Publishing Nonfiction Books on Spirituality
benebell wen

MODULE 4
SELF (OR INDEPENDENT) PUBLISHING

Understanding ISBNs, Bar Codes, and LOC Listings

The following document is part of a five module series on publishing nonfiction books in the category of spirituality, metaphysics, occult, and New Age. Module 4 is on self-publishing. The previous module instructions were audio lectures, downloadable MP4 files you can listen to. However, prior to putting together Module 4, my laptop broke, and to record those audio lectures, I was using a recorder app on that laptop. I don't know how to record audio files with my desktop computer. Thus, in lieu of audio MP4 files, Module 4 instruction will be provided by the script or transcript I would have read off of to produce said audio files.

Since the following text was intended to be notes I read off of to create audio lectures, the tone may be informal and the sentence structure imperfect. Please forgive and acknowledge that you are reading what should have been transcript notes for an audio lecture.

BEGIN AUDIO LECTURE TRANSCRIPT:

The ISO, or International Organization for Standardization, helps set up various standardized practices for all within a particular trade industry to follow, so that no matter where you go in the world, those practices will remain the same and there is a shared baseline you can rely on. When you do product manufacturing or OEM, original equipment manufacturing, for example, you work with ISO standards a lot.

In book publishing, one of the trade industries covered by the ISO, it has been decided that every book will be assigned an ISBN or International Standard Book Number, which is a unique numerical code that identifies your book for streamlined, efficient commercial sale.

If you book is printed in hardcover, the hardcover version has its own ISBN. If your book is also printed in paperback, in addition to hardcover, that paperback version as a totally different and separate ISBN. If you print in e-book, then that e-book has again, its own different and separate ISBN.

Do you need an ISBN number to publish your book? No. You don't. For example, if you're just selling an e-book on Amazon, then you don't need an ISBN. However, any print book will require an ISBN. But if you want to distribute your book commercially and try to sell it through distribution channels, then yes, you absolutely must get an ISBN. By and large, bookstores will NOT carry your book if you don't have an ISBN number for your book, AND you need a different ISBN for your book in hardcover versus your book in paperback versus an e-book version you're trying to sell. By the way, this is the same for tarot and oracle decks. If you've created and self-published a tarot or oracle deck, you can still try to get your deck carried at regional bookstores BUT to do so, you need to obtain an ISBN number for your deck. Decks are treated like books in this case.

ISBNs are assigned by various agencies around the world. In the United States, ISBNs are assigned by R.R. Bowker, an independent company. You can apply for an ISBN online and on average, will take about two weeks for ISBN assignment to go through. You can order ISBNs at isbn.org.

Quick "now you know" info. There's also such a thing as an ISSN, an International Standard Serial Number, but if you're publishing a book, that's not for you. ISSNs are for periodicals, literary journals, magazines, newspapers, and such, for serialization.

You're also going to need a bar code, to appear on the back of your book or, if you are a tarot or oracle deck creator, somewhere on the deck's outer packaging. You can buy the ISBN and bar code in one package through ISBN.org and it's only around $150.

Now, if you self-publish through Amazon Digital Services, called KDP, or Lulu.com, these third party sites will often help you get an ISBN and bar code for free, or for just $10 or something like that to put it under your own name rather than theirs. That sounds a lot cheaper than $150 and easier than trying to do all that registration stuff on your own, right? Probably. But it will also be obvious to everyone you're self-publishing through those print on demand services and under

your EIN or bar code registration, it will still be evident that the book is published and distributed by Amazon Digital Services or Lulu. If that's okay with you, then cool! Go that route! It's definitely cheaper and easier.

There's also this thing called Publisher of Record. When you go with a print on demand service like Amazon Digital or Lulu.com, chances are the Publisher of Record is going to be that print on demand service. When you register your own ISBN and bar code, then you can input your own Publisher of Record, which will either be your own name or the publishing house you come up with.

If you want to go as legit as possible, then bite the bullet and spend that $150 to get your own ISBN and bar code direct from ISBN.org. Think of it this way. Let's say you sell your book for $15 dollars. Let's estimate conservatively for a self-published book and presume your royalties earned on that book is going to be about $7 per unit. That means as soon as you sell 22 copies of your book, you've earned back what you spent on registering the ISBN and obtaining your bar code. I know you have at least 22 friends who are going to buy your book just for shits. So there you go. Your ISBN and bar code expenses, bootstrapped.

Finally, let's talk about LOC or Library of Congress file listings. This is optional and not required. In fact, some books aren't even eligible, like mass market paperbacks, elementary school textbooks, e-books, or books that have already been published, just to name a few. But hey, if you're the hard core type, and you know, I'm kind of a hard core type, and you're already thinking about registering an LLC to become your own legit publisher and setting up a publishing house for yourself, then take out pen and paper and take notes. Otherwise, you can probably check out during this next section.

So. Library of Congress catalog control numbers. What are they. They're unique identification numbers assigned by the U.S. Library of Congress to cataloguing each book. It's used by libraries to locate your book and your book will be listed in all national databases. This identification number is called a PCN, or pre-assigned control number. Note the name—pre-assigned. Yep, that means you obtain this number, your PCN, BEFORE you publish your book. Once you've got your PCN number, you include on that copyright page in your book. Your PCN is what libraries and book vendors will use to catalog your book. This is how, for example, a bookstore knows which bookshelf to place your book on, whether it goes under Philosophy or World Religions.

Only publishers can apply for PCNs. If you've registered for an LLC to be the publishing house, then this won't be a problem. Otherwise there are certain points of eligibility to be considered a publisher, such as needing to have a principal place of business in the United States and a main contact that the LOC can call for any bibliographical questions about the books cataloged.

You then complete and submit an Application to Participate Form. For more information, go to www.loc.gov/publish/pcn/. The direct link to the Application to Participate Form is pcn.loc.gov/pcn007.html. These hyperlinks are provided in the Workbook.

Once your Application has been approved, you will be assigned an account number and login as a publisher. You then log in and complete a Preassigned Control Number Application Form for

each book you want listed with the Library of Congress catalog. Once the number has been assigned, you print it on the copyright page of your book.

Please note that this is a two-step process. All publishers wanting to participate in the PCN Program must first complete and submit an Application to Participate. When the application has been approved, an account number and password will be sent to the publisher via email. Then, publishers participating in the program logon to the PCN system and complete a Preassigned Control Number Application Form for each title for which a preassigned control number is requested. Based on the information provided by the publisher, Library staff preassign a control number to each eligible title. Upon receiving the number, the publisher prints it on the back of the title page (i.e., the copyright page). The format to use is provided in the Template for Self Published Manuscript, one of the handouts in this module.

Remember: obtaining your PCN number from the Library of Congress comes BEFORE you've published the book. You get it first and then you insert it into the copyright page of your book prior to publication. Books that have already been published are NOT eligible for a PCN number. If you haven't listed a U.S. city as your place of publication for the book, then the book also isn't eligible. Remember, the U.S. city has to appear on the title page or copyright page. In the Template for Self Published Manuscript, the place to put the city of publication is on the Title Page. E-books are also not eligible for a PCN. Generally, texts under 50 pages won't be eligible. Any book you wouldn't intend for wide distribution in libraries won't need a PCN. Your tarot or oracle deck probably doesn't need a PCN number and catalog listing with the Library of Congress. Just putting that out there.

For more information about the Library of Congress catalog program, you can contact the current Acting CIP Program Manager, Caroline Saccucci. That's Caroline, CAROLINE, Saccucci, SACCUCCI. The telephone number is (202) 707-3317, again (202) 707-3317, or you can reach her by email at csus@loc.gov.

When you're self-publishing, you may also want to consider registering a U.S. copyright for your book. Form TX is the Library of Congress form to use for literary works. The form template is provided for you as a fillable PDF that you can download. I've also provided a handout distributed by the US Library of Congress on single copyright registrations.

You don't need to register your copyright with the LOC to have a valid copyright. As soon as you've written your book in a tangible form, it's copyrighted. However, registering a copyright avails you to really cool statutory damages, aka money, in the event of an infringement suit. Also, a registered copyright will make certain claims easier to argue, and win in court, if you have a registration. Do some cost-benefit analysis. It costs under $40 to register a copyright for your book so why wouldn't you do it?

END AUDIO LECTURE TRANSCRIPT.
Uploaded August 23, 2016.