available but we shall be happy to advise you. Using full colour and gold or silver foil blocking can be expensive but may be worthwhile to get the right image across. A clever designer can use a reduced range of colours, three, or two or even one to excellent effect. Again, look on your shelves to see what kind of thing you like - e.g. a picture, a cartoon, a geometric design and tell us whatever you can. It is vital to produce jackets or covers *early*; sales reps use them to sell your book and many booksellers *will only order from a jacket or cover before publication*.

Question Nineteen

There is an enormous range of alternatives, from ring binders to funny shaped pop up children's books. If you have something special in mind, even if it is a few special leather-bound copies to give to your friends or relatives, let us know.

Question Twenty

Sewn books are those with the pages stitched together in sections. Because of modern printing techniques for short print runs, it is not always possible to sew a book rather than just glue it, if a particular print technique is used. If it is very important to you to have sewn books, it is advisable for us to know early since there are certain printers we would not ask to quote.

Question Twenty-one

Anything in your book that has not been created or written by you does not belong to you. If you want to use material such as photographs, drawings, paintings or text quotations, then permission has to be sought and agreed in writing. Usually, permission fees are also payable. If you use someone else's material without their permission, they can sue you. *Amolibros* will be pleased to handle all permissions for copyright material or advise you on how to do it yourself but it is important that you tell us about any material that you want to use that does not belong to you.

Question Twenty-two

When we see your material we will be able to make some judgements about the market, but it is useful for us to know what you think. The 'market' consists of categories of people most likely to want to read your book. It might be as simple as adult readers of romantic fiction, or it might be more complicated. If, for instance, you had written a book on agricultural law, your audience might consist of farmers, solicitors and barristers who specialise in farming law along with land agents, etc. Ironically, the more complicated your market definition, the easier it is to identify and approach potential purchasers. It is a question you should think quite hard about since how the book should be produced, what the price should be and how many copies of the book you should print, will all depend on a realistic assessment of your potential audience. *Amolibros* will use its expertise to help define your audience and how best it should be approached.

Question Twenty-three

Amolibros offers a full service for warehousing, invoicing, despatch, sales representation and distribution. It is an optional service but you may well wish to take advantage of it. If you decide to use the service, your books still belong to you and all the sales proceeds less a commission for providing the service are payable to you. Marketing and PR services are also available. Such services are quoted and charged for separately. Further details will be forwarded with the Outline Plan. These services are optional because some authors may prefer to undertake some of these functions themselves, particularly if their market is local or they already know how they wish to sell their books.

Question Twenty-four

If you libel or defame somebody it can prove very expensive and for some odd reason, usually more expensive than, for instance, breaking someone's leg! You can be sued for libel even if you are innocent, i.e. if someone insists that what you have said about them is not true, it might be up to you to prove that it is. If, for instance, you have written a novel and one of your characters closely resembles the man next door and you are very derogatory about him, he might sue you for libel. If you write an unauthorised biography about someone who is still alive, you are also open to accusations of libel. If in any doubt whatsoever, you must have your book, or the relevant parts, read for libel. *Amolibros* will be happy to arrange this for you but will not take responsibility for anything that may be obscene, indecent, objectionable or libellous or defamatory. (Most publishers won't either.)

Question Twenty-five

The Internet is that very fashionable thing that often gets referred to as the Great Super Highway. Some publishers are now putting material on the Internet so that people who use the Internet can look at their material. Sometimes there is a charge levied for accessing the material, sometimes not. It might be of interest to some of you but it does cost money to put material on the Internet.

Question Twenty-seven

Knowing something about you is important to *Amolibros* as well as to potential buyers of your book. If you decide to self-publish, we will come back to this question in more detail, but it would help us to have some basic knowledge to begin with.

About *Amolibros*

Amolibros is a consultancy run by Jane Tatam. She has worked in the publishing business for twenty years, initially in the marketing role for companies such as Kogan Page and Sweet & Maxwell. She has been managing director of two publishing companies, during which time she has worked with many authors and has become fully conversant with the skills of the publishing process. *Amolibros* is committed to working with a range of specialist suppliers who are experts in their own particular fields.

Five good reasons for using *Amolibros*

- ◆ You remain in control
- ◆ You receive expert professional advice on all fronts - editorial, production, marketing, sales
- ◆ You pay suppliers directly, suppliers that are used by the conventional publishing industry
- ◆ You publish under your own imprint
- ◆ You will not be given misleading expectations

Your Costs

The Outline Plan - Stage One

If you decide to send us your manuscript along with the completed form, we will assess your production needs and send an Outline of what we think needs to be done to produce your book and provide a short assessment of your market and how to approach it, along with our quotation for doing all the production work.

Stage One is the process by which we collect all the relevant quotations, from copy editing through to finished copies, advise you on print runs, formats, etc. When you receive Stage One from us you will be in a position to decide which quotations you wish to accept and how much you want to spend in order to receive finished copies. If you want us to quote for any marketing work, we shall be happy to do so. It is best to talk about marketing at this stage. Certain actions like sending information to the book trade need to be done several months before the book is actually published and some marketing requirements, like sending book covers to book shops, have to be planned before the book goes into production.

Stage Two

Stage Two is the process by which we take your work from manuscript to finished copies. You will be asked to pay *Amolibros* for Stage Two before we proceed with this work. At this point we will be liaising with you very closely, to ensure that each step of the production process is completed to your satisfaction and in line with what you envisage. *Amolibros* will draft orders to suppliers for you but you will be asked to pay them directly (according to their payment terms) so that you remain in control of your own product. Although we maintain full liaison with all suppliers and aim to cover all queries of an operational or technical nature, there may be occasions when they need to talk to you directly. Copy editors and indexers may, for example, have queries that are best answered by you personally. You will not need to worry about things like ISBNs, Whitakers registration forms, CIP data et al, all this is taken care of by *Amolibros*.

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Amolibros hope these notes have been useful to you and will be pleased to answer any queries you have.

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