Self-Publishing Glossary / Jargon

A

Active Campaign

Mailing List Provider. In return for a monthly fee, they host your author newsletter list, and you can send out emails via their platform. They integrate with your website to manage the sign ups, unsubscribes etc. Expensive platform, but allows a lot of flexibility in terms of sending out emails. (see also Mailerlite, Mailchimp, Convertkit)

Advertising lists / email marketing promotion sites

Services that have large email lists that they use to promote discounted and free books. Authors pay a fee to the service, in return for their book being sent out to the readers on the list. The most well known service with millions of readers is BookBub. Other options include eReader News Today (ENT), FreeBooksy, Bargainbooksy, Robin Reads and Books Barbarian.

Affiliate Links

Services like Amazon Associates offer the opportunity to receive a bounty in the form of a percentage of the profit for promoting sales of their products.

Algorithm

An algorithm is a set of rules used by computer programmers, usually to automatically analyse and sort big data (large volumes of information). Amazon has an extremely sophisticated algorithm that helps them figure out which books are bestsellers, which are more popular, and which ones should be promoted to which readers. There is a lot of information on the magical Amazon algorithm, because many believe catching the algorithm helps with sales.

Amazon

The main ebook publishing platform in the world. Can purchase both ebook and print books via Amazon. Accounts for 80% of sales of ebooks. It uses an algorithm to determine which books will be promoted.

Amazon Ads (AMS)

Advertisements authors can create that appear on Amazon book pages as "Sponsored". To access the dashboard, log into your Amazon account, click on Reports and then "Ad Dashboard".

Apple Books
A publishing platform for ebooks, owned by Apple. It uses a curated system to decide on which books are promoted.
Formerly called *iBooks.*

ARCs (Advanced Reader Copy)

Copies of your book that you give out to your ARC or Street Team so they can read the book before it's out, and put reviews up on the various platforms for you when it goes up. Giving out ARCs can help with promotion and marketing—the more you give out, the more buzz you can garner.

Atticus

Book formatting software for both windows PC and Mac users.

Author Brand/Platform

An author brand is the feeling/general vibe surrounding your author personality. It should be consistent with the kind of books you write. For example an author who writes sweet contemporary novels shouldn't write a blog full of the f-word. It is to do with how your readers see you, the author. An author platform can include everything from your website, your newsletter, your facebook page, any facebook groups you run, or are in.

Amazon Author Central

The Amazon website where you put up your author details and connect your books to your Amazon author page. You can also check your overall author ranking, your book ranking and your sales ranking.

Amazon Author page

The page on Amazon that is YOURS. It hosts all your books, your bio, your linked-blog posts. It is important to maximise this page (listen to the SPA Girls podcast episodes on "Zhushing Up Your Amazon Page" for tips.

Bisac Code

BISAC (Book Industry Standards And Communications) subject codes are essentially genre codes used by retailers and are part of your metadata. They help categorize your book in the primary genre, topic and theme so readers can find them when searching the online store. Choose Bisac codes that accurately and clearly describe the content of your book as a whole.

Beta readers

Readers who will read your book before you publish to give you feedback on any issues or problems with your book. They read it as a reader, not an editor, and will generally find things like inconsistencies, plot holes and character problems, and some grammar issues.

Blog tour

Part of promotion of a new release book, authors can pay to go around several blogs by readers and other people interested in books in your genre. They can include posting and excerpt, a post written by yourself, or a question and answer session. They used to be very effective, not sure that they are considered particularly effective any more.

Blurb /Book Description

The information about your book that gives readers the hook, and sells the book to potential readers. In the old system of traditional publishing, a blurb was also the quote that you got from other authors on the cover saying how much they loved your book.

It is most definitely not a description in the sense that you must describe the plot like you would in a synopsis.

Bookbub

The Big Daddy of all advertising newsletters where authors apply for a curated Featured Deal to advertise their discounted book.

Bookbub Ads

Accessible to all authors who have a free Bookbub Partner account (https://partners.bookbub.com/) . These are the small paid advertisements that appears at the bottom of the daily bookbub email newsletter.

C

Call to Action or CTA

Part of the sales jargon. It is the one thing that you want your audience to do after looking at your product. It might be buy the book, buy the next book, or join your mailing list.

Categories

The categories that your book falls into on the various sales platforms that help readers find the books they love to read. They used to go by the BISAC (Book Industry Standards and Communications) system which was used by the traditional publishing industry, but in recent years this has evolved, especially on Amazon, and they now use a wider selection of categories.

Copyright

Automatically protects your original works. You may use the symbol © to help you demonstrate that you claim copyright in a particular work, but you do not need to. Protects original works. Copyright is automatic in NZ; in the US you can to apply to register it.

Copy editing/ Line editing

Usually used interchangeably, this level of editing will fix problems with grammar and spelling, but will also go more in-depth and find inconsistencies of plot or character, sentence structure issues, etc etc.

D

DRM

Digital rights management. It is possible to check that you want to have DRM on your ebooks, but it's generally considered a bad idea.

Draft2Digital or D2D

An aggregator who you can use to put your ebooks up to all the different platforms if you choose to go wide (instead of being exclusive with Amazon). You can also do print and audiobooks through Draft2Digital.

Self-Publishing Glossary / Jargon

Developmental editing / substantive editing/ structural editing /content editing

This is a high level critique of your book, usually commenting on the overall structure and storyline, and usually working with you to fix the overall book. They won't make changes to grammar and spelling.

E

Epub files

The type of file you will need format your manuscript into to publish your book to be published on all the online retail platforms such as Amazon, Kobo, Apple Books, Nook etc.

F

Facebook profile / Facebook Page

Your facebook profile is your personal profile on Facebook. Facebook frowns on using this for business. Instead your profile creates a Facebook Page for your author name—this allows you to run ads from that page.

Final Draft

The completely edited and polished final version of your book that you're going to put up on the publishing platforms.

Findaway Voices

Audiobook service that offers self-publishers the ability to produce their own audiobooks, hire narrators and publish worldwide.

First draft

Your first version of your novel. Your first draft should never be the draft that goes up on the publishing platforms.

Foreign Rights

Usually rights are for certain areas, and you can sell your print/ebook rights separately.

Formatting

Formatting refers to the process of changing a novel that is in a format such as word or scrivener into a file type that can be used on one of the sales platforms like Kobo, Amazon, or Apple Books.

Forums

An online forum such as Romance Divas (www.romancedivas.com) and where you can go and talk with other authors about publishing, writing craft and anything else. It's all in written form.

Front matter

This is the information found at the front of your book, before the main novel. This could include the copyright page, your newsletter offer, the contents and the dedication page.

G

Goodreads

A social media platform for readers. Includes lists of books, people can mark their favourites, talk in forums with other readers about their favourite books, and give ratings for the books. Ratings on Goodreads tend to be harsher than on Amazon, and the users can be quite vicious if they feel authors are going on there and trying to sell or market their books aggressively.

Google Play

A publishing platform for ebooks, run by Google. Now accessible through Draft2Digital.

H

Hybrid author

Someone who is both traditionally and Indie published.

Self-Publishing Glossary / Jargon

I

Indie Publishing

Another word for self publishing (used by some people in preference to self publishing, because of the negative connotations to SP.) Indie stands for Independent. Indie authors are business owners who must organise everything themselves (even if it is simply organising the people who are going to do aspects of the work for them).

ISBN

The unique number used in the publishing industry to count the number of books and estimate sales. It's not necessary to have an ISBN on Amazon, they will assign an ASIN to your book, which is their own internal numbering.

In the US it costs a fair amount of money to purchase ISBNs, but in New Zealand (and other countries) they are available for free from the National Library. You need a separate ISBN for each format of your book (ebook, print, etc), and if you've substantially changed the book.

ITTN/ITIN/EIN

Tax numbers for the US systems. For New Zealand self-publishers, we no longer need them, and can use our own NZ tax numbers for retailers such as Amazon.

J

Jutoh

A computer programme that can be used to format book files for publishing. Can be used on both PC and Mac.

K

KDP Print

Amazon's print on demand service, started after it purchased CreateSpace. It is done through the same dashboard as KDP, making it quite convenient.

Keywords

In this context they are the words used by the aggregators to help describe your book for potential readers. For example Amazon allows you to have seven keywords or phrases, and you should find ones that describe your book's main tropes and genre traditions.

Kindle Direct Publishing or KDP

Kindle Direct Publishing is the publishing platform used by authors to put their books onto Amazon.

Kindle Unlimited or KU

Kindle Unlimited is a subscription service that allows Amazon users in the UK and US to access a large selection of titles from the Kindle store for a single monthly payment. Subscribers can keep up to ten titles to read on any Amazon device or Kindle reading app and there are no due dates.

For authors, to have your books available to KU readers, you must be part of the Select programme, and therefore exclusive to Amazon. (This exclusivity is only for ebooks, you are able to put print on demand books on other sites.)

Payment for authors whose books are in the KU service is via KENP, or pages read. Each month there is a pool of money allocated to be shared among all eligible authors, which is worked out on a per page read basis.

Kobo

A publishing platform for ebooks, owned by parent company Rakuten. Publishes globally to more than 190 countries. It uses a curated system to decide on the books being promoted and pushed through the service.

L-N

MailChimp

Platform for your mailing list. In return for a monthly fee, they host your list, and you can send out emails via their platform. They integrate with your website to manage the sign ups, unsubscribes etc. Probably one of the most well known mailing platforms.

MailerLite

Platform for your mailing list. In return for a monthly fee, they host your list, and you can send out emails via their platform. They integrate with your website, and manage the sign ups, unsubscribes etc. Excellent back end, a few deliverability issues, good price.

Meta data

Background information used to help searches. This includes keywords and categories used on retailers. On a website, it is the background information that you have on the site that is not visible to visitors, but helps them be found in search engines.

Mobi files

Older MOBI format previously used for publishing on Amazon. Now you should use the generic epub format.

Netgalley

A service, mostly used by traditional publishers, to provide ARCs of books due to be released to people in the industry such as librarians, bloggers, reviewers etc. You pay a monthly or yearly fee for the privilege.

Newsletters/mailing list

This is a personal mailing list of people who have signed up to hear from you specifically about your books. Mailing lists need to be organised via a mailing list platform. Authors can send out to their list weekly, fortnightly, monthly or whenever they release a new book.

O P

Permafree

Permafree means a book is permanently free. It's a pricing strategy where your ebook (usually first in series) is permanently free on all the booksellers. It is not possible to just put a book permanently free on Amazon, but you can do it by having the book wide, and making it free on at least two other platforms (Kobo and Apple Books) and then letting Amazon know and ask nicely for them to price match.

POD

Print on Demand. This is a service that will print individual books, rather than requiring publishers to print thousands of books at a time. New digital technology has enabled this kind of service to be viable.

Podcasts

On-demand audio shows, that can be listened to anywhere. A must listen is www.selfpublishingauthorspodcast.com ;)

Pomodoro Technique

Popular amongst writers as a method of focussed writing time. The technique uses a timer to break down work into intervals, traditionally 25 minutes in length, separated by short breaks.

Preorders

Used on Amazon, where you can put your book up to be sold, before the actual book is able to purchased.

Proofreading

The last part of the editing process, the proof-reader will pick up grammatical errors, and spelling mistakes etc, but will not comment on structural, developmental or larger issues.

Publishing Aggregators

A publishing aggregator is a service, such as Draft2Digital, that lets you upload your manuscript in one place, and then distribute your work to multiple retail channels (such as Apple Books, Kobo, etc). They will take a percentage of your sales—check their terms for what this is.

Q R

Reviews

Readers leave reviews of your ebooks on Amazon, and Amazon is rumoured to use these reviews (possibly both the overall score and the number of reviews) as part of their magical algorithm. There are rules surrounding who may leave reviews of your books – family and friends are not allowed to leave a review and you can't offer anything other than an ARC in return for an honest review.

S

Scrivener

A writing programme used by authors. It allows for notes, extra information, photographs, extra folders and everything else you might need to be kept all in one place while you write.

Smashwords

An aggregator to put ebooks up on all the different platforms. One of the first aggregator platforms, now owned by Draft2Digital.

Social media platforms

All the different platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Tik Tok, etc.

Street team/Review team

The loyal readers who will read your ARCs before your book is published, and give you reviews on the different platforms once your book is live. They can also help with word of mouth, and other promotional activities.

Synopsis

A description of the plot of your book.

T

Target Audience

The people who will most enjoy your books.

Traditional Publisher

The traditional publishing houses who have a team of editors, marketers, booksellers who purchase the rights to sell your books to bookstores, both online and bricks and mortar. They take a large percentage of the profits in order to pay for the printing, distribution and housing of print books. They are the traditional "gatekeepers" to publishing.

Trope

Commonly recurring themes or ideas in a genre. Different genres will have different tropes, for example romance tropes include amnesia, enemies to lovers, secret baby. Urban Fantasy tropes include kick-butt heroines, magic in an urban environment. Epic fantasy tropes include an outsider hero, or an evil king who must be defeated.

U-Z

Universal Link

A trackable link that you can use in your books, on your website or other places where you use links to obtain data.
Service providers include Bit.ly, Books2Read.

Vellum

Vellum is a computer program that can be used on Mac computers to format ebooks.

Wide vs Exclusive

Wide is when you have your books up on all the different platforms like Kobo, Amazon, Apple Books, and Nook. Exclusive is when you only have your ebooks for sale on Amazon, are part of the KDP Select program and KU.