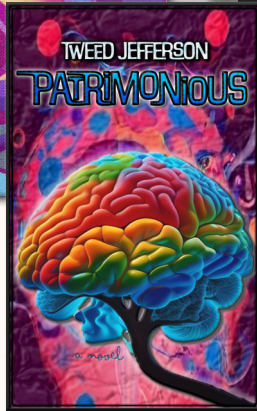
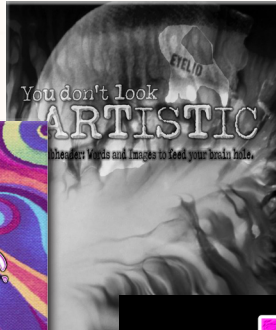
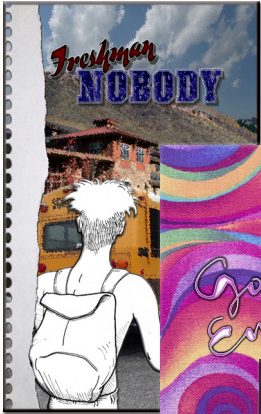




Is Self-Publishing For You?

Helpful questions to
ask when querying a
publisher

OTHER Tweed Jefferson WORKS



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So you wrote a book?

...or want to write a book.

Congratulations! You've theoretically made it over – or are in the process of making it over – the most difficult hurdle to writing a best-seller: putting your butt in the chair.

The next-most difficult part, if the plethora of online tales are to be believed, is finding a publisher. But you're in luck! You live in a day and age where taking your book from manuscript to print is as simple as uploading a word document to Amazon and clicking print.

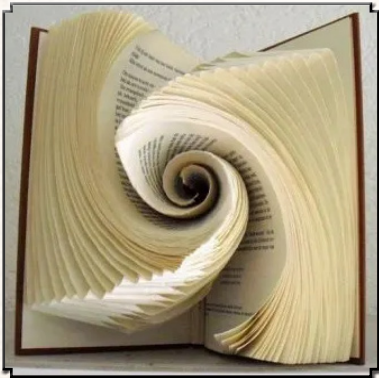
Or is it?

It is. If you want your book to come out looking like someone printed a word document. Even though we're fortunate enough to not have to rely on signing with a publisher and distributor to take our books to press any more, we still have to contend with the millions of other authors, good or bad, who have discovered they can use the same technology.

So how can you make your book stand out? Keep reading for helpful hints from Tweed Jefferson, publisher and novelist. With the benefit of his mistakes and successes, you can make a more

informed decision as to whether you'd like to self-publish or if some additional help may be needed to make your book the best it can be.

It's not black-and-white, like a book page. You have many options when it comes to publishing and self-publishing.



Lesson 1: Ego

Over a decade in the producer's chair in the recording studio has taught me one particularly definitive lesson: **Ego kills art.** I can't tell you how many times I've heard great ideas shot down by a 'leader' or songwriter for no justifiable reason. Control. It was *their* song and nobody was going to alter it in a way that made them at all defensive over ownership. Unfortunately, where this line is for people varies wildly.



Does this sound like you? Be honest. If so, you may find yourself butting heads with an editor, publisher, or publicist. Understand that those people are there to (hopefully) help you focus on creating and producing the best work possible. But your reason for questioning their motives is sound. Horror stories of bad recording or publishing deals have existed as long as their respective mediums. Publishers, agents, and managers *will* try to rip you off. Trust your gut and don't be afraid to say 'no' to a bad deal.

If you can let go of that artist's ego and collaborate with others, you've opened yourself up to new ideas and direction that can help shape both your book and you as an author. Your work will *always* exist - the original and the editor's version.

It's up to you to release the reigns, but aside from how much you're getting paid, creative control is a significant factor in any business decision. How much do you want and how much are you willing to let go of? Consider if this is a fair transaction for a publisher, who may receive thousands of other manuscripts every year. *Ceteris paribus*, consider why they would want to work with you. What value does your work have to warrant their time and experience? I promise, there are thousands of great books out there with authors nobody wants to work with.

Show me the money?

Unless you're a weirdo like me, you probably want to make money from your book. Don't get me wrong, some well-funded retirement from my royalties would be great, but I write and publish because I love writing and publishing. That doesn't mean it still isn't *way* more business than I'd like it to be. Graphic design. Social media. Websites and ad campaigns.

Oh, right, the money. So if you self-publish, you get 100% of the profits! Minus whatever Amazon or your printer-distributor takes, which can be anywhere from a couple of bucks to more than thirty dollars per print copy depending on length, size, color, and other factors.

Working with a publisher will make you anywhere between less than 100% and 0%. That's only a half-joke. Small publishing houses who only work with select authors, often in a key demographic or genre, might give you fifty, even eighty, percent of the net. Whereas for a first-time author with no fan support, a major publishing house might pay the author somewhere in the 10% range - if they even consider the author without an agent - while taking repayment on distribution, design, and marketing from the author's royalties. Effectively, this means that the author, barring a best-seller, may make nothing or even owe the publisher.



But, something those big publishers have that the smaller houses and independent publishers don't have is a large distribution and marketing network. They can get your book into retail stores - Target, WalMart, even libraries. Their ability to pre-order thousands of copies of a book allows them to decide who will be the next best-seller. Everyone else has to rely on organic marketing with a far more limited budget. Access to distribution should be a major consideration when signing with a publisher. You may choose a large network with little creative support from the publisher, or a smaller group with more personalized support. Ask yourself if you are creating art or merchandise.

Art and Design

You're a writer, not an artist. Nobody expects you to come up with brilliant artwork for your book, inside and out. Or perhaps you are an artist and can create these things, but do you know how to layout the cover for bleed and folds? Can you setup underlays and overlays and perception effects to make the artwork 'pop'? No shame in not being able to. I can barely draw a stick figure.

Again, the internet comes to the rescue; Amazon and other publishing outlets have easy drag-and-drop cover designers. They're not bad, actually. Limiting, but they have some decent options.

If you're looking for a cover and interior artwork that follows your brand and image, those self-publishing tools may not cut it. A publisher, or their network, will undoubtedly have people who specialize in this kind of work. Many cover designers can be contracted for piece-work, too, if that's all you need.

In today's visual-oriented marketing world, you can't just post your one cover over and over on social media. That's a speedy route to being ignored. A thorough marketing campaign will utilize dozens of images and videos to help set the tone of the book while building anticipation. A well-crafted campaign will carry over certain design elements to build on a theme while keeping the content fresh. This may sound like something you'd love to take a stab at, experienced or not, and I can tell you as one, who is continually learning, it's pretty enjoyable work. However, if you'd rather be writing, consider how a publisher or agent can help you promote your book both before and after its release.



LAYOUT AND EDITING

Like I said in the introduction, if you wanted to upload a document file and print it in book formatted, that is absolutely an option. I did it for my first two books. No table of contents, no page numbering. Aside from a glossary, a complete lack of front and back matter. I didn't know what I was doing. One of these days, I'll sit down and second-edition them with a proper layout.

And if you do this without getting a second, third, or seventh pair of eyes on your work first, you're going to miss some errors. Some of your statements will be unclear to a reader who doesn't have the benefit of your expertise on a topic. An editor – or editors – can help not only with technical errors and formatting, but by asking questions and suggesting ideas. This team brainstorming can get the creative juices flowing and bring forth ideas that never would have been realized when writing in a vacuum.



If you're adept enough with Word or InDesign, laying out a manuscript with page numbering and table of contents is easy work. But a great designer will take advantage of modern print technology, using typefaces, art, and icons to make your work more than just Times-12 on a white page. Every design idea you see in this pamphlet, and more, are readily available for your print and digital books, should you choose to take advantage of them.

A good reason to reach out to a publisher or editor would be, for example, if you missed the two errors in the first sentence on this page. I can tell you that it's way harder to edit your own work than someone else's, as your brain will fill in your mistakes, even after dozens of reads.

DIGITAL - AUDIOBOOK - FUTURE TECHNOLOGY

I don't know about you, but I'm partial to a 6x9 hardcover book. Others might like those little romance-novel sized paperbacks, or large-print coffee-table size. Still others prefer to read on a tablet or phone, or by listening to an audiobook. Are you ready to reformat your manuscript over and over for each of these formats that may be needed for your particular niche or genre? Ebooks have countless nuances to make them display and navigate intuitively. Hours of narration must be recorded for an audiobook. You might prefer to be working on a sequel instead, in which case you can buy yourself a couple weeks writing time by having a publisher or freelancer complete these tasks.

ISBN, LoC, Legal

If you're confused, I don't blame you. The ISBN is, effectively, the bar code identification number for your book. You can get these free from an online publisher - with a catch: they own the ISBN and imprint, so you can't change it. If you want a code that scans through all retail outlets and libraries, not just Amazon and their partners, you'll need to buy one yourself. Be careful there are others reselling ISBNs and again, they'd own the imprint.

LoC is Library of Congress. Should you want your book registered for posterity and cataloging purposes, you'll need to register. Unfortunately, this is only open to publishers with three new works or more per year. So get to writing if you're going to do this on your own.

Finally, what's up with that mess of fine print and numbers in the front of a book? (See inside cover) They have a purpose and need to be done a particular way to keep certain folks happy. You can write it yourself with a bit of research - or you could have a publisher handle it - and double check you for libel.

Where are my readers?

Now that you've got your printed, even Kindle, versions of the book complete, what are you going to do with them? I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but it's pretty rare for books to take off on their own. They need some sort of marketing campaign behind them. It could be social media ads, videos, author appearances, podcasts, the list goes on. It can be overwhelming, even for those of us who have been through it several times before, to keep track of everything, stay on top of all the different timelines, and make decisions regarding branding and image.

Again, an ambitious author can do it for themselves. Shit, if you use social media as a recreational activity, you may be better suited for the marketing than I am. It's one thing to know algorithms and read metadata, it's another to connect with people. It could be that you are great at that - awesome; do that and find people for technical support. Or if you're more task-oriented, you might need some help with a public image and staying consistent with an audience. Either are a lot of work. Doing both can be suffocating. And you still have to find time to write!



In the end, someone has to analyze the data and connect with readers, so this is a valid concern for anyone considering publishing solo or with a publisher. Market research and reformat are part of the game. Since it's digital, that makes some aspects easy, but since media and marketing move so fast, it seems like a race to keep up with the new markets and formats available.

Should you self-publish?
This short text should help answer some of your questions about whether or not to query a publisher or take the DIY approach - and some in-between options.



Tweed Jefferson has authored a bunch of books - published nine. He founded SquillPublishing to coach first time authors and artists on the publishing world. In addition to book publishing, Tweed worked in the music publishing and production world for two decades, releasing over a dozen full-length albums and more than four-hundred songs.

squillpublishing.com