

A non-fiction author's
how-to guide to writing,
publishing and marketing

Allan Kelly



Lessons from a dyslexic
writer in the digital age

Working with publishers
and self-publishing with
LeanPub and Amazon.

Foreword by
Johanna Rothman

Books to be written

A non-fiction author's how-to guide to writing,
publishing & marketing your own books

Allan Kelly

This book is for sale at <http://leanpub.com/bookstobewritten>

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This is a [Leanpub](#) book. Leanpub empowers authors and publishers with the Lean Publishing process. [Lean Publishing](#) is the act of publishing an in-progress ebook using lightweight tools and many iterations to get reader feedback, pivot until you have the right book and build traction once you do.

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What people are saying about *Books to be Written*

“When I first started self-publishing my own books in 2014, Allan was a great source of knowledge to me. I’ve badgered him for years to write this book and I’m glad it’s happened!”
Steve Smith, author of *Measuring Continuous Delivery*

“I can honestly say that without Allan’s advice I would never have published my book – I am so glad he has now put that wisdom into an easy-to-read and highly practical book. Rather than offering up a get-rich-quick fantasy, *Books to be Written* clearly explains what outcomes you can expect as well as why and how to do it, all based on first-hand, real-world experience. And, as always, Allan covers this in an entertaining and highly readable way. Writing, publishing and promoting a book will never be easy, but with this guide in your hands you will be able to get started right away and make the process as simple as possible.”
David Daly, author of *Better Agile*

“It’s amazing, I’m writing a book myself (my first) and this is timed perfectly for me. So much great advice in there and your honesty is refreshing.” Sean Luke

“Awesome page turner. Read it in two days. Admire how open you are mentioning your dyslexia – kudos for that.” Björn Schotte

“It is great to read about your experiences on book writing and I wished I had all that advice before writing my own book” Christopher Preschern, author of *Fluent C*

“Books to be Written is a straight-forward, and easy to digest roadmap and one I am sure I will revisit as my story progresses, both to refresh my memory, but to also test my hypotheses to ensure I am on track. The genius of this book is that you will likely continue to re-read it as you move through your story process.” Gilbert B. Hammer

Preface

Follow the path of the unsafe, independent thinker. Expose your ideas to the danger of controversy. Speak your mind and fear less the label of ‘crackpot’ than the stigma of conformity.

Thomas J Watson Jr, CEO of IBM 1914-1956

What do you think about when you think of writing a book? You probably think of long hours at a keyboard, you probably think of a mighty manuscript with tens of thousands of words. Maybe you see the creation of that manuscript as a marathon.

When books are 70,000 words long and publishers handle everything once the draft is delivered, then a marathon is a reasonable analogy. Of course there is the small matter of marketing the book – but surely that is akin to a lap of honour to soak up the glory?

By contrast when you write your own book, arrange production to a high standard, publish it yourself and then market the hell out it, the metaphor is not a marathon. When you are writer, publisher and marketeer, writing a book is more akin to a triathlon. First you write, then you produce and publish, then you market.

This book describes my experience of writing, both self-publishing and working with a publisher, and marketing the finished works. Here is one secret that I can share right now: publishers might help with marketing, but most marketing comes down to you one way or another.

Before you start your triathlon, it helps to do some training, so I’ll describe a training regime. As there are times when you will feel like giving up, I’ll also discuss some of the benefits you might get from writing.

One recurring theme is the way in which the publishing landscape has changed since the start of the millennium. Digital tools have changed writing, changed publishing, changed buying and even changed book consumption.

Not all publishers have grasped the opportunities offered by these changes, while others are struggling to adapt their business model. Whether you aim to self-publish or to work with a publisher, I hope this book will prepare you to be a successful author in the digital age.

Why write a book?

A few of you will answer that question with ‘To make money’. In case you haven’t heard, for every J K Rowling there are not just ten or 100 budding authors – there are 1,000 or even 10,000. So, first of all: you probably won’t make much money.

If you do want to make money then you are reading the wrong book. I won’t ignore the subject of writing for profit, but I am sure there are better authors out there to read for that. I’ve read a few myself.

The basic formula for writing a best-seller will be recognizable to many readers from other fields: identify a market, identify a subject, identify a compelling need to buy. Perhaps even test your market *Lean Start-up* style, then write for that market.

You don’t even need to be knowledgeable in the subject you write about. Identify the best-selling books in the field, read a few of them and write your own version based on what you have learned.

Therein lies my first piece of advice: you don’t need to have an original idea for a book, you don’t need to have something unique to say. After all, despite the thousands of love stories out there, people keep writing love stories.

From a classic business perspective, the fact that many books might exist about a specific topic suggests a crowded market that one should avoid. On the other hand it can also be viewed as a validated market: if people are buying such books it suggests a subject people do want to read about.

If you are from an academic background what I have just said may sound horrifying: the aim of most academics – and certainly PhD students – is to find and describe new knowledge. If you are an academic, or original knowledge is your goal, then you too are probably reading the wrong book. Still, you might nevertheless find useful advice here. I’ll discuss academic writing later.

So who is this book for?

My key audience, the people for whom I am writing this book, are my friends. While I haven’t met some of you yet, others have already heard this advice. Indeed, I’m writing this book to save myself time. A few times a year people come to me and say “Allan, I’m thinking of writing a book, you’ve written a few books, can I get your advice...”. (Steve, I’m thinking of you.)

A variation on this is David, who said “I’ve written this book...”, to which I replied “Publish!”. Then last month there was Trevor, who I haven’t seen for years and who has written what looks like a really interesting book, so I just couldn’t help sending him a note saying “Have you thought of...?”.

These friends write because, like me, they have something they want to say. The other things they have in common is that we all come from a technical background. While few of our books are deeply technical, they may still appear technical to a non-technical reader.

So, while I’d like to think this book is interesting to a wider audience, those coming from a technical background may find it especially interesting. It also means I should apologise to the non-technical reader if my technical bias comes through.

My first book, *Changing Software Development*, was written because I wanted to say “Hey world! Have you ever looked at it like this...”. True, I was looking for something to write as a book – like many others, ‘writing a book’ is on the bucket list in my head of things to do. For someone moving into the consultancy field a book adds credibility. A author friend of mine was told by a very successful author “A book is an extended business card”.

My second book, *Business Patterns*, was written for similar reasons: “Hey world, you can use patterns for business strategy”. (In fact the *EuroPLOP 2009 proceedings* might have counted as my second book, but it was more of a compilation exercise.)

I wrote book three, *Xanpan*, because I wanted to play with the LeanPub platform. It started life as some repurposed essays and grew. When people starting paying for my unfinished book it motivated me to continue. I’m saying *Xanpan* was book number three, but it might have been four or five if you include the *Agile Reader* series, which I never marketed, assigned an ISBN to or had copy-edited.

Book four, *A Little Book of Requirements and User Stories*, was written because, like this one, I kept giving the same advice to people again and again. I eventually found time to write that advice down on a flight from London to Dallas, but instead of a 4,000 word essay it came to 27,000 words, of which about 20,000 on the flight.

Books five and six were one book that I split in two. *Project Myopia* says “World: this project management thing is wrong”, while *Continuous Digital* attempts to describe what to do instead.

I wrote *The Art of Agile Product Ownership* because *A Little Book of Requirements and User Stories* needed a companion. Then a publisher got involved and it became something different.

My last and eighth book started as notes to myself, but then Covid happened and it became my lockdown project. It is with this title, *Succeeding with OKRs in Agile*, that I finally feel

I've cracked it: I know not only how to write, produce and publish a book, I now also know what needs to be done to make it sell.

There is a story behind each of my books, but the common uniting theme is that *I had something to say, something I wanted the world to know*.

Having written one's masterpiece, it's great to make a little money from it. So please read this book if you have something to say and would like to make a return from it.

Actually, while I and my bank manager appreciate the money, I would still be better off putting my time into other work – such as taxi driving. But money is information as well as spending power. When I receive money from book sales it carries an important message: people are buying my books. In other words, my messages are getting out there and people are listening.

With three book produced through publishers and another four self-published and on sale via Amazon and elsewhere, I'm now making a few hundred pounds a month (that's a few hundred dollars a month or few hundred euros a month.)

I'm still not making enough money to cover my mortgage, but I'm making more than enough to buy a few drinks in the pub. I'm making enough to have to remember to mention it on my tax return.

But there is a final motivator for writing: *to learn*.

Notice I say learn, not teach. As much as any of us want to educate the world, the person who learns most from writing is the author, not the reader. Writing – putting your ideas down in words, words which kind-of fit together and make sense – forces you to straighten out your thinking. Writing highlights where you are making jumps in logic and where your thinking is weak. Writing will challenge you to find out more.

If any of this sounds like you, please read on.

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As a thank you new subscribers receive an e-book – currently *Continuous Digital*.

¹<https://allankelly.net/newsletter/>

Foreword

I don't remember when I met Allan Kelly. I'm sure it was at a conference, and I was impressed with his straightforward and practical approach to agility.

Fast forward a few years and Allan suggested he write a series of articles for AgileConnection.com. At the time, I was the technical editor for the site. I said something like "Of course!" and gave him the site's parameters.

We were off and running. Allan wrote a number of articles for AgileConnection.com and I enjoyed reading them. They were straightforward and practical.

Allan's written several books over the years, and each of them share that straightforward and practical approach to the topic. Now you too can learn from Allan's approach to writing, publishing and marketing a book.

Many people think they have a book in them, but somehow that book never exits in their brain. That's because many would-be authors get stuck. They have many questions about writing, publishing and marketing. How can they start? What's the process? And how do they decide how to publish the book?

Allan wrote this guide for the people who don't know how to start and finish writing a book. Starting with why to write a book, Allan suggests that we learn from our writing. I certainly do, as do my writing students.

Allan offers many gems on how to start, maintain and finish writing a book. One of the big problems with this process is that writers learn as they write. Allan offers options for you to use indirect feedback about your topic to refine your book as you write. If you take Allan's suggestion to use leanpub.com as your writing platform, you can also integrate that feedback as you write.

Allan acknowledges that 'Once you have finished writing the work really begins'. (The first sentence of Chapter 20.) Allan's guidance continues with the ins and outs of how you can produce and market an excellent book, one that represents your thoughts and brand.

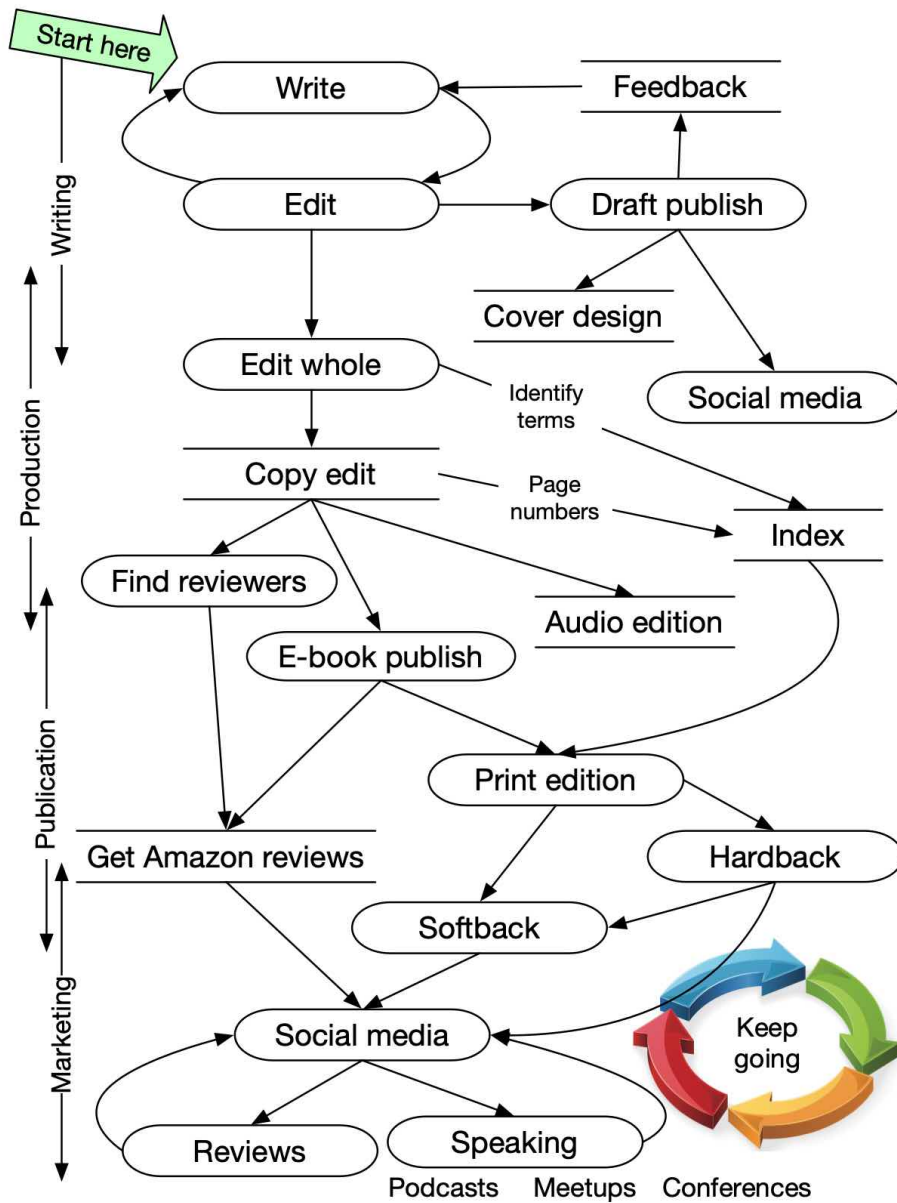
In Allan's deft hands you can read everything he knows about writing, creating books in various formats, publication and marketing, especially if you are willing to use leanpub.com. I use LeanPub for my nonfiction books and recommend it highly for all nonfiction book writers.

Allan then does a deeper dive into various possible delivery formats, including audio, perfect bound versus hardcover and so on. I have realized that my audio ‘readership’ is not the same as my e-book readership, and that both of those groups seem to be different from those who prefer paper copy.

Don’t stay stuck. Help your ideas find their place in the world, so that your readers can use those ideas. Use *Books to be Written* as a terrific guide to write your book and help your readers.

— Johanna Rothman, Author of *Free Your Inner Nonfiction Writer: Educate, Influence, and Entertain Your Readers*

I A brave new world



1. What is a book?

More books are being published now than ever before in history. The rise of digital publishing has not killed traditional books, but rather has grown the market. The growth of audio books is doing something similar. It is not just that authors are writing more books: there are more authors than ever before.

There are more publishers too. Most of the publishing imprints you might have heard of are ultimately owned by a few mega-publishers such as Bertelsmann, Axel Springer and News Corp, but there are many more small publishers, and probably millions of solo author-publishers such as me.

But this profusion of books, authors and publishers raises the question: *what is a book?*

Twenty years ago this was easy to answer: a book was words printed on paper, bound together and normally stored on a bookshelf. On the spine it bore a distinguished name such as Wiley, Bloomsbury, HBS, Oxford, Addison-Wesley, Pearson, Orbit.

Today a book can be electronic: is an e-book version of Harry Potter any less of a book than the 500-page print version?

If I write 50,000 words and give away PDF versions, is it a book?

If I have it copy-edited and typeset but only ever give away electronic versions, is it a book?

If I add an ISBN number, does that make it a book?

If I print and sell copies, is it a book?

If I pay a publishing house to do the hard work of editing, typesetting, adding an ISBN, printing and putting it in bookshops, is it a book?

In short, at what point does a *book* become a *book*? What are the defining features of a book?

Once you step into the world of modern digital publishing, the very notion of a book changes.

I have lots of books on my shelves. Some old favourites like *Lord of the Rings* and *Catch-22*, and more serious books like *How Buildings Learn* and *The C++ Programming Language*. Without a doubt these are books. They are published by publishing houses (Harper Collins, Vintage Classics, Penguin, Addison-Wesley), they have an ISBN, they are printed on paper and were mostly bought in bookshops and carried home.

Most of these books are also available in electronic form for my Kindle or iPad, but that doesn't mean they aren't books. If the same content was only available electronically, would it still be a book? Is being printed the defining feature? If I only ever own *Lord of the Rings* in an electronic format, does that mean I don't own the book?

Or perhaps it is the involvement of a publishing house. Although self-publishing has existed for many years, it has traditionally been seen as the domain of the vain. There is a certain snobbery in having a publisher involved: a publisher adds credibility – although some publishers are more credible than others. Having worked with publishers I find it hard to see what else they add.

My first book, *Changing Software Development: Learning to be Agile*, is undoubtedly a book. It contains about 90,000 words, was published by John Wiley and Sons, has an ISBN number and print versions appeared before electronic ones.

A year or so later I self-published the EuroPLoP 2009 conference proceedings. Michael Weiss and I are listed as editors, but in truth we did very little editing of any of the 600+ pages.

The proceedings have an ISBN number (978-1-4466-9363-6) and are available in print or electronic versions. There may be a few dozen electronic versions around, but I don't think there are more than a dozen print versions in the world. The wonders of print-on-demand technology mean you can go to Lulu.com and order a copy today.

I also used Lulu.com to self-publish a book titled *Agile Reader*. It contains a collection of essays on software development that I used to give away when I delivered training courses. People could also buy copies, but I never publicized the book. Still, it made me a little money.

Unlike my other books, *Agile Reader* has been through three editions, at one point it was in Lulu's top-ten sellers list, and probably more copies have been printed and distributed than any of my other books, but I'm not especially proud of it. *Agile Reader* was not polished, never copy-edited and the typesetting was crude – only Microsoft Word. It filled a need.

Agile Reader was never given an ISBN and no copies were sent to deposit libraries, but they are printed and most people would consider them books. Perhaps a better term would be a pamphlet:

pamphlet: noun, a small booklet or leaflet containing information or arguments about a single subject. Apple MacOS dictionary

Which raises a question: *how many pages or words do you need before a written work can be considered a book?*

John Wiley paid me an advance for *Business Software Patterns*, my second book – or third if you count *Agile Reader*. It runs to over 110,000 words. I find it hard to imagine ever writing a book that long again. In contrast my shortest book, *Project Myopia*, contains only 22,000 words.

After *Business Software Patterns* I vowed ‘never again’, but my attitude changed when Laurent Bossavit told me about LeanPub. With LeanPub you can write and sell a manuscript before it is finished. This raises more questions: if a manuscript is only available as an e-book, is it a book? If it is never finished, is it a book?

Since then I have produced seven books with LeanPub and started a couple of other book projects that I subsequently abandoned.

Two of those books became a book called *Art of Product Ownership*. Then Apress publishing came along and said “We like your book on LeanPub, would you like to publish it with us?”.

Art of Product Ownership was less of a book than *The Art of Agile Product Ownership* because the former was never finished. Copies sold, but it was removed from publication and became *The Art of Agile Product Ownership*. Was the original version less of a book because it was electronic only? Because it was self-published? Because it didn’t have an ISBN?

An odd thing happened with *The Art of Agile Product Ownership* after I delivered the final manuscript: I lost interest in it. There was still work to do: index, copy-editing, typesetting, printing and so on, but I was largely a bystander. This feeling was reinforced when the copy-editing turned out to be awful but I felt I couldn’t veto publication.

So I lacked motivation to publicize *The Art of Agile Product Ownership* because I’d lost ownership – ironic, really. When the pandemic hit a couple of months later the book was largely forgotten, but 18 months later royalty cheques arrived. Apress had given me a small advance, and unlike my Wiley books this time the royalties more than covered the advance. Publishers still have power when it comes to sales.

While I was busy forgetting about *The Art of Agile Product Ownership* I was writing *Succeeding with OKRs in Agile*. With that book I felt that I’d finally got it right.

The topic is more popular than I ever thought it would be.

I’ve learned to write. I’ve kept it short and to the point.

I paid for a professional copy-edit – the same editor Wiley commissioned to edit and typeset *Business Software Patterns*, who I keep returning to. I paid for professional artwork – again I have a regular artist.

I quickly got electronic and print versions onto Amazon, and Amazon is where most sales are made.

I received reviews on Amazon at the book's launch, I publicized it on social media and I did a virtual book tour – perhaps something that was easier and faster because the book was published in the middle of the pandemic.

And the book sells.

The publishing industry defines a book as almost anything with an ISBN number, which means that *Succeeding with OKRs in Agile* is actually three books: printed paperback, an e-book and an audio book. In fact, though, *Succeeding* is actually just one title with three editions.

My formula

- Publish early, even before you think you are ready to publish.
- Publish often. Write iteratively, publish often and make social media noise when a new version is available.
- Keep your book short, less than 200 A5 pages and/or less than 30,000 words. Split it into two or more books if you have more material than will fit into this length. Or maybe release extra material as another book, or as an appendix or extra, and forego the usual production polish and publicity.
- Keep the price low for e-books, 'under 10' – that's under \$10, £10, €10. Charge more for the print version, an extra 5 but maybe just 10, so an £7.50 e-book would be a £17.50 printed book, a \$9.99 e-book a \$19.99 printed book. (My printed books outsell my e-books.)
- Have an audio version of the book recorded. You might choose to do this yourself, or you might get someone else to voice the book. Audio versions sell themselves and lead to more overall sales.

2. Why write a book?

I think my motivation for my first book was the desire many have ‘to write a book’, to see my name on a book cover, to say “I’ve written a book”, just to show that I could do it.

If I’m being honest, there was also a part of me that felt that the 25,000 words I’d written in my Masters dissertation deserved a wider audience. Something I have to relearn with every successive book, however, is that one shouldn’t be scared to throw work away, even if it is well-developed.

Not for the money

One reason nobody should write a book is *to make money*. Most authors would earn more flipping burgers or stacking shelves. True, a few, such as J K Rowling, do make money, but they are the exception.

Commercially speaking, writing a book is seldom a profitable use of time. Having said that, though, there are exceptions. Clearly Jo Rowling makes a lot of money, but we’re talking about novels. If you *are* writing a novel, please still read this book about books, as I’m sure you will learn something, but please be aware that I’m not thinking principally of you.

If you already have a platform – perhaps you are on TV – then I imagine there are people who will buy your book and benefit you financially. If you have been privy to public events – perhaps you worked for a politician who was at the centre of some scandal – then I’m sure there are people who would love to hear your story. In both cases you might want to find a commercial agent.

So, discounting vanity and money, *why write a book?*

Learning

Top of the list is to learn. The truth is that the person who learns most from a book is not a reader – it is the author. Putting your thoughts in order, putting them into words, forcing yourself to make sense and be understood brings order to your own thoughts. It uncovers flaws in your reasoning, it makes connections you have overlooked, it drives you to read more, to follow up leads on interesting information and more.

Fulfilment

Reason number two flows from learning: writing a book is very fulfilling. Looking at a tome you have created and knowing you created it is a fantastic feeling, and if you ever get the opportunity to see your book on the shelves of a distinguished bookstore it is ten times better!

Credibility

Next is professional credibility: a book marks you out as someone who knows their stuff, a book with your name on it is a sign of credibility and builds towards a reputation. Books also provide a marketing platform: in marketing your book you are also marketing yourself. When you are invited onto a podcast to talk about your book you are saying “Please buy my book”, but you are also saying “Here I am! If you like what I am saying maybe you want to hire me?”.

That said, I suspect 80% of that benefit comes from having one book, another 18% comes from your second book, 1% the third, and by the time you get to the fifth or sixth you’re probably losing credibility!

Credibility can help in landing a job. Although a warning: this doesn’t automatically happen. People do not say “Wow, I must hire them because they wrote a book”, or “I must hire the person who wrote this book”. I’ve even heard of one company that views authors negatively: they reason that authors are more interested in acquiring material for another book than in doing their job.

A calling card

A book might not land you a job, but it can help to secure an assignment. As a consultant, particularly an independent consultant, the credibility of books goes a long way. It could be argued that a book makes money, not by selling copies, but by marking you out as someone who is worth working with.

Books are useful as calling cards – why give someone a business card when you can give them a book? Books impress clients; they are more substantial. So maybe selling copies of your book won’t provide you with much of an income stream, but it might mean that you get hired more often and earn more as an expert in your field.

Books can also serve as a platform to sell from. I'm sure that my books have opened doors that have allowed me to sell training workshop places. My books have also secured me speaking opportunities at conference and meet-ups that have later led to consultancy engagements.

I haven't yet succeeded with it, but you can also build products around a book, such as online or in-person training programmes, or tools that can be used to follow recipes in your book – software, playing cards, worksheets and more.

I'm sure there are other reasons why you might want to write a book that I haven't thought of, but these are perhaps the most common. If it helps, write down your own reasons – but equally don't be worried if you don't know why, you just know that you want to write. Just do it: these days writing a book is cheap even if it is not easy. What is the worst that can happen? You give up? Or you publish and nobody buys?

Something to say

One final reason, perhaps the real reason I write, or at least keep writing, is that I have something to say. When you have something to say it makes writing much easier. Blame it on being a big-mouthed Liverpudlian – well Birkenhead, actually. Blame it on being dyslexic and seeing the world differently. Or blame it on a feeling that I can change the world.

However you look at it there are things I want to share, things I want to tell people, things I want to point out. If you are writing for one of the reasons above but don't have much to say, you are going to find it a longer and harder process.

So write about what you want to share with people – it is so much easier.

Giving my knowledge away?

A friend once told me that “I worry that if I write a book people can do it themselves and they won't hire me as a consultant”.

Perhaps he is right. I once did some consulting in Leeds where one of the managers said “You're *that* Allan Kelly!” and proceeded to show me his copy of my ‘little red book’, *An Agile Reader*. “At my last place we based our version of agile on your book”.

The manager had never been on one of my training courses, but someone on his team had. That someone had a copy of my red book and they used that as a guide when implementing their own version of agile. So, if I had not written the book, would they have hired me?

I suspect not: the company concerned has a reputation for penny-pinching, so I don't think they would have hired anyone. If they had hired someone they would have haggled for a low price, so the work would have only been marginally profitable. More importantly, there was no guarantee I would have secured the work: if the book didn't exist they might never have heard of me.

As an expert and consultant you can never write down everything you know, readers can never absorb everything you say, and many real-life cases defy explanation anyway. A book can only contain *explicit knowledge*, it can never hold *tacit knowledge*. Yet that tacit knowledge is essential.

If someone reads one of my books and can 'follow the instructions' then I'm delighted. If my book helps people to solve their problems without me then I am happy. I am succeeding, I am helping people and I am making work better.

But no matter how much I write, and how clearly I write it, people will find it hard to implement what they read. That is where consultancy and training comes in, and that is where there is money to be made.

A book shares knowledge and it builds credibility. It is also a marketing tool that opens more doors than it closes.

Some of the people who buy your book won't read it. They will however be impressed. They might not pick up the phone immediately and call but your name will register in their mind. Years later they may call. Or, when faced with a choice of several potential consultants, they may remember your book and note that the others haven't published anything.

Of course this book is an exception. I write it to share what I have learned: I don't have any plans to offer services for budding authors.

Not yet, anyway.

3. It's digital now

Thirty years ago I would shop for books on Charing Cross Road in London. A shopping trip could result in multiple purchases, both novels and technical books. Now those shops are gone and my books overwhelmingly come from a Seattle-based company I both love and hate.

The world of publishing has changed, and you probably won't be surprised that the change is called *digital*. However, fears that digital books and e-readers would do away with books were misplaced: more new books are published today than ever before.

In most countries book sales boomed during the pandemic – the UK and Australia experienced in excess of 10% growth. Nor was this just the result of people staying home and reading. In many other countries book sales are also growing.

Once again new technology has not rendered an industry obsolete, but rather has increased consumption. One of the ways in which it has done this is by lowering costs. Another is by making writing and publishing tools accessible to more people. Technology allows you to carry your library in your pocket and to listen to books rather than read them.

This is a book about writing your own book, so will be bought by people who want to write and publish their own books. Until recently this was such a niche market that it didn't make sense to create such a book. Until recently people like me wouldn't have the experience to write about it, and until recently the cost of writing and publishing such a niche book would not justify the effort.

But these changes have played out in ways you might not have realised.

The bookshop

In technical publishing it used to make sense to write big books and sell them for a high price. Publishers like Wrox and Apress would produce thousand-page tomes that sold for upwards of £40 or \$60 when £40/\$60 was a lot of money. Amazon still lists Wrox's 1056-page *Professional Microsoft SQL Server Analysis Services 2008*, with a recommended price of £39.99 and five authors.

Back then most books were sold through actual bookshops. People like me would wander in, browse the shelves, choose a book, pay for it and take it home. The bookshop might never

see me again. Even if I returned the staff wouldn't know I was a regular until I'd been in many times. Even if I had a relationship with the shop I probably wouldn't have one with the publisher. I might meet authors at conferences or book signings, but it is unlikely that they would let me know if they had a new book out.

In those days it made sense for the author, the publisher and the shop to take as much of my money as possible for each transaction. To justify a higher price a book needed more pages, and more pages meant more authors or a longer gestation period.

In some fields taking longer to write a book doesn't matter much, but in technology it does. If Wrox's *SQL Server Analysis Services 2008* had been written by a single author it might only have been completed in time for *SQL Server 2010* to be released.

Oddly, bigger books don't necessarily cost more to print. I'm sure Wrox 1,000-page tomes do cost more in paper than Pinal Dave's 110-page *SQL Server Interview Questions and Answers: Updated 2021*, but the cost doesn't increase proportionately. Paper is only part of the cost of printing a book: the publishing process – selection, editorial choices, marketing and so on – is the same whether a book has 100 or 1,000 pages.

So when books were bought in shops it was a big event and largely a one-off. Today the strategy is reversed: you need to aim for multiple sales, price low to remove the barrier to a sale, and reduce the size of the book because a) several smaller books can earn more than one big book, and b) small books are quicker to produce and get onto the market.

Why write 20 chapters of 50 pages each when you could write two chapters, put a 100-page book on sale and bank some cash while working on the remaining chapters?

When books are bought online it need not be a one-off event: the seller knows who you are and what you bought, authors and publishers will encourage you to share your name and email – 'register your book' or 'download additional material'. Every purchase is on at least one database.

Because they have your contact details they can sell to you again. Buying a book ceases to be an isolated transaction and, if managed correctly, becomes the start of a relationship. Seller, author and publisher can now tell you that 'Your favourite author has a new book' – 'People who bought *SQL Server 2008* also bought...' and so on.

Now the seller collects not just your money but also valuable information: your contact details and your preferences. This helps them to sell to you again and again. The sale is just the start of a relationship, and that information is valuable in itself. So rather than sell 1,000 pages of one book for £40, it makes sense to sell ten books, each of 100 pages at £5 each.

Simultaneously, selling these books has become cheaper: digital technology means that shops can check their own stock online without searching the store, ordering a book no longer

requires paper or a telephone request, and because books are instantly available, bookshops no longer need to carry large stocks.

But that is not all. Print-on-demand means publishers no longer need warehouses and vast stocks of books to support future sales. Money is saved on warehouses, storage costs, printing costs and other capital costs because there is no longer a need to invest in infrastructure before books are sold.

We haven't even got to the effect of e-books, Kindles and iPads. Nor have I mentioned Amazon yet.

Amazon

Amazon changed everything.

Most books are now sold through a single retailer, a retailer that is ruthless at driving down costs and exploiting economies of scale. A retailer that knows every purchase you have ever made from them and has honed its skills in using that data to offer up the next thing you will buy before you know yourself.

Many bookshops no longer need to keep stocks because many bookshops no longer exist. Much of the traditional book logistics 'tail' is now optional. Novels may still be printed cheaply and shipped to many small bookshops in the hope of sales, but professional books only need to be shipped from printing plant to one warehouse.

When my first book was published I was proud to see it in Foyles on Charing Cross Road. Even in 2008 you wanted your book to be on the shelves in shops so that customers could see it, and a good publisher was one who could get your book on the shelves of as many shops as possible. Bookshops have limited space, so this is a battle, and publishers may be asked to pay for prime locations in shops.

Now, particularly in technical publishing, there is just one shop that matters. Publishers no longer need to spend money on sending salespeople to visit many bookshops. For the author that also means that one reason for using a publisher has gone: as long as your book is on Amazon you will get your sales. You will certainly sell more copies if you can get it listed with Waterstones, Borders, Powell's, Daunt books and all the other chains and single local bookshops, but those extra sales are unlikely be worth the effort.

Amazon has changed the world of book reviews too: previously your book would be lucky to get one review in a specialist publication. People would flip through the book and decide for themselves in the shop. Now reviews on Amazon are a big deal: the more reviews the better: don't even tell people your book is on sale until you have reviews.

You still want to seek out reviews elsewhere. Technology has changed this: there are myriad of online journals for every niche, there are bloggers and multiple social media sites where people might review or name-drop your book. There are also dedicated review sites like GoodReads, although these might not be as independent as they appear: Amazon owns GoodRead.

It is worth repeating that Amazon knows what you have bought and what you have reviewed. Amazon can tell if new edition of a book is released or an author has published a new book, and Amazon can tell you about other books you might want to read.

Electronic

I know bookshops still exist, but there are a lot fewer than there were 20 years ago. As a reader, book buyer and high-street shopper, I don't think that is necessarily a good thing.

I don't consider Amazon a paean of virtue – some of its sales and employment practices are questionable. But it is nevertheless dominant, and as authors this is the world you and I find ourselves in.

As a consumer you can choose not to buy from Amazon, but as an author you don't have much choice. Fortunately Amazon is very good at what it does – few of their competitors do a better job.

All the changes mentioned so far are the result of digital technology. Without modern computers and the internet there would be no Amazon, no easy self-publishing, no CRM systems and mailing lists, no online reviews and no GoodReads. Instead, publishers would employ more people to publish fewer books, on paper, for sale in bookshops.

We still haven't mentioned e-books.

4. Publishers

Digitization has not only changed what it means to be a book, but also who publishes books. Previously self-publishing was mostly considered the preserve of the rich and vain: real writers had publishers. Today digital tools make both writing and publishing easier.

You may now ask *why use a publisher?* - if you are not asking that question, then at least think about it.

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5. Reasons to work with publishers

I may come across as anti-publisher, but I'm not, I'm just disappointed in the publishers I've worked with. That might be my fault, I may have had unrealistic expectations, or it might be theirs for not setting expectations correctly. Ah well, you live and learn.

There are good reasons for working with publishers. They do pick up a lot of the post-writing work: graphics, copy-edit, layout, indexing, distribution, price-setting, sales accounting and so on. As I've said, you can buy these services yourself, often from the same people, but until you have those connections and contacts that can seem daunting.

Undoubtedly I benefitted and learned a lot from having a publisher for my first two books. I'm glad I did and would do the same again. Especially with my first book, the publisher ensured I produced a far better book than if I had done it all myself. I'm also sure that, thanks to the reputation of the publisher and their distribution network, it sold more copies than I could have myself.

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6. Publisher checklist

Have worked with two publishers and also self-published, there are a lot of things I'd want to understand before working with another publisher. So here is my checklist of things I would want to understand from a publisher before I work with them. I'm not sure what the 'right' answers are; I also know that in any relationship there is always compromise. A publisher might fall down on one of these points, but be strong enough on others to compensate.

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7. Digital publishing: selling before you have finished

Printed books need to be printed before you can sell them. This means the book needs to be finished before you can sell it. While that might seem obvious, it is not the same with electronic books: you can start selling an electronic book before you have finished writing it.

The economics of printing books, and the fact that, once printed, you can't change them, has led to a particular publishing process that digital books don't need to obey. Creating a digital book is a lot more like creating software.

Traditional publishing

Because physical books are printed, they can't be changed later. This means that everything needs to be 'right' before they are printed: the author needs to say everything they want to say, the book needs copy-editing, the images need to clear copyright checks, the text needs to be typeset and the index needs to be produced with correct page numbers.

Because there are economies of scale in printing, it makes sense to print all the predicted sales in one go. Most books never sell enough to justify a second print run, let alone a second edition. Actually, many books don't even justify a first print run, but publishers only learn that later. Therefore, while it makes sense economically to have a big print run, it also makes sense to print as few as possible to save printing, shipping, storing and pulping books that don't sell.

Ideally you don't want to print any copies that won't sell, so you need to be pretty sure the books will, at least, not lose money. So publishers want to see evidence that an author and their book will sell.

Digital publishing

There are no printing costs to digital books, although I discuss download costs later. Plus I can change them after they are published. No digital book need ever be 'finished' – indeed actually knowing when you are finished can be difficult.

When I start selling a book using LeanPub it isn't finished. I continue adding chapters, editing existing content, changing graphics and so on. Those who buy my book are entitled to free updates – just like an app you buy from the Apple AppStore for your phone. Every time I push out a book update buyers get an email saying 'Allan just updated his book, download the latest version for free'.

Every time I release an update is a marketing opportunity, and social media makes it easy. All it requires is a battery of tweets announcing a new chapter, or a status update telling my LinkedIn connections that a chapter has been extended or edited. Were I on Instagram I could also make noise about the diagrams, graphs and illustration I'm adding and changing.

My recent books have earned around \$1,000 even before they were finished. People know they are buying an unfinished product, but that has its own value: they get to be the first to read the book and they get an opportunity to give feedback.

To be honest, while in theory early versions of my books should generate feedback, I don't get much. The best feedback I get is the sales, the payments. Not that \$3.50 changes my life, but I know that someone, somewhere, thinks that what I am writing is worth money. That is a special form of feedback.

When to stop?

Traditional publishers ask authors to complete book proposal forms when considering a book. These forms detail the book's title, synopsis, table of contents, target audience, competitor books, estimated word count and proposed delivery date.

A lot of that information is designed to allow the publisher to assess the size of the book's market. The list of competitors is there, not so that publishers can check that your work is better, but so that they can see how the competition sells. If you are proposing a book on 'Safety critical systems in PHP' and there are no competitors, or competitors that have only sold a dozen copies, it might be that there is no market. (Nielsen and other book distribution systems allow publishers to see sales figures on rival books. How much information they can see I don't know.)

The word count and deadline are there to define the book and determine when it is 'done'. The delivered tome is expected to have a structure not too far from the table of contents, which means that a) the author has thought this through in advance, and b) there is limited opportunity to change the contents.

When writing and publishing yourself you probably don't create your own book proposal, although it might be useful. An author may decide for themselves to stop writing when, after

six months, nobody has bought a draft copy of ‘Safety critical systems in PHP’ or whatever. But since there is no editor or project manager, no word count or table of contents, an author could just keep writing.

I faced this problem with my first self-published book, *Xanpan*. I had plenty of ideas but I didn’t know when to stop. Eventually I stopped because I wanted to pursue other projects. However, because people are still buying the book, the temptation to continue remains.

Batch processing

Traditionally when writing is finished it is time to move a book to production. Copy-editing is the first process here, followed by typesetting and indexing, then printing. It doesn’t make sense to start these processes before writing is finished because the text will inevitably change.

In the digital world indexes are rather a thing of the past, as readers can search the text electronically.

Modern digital tools reduce the need for typesetting, but they don’t produce the quality a skilled typesetter would. My copy-editor, Steve, also typesets, and I can hear him groan every time I politely decline his offer to typeset my book. Yes, a professional typeset would make my book look better, but to my eyes modern tools deliver 80% of the quality for 10% of the cost.

However, cost-benefit is not the only problem typesetting faces. Traditional typesetting laid out books on paper, but in the digital world printed books are but one of many formats. There is PDF, Mobi, ePub and others I have never heard of. A book that is brilliantly typeset on paper may look awful on ePub or vice-versa. If quality is important to you then you may need to do several typesets.

However, modern digital publishing tools can easily produce multiple formats. It may only be 80% of the quality of print, but it’s 80% on all platforms. This is very much like software: I spent a large part of my programming career porting software between Windows and Unix – and not just one Unix version, but Solaris, SCO, Interactive, AIX, TruUnix and so on.

Copy-editing remains. I’m sure some authors are pretty good at grammar, spelling and all that stuff. If I were more confident that my chapters would remain stable I could have chapters copy-edited one at a time, but I frequently find myself delving back into a chapter and changing it – even moving vast chunks to other chapters.

Cover design needn’t be a batch process; it can be done at pretty much any time. Having a good-looking cover can only help sales even if the book isn’t finished. If you are using

social media to generate interest and sales in your unfinished book, having a professionally designed cover gives your message more impact.

One new process has inserted itself into the digital age: the creation of audio books. Only when the text is stable do I have have a narrator record the book, although in theory I could have Stacy record the chapters one by one as I finish them.

Publisher cost-cutting

In recent decades publishers have striven to drive down publishing costs. Books are printed in far-away countries where it is cheap. This increases shipping costs, and more trouble introduces a time delay. It is unlikely that your heavy books are going to be airfreighted overnight – six weeks in a shipping contain is much more likely.

Copy-editing and typesetting have also been moved to offshore locations. While publishers clearly feel that the quality of both is as good in their chosen low-cost location as it is in their more expensive home country, not all authors agree with them. While I'm prepared to compromise on typesetting and layout, I am unwilling to compromise on copy-editing.

I may have been unlucky, but of the three books I published with traditional publishers two were copy-edited in a low-cost location. Being dyslexic I need more copy-editing than most, and I'm sorry to say I wasn't happy with the quality of either.

During the copy-edit of the second of those two book I toyed with rejecting the copy-edit. I had no idea what would happen if I did, so I didn't. I wish I had.

Conversely, one of my books was edited here in the UK. The copy-editor was not an employee of the publisher – like many copy-editors he was and still is freelance. Any publisher can hire him, and I do too. Steve has copy-edited almost all my books and I'm very happy with him. Judge for yourself. I know authors who use cheaper copy-editors, but I value his standards and he has got to know my quirks.

Print-on-demand

Digital technology has also changed the economics of printing. Economies of scale still mean that printing 1,000 books in one run is cheaper than printing one book individually a thousand times. If only 100 out of those 1,000 books sell and the other 900 get pulped, however, the economics change.

Not only do those 900 wasted copies cost a lot to print, they also cost to store while the publisher hopes someone will buy them. All that incurs charges, but perhaps more importantly it requires organization and administration. Someone needs to rent warehouse space and employ the warehouse staff.

Individual print-on-demand copies may cost more to print than a bulk-printed book, but they don't require capital to be locked up in stock or the administration of storage or staff. There must be a point below which it makes sense to print each book on demand and above which it makes sense to bulk-print, but I have no figures or experience. Certainly as a self-publisher print-on-demand is much simpler.

Power to small publishers

Publishers once had access to unique resources and skills that made them the guardians of what was published. Today digital technology means many of these specialist capabilities are now available to anyone.

Unlike their own employees, the freelancers who publishers use – for copy-editing, typesetting, indexing and artwork – are available for hire. Your money and mine is as good as Addison-Wesley's or Penguin's.

Put all this together and the self-publishing author can match traditional publishers, and even better them in places.

8. Copyright

Self-publishing means that you to keep the copyright to your work. That might not seem a big deal if your aim is to make money by selling books, but if your aim is to use the book as a calling card or as the basis for other products, it might be. In fact, because publishers don't yet seem to understand the way the digital world has changed, their restrictions - designed to protect copyright - may actually hinder sales.

As a consultant I find it incredibly useful to own the copyright to my work. Whether it is giving e-books to potential clients or using parts of books in marketing, the content I self-published gets reused, while the books I sold to a publisher get ignored.

...

9. Money from writing

Most of this book discusses how to make money from your own writing and publishing, whether with or without a publisher. Basically you write, your book gets published and you earn money from sales.

Of over 45,000 'unique titles' published in the US during the year 2021–2022 less than 1% sold over 100,000 copies, while 86% of books sold less than 5,000 copies. Perhaps more worryingly for a new author, 15% of books sold less than 12 copies.

10. The *Little Book* story

I once wrote a book on a flight from London to Dallas. To be honest, it was only a first draft and those ten hours didn't include any editing or production. I didn't set out to write a book, and I when I saw how much I had written I didn't know what to do with the manuscript. Eventually that manuscript ended up as my best-selling *A Little Book of Requirements and User Stories*.

...

II Writing

11. When you know what you want to say

It is easier to write if you know what you want to say. If you *feel* the message you are trying to convey, if you can imagine the argument you are trying to make and if you can see the people you want to speak to in your mind's eye.

...

12. Learning to write

I'm sure some authors just sit down one day and write a book. For most of us, though, it helps to work up to it. A book is a marathon - or perhaps a triathlon if you are both writing and self-publishing. If you are going to attempt an endurance event it helps to practice on a smaller scale beforehand.

...

13. Writers conferences

It was at a former monastery about an hour outside Munich that I learned to write over a period of 12 years: EuroPLoP.

While most people who have heard of EuroPLoP think of it as a *patterns conference*, it is really a *writers' conference*. One of the earliest pattern aficionados in the technology world, Richard 'Dick' Gabriel, brought writers' workshops to the nascent pattern conference movement.

For me it started in 2002, ...

14. Some writing techniques

There are plenty of books, courses and even degrees in writing. I've consulted almost none of them. The advice I am giving here and in other chapters about the actual writing process describes my own experiences. I don't criticize any of those other sources: maybe if I read a book on writing I could be even better!

...

15. Incremental and iterative writing and publishing

Publish early, publish often

The key advantage of incremental publishing is it allows you to start marketing and selling your book very early.

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16. The process

Writing is the least of the problems when writing a book. That I can write a book is without question: I've done it before.

More important questions are *is anyone interested?* and *are they interested enough to buy the book?* However these too I tend to ignore - or at least let my gut feeling make a decision. My motivation for writing is that I have something I want to say, and I know that in the process I will learn something. So while I *should* think about who will buy the book, my desire to write it also plays a part.

...

17. Beginning: introductions and forewords

The first few chapters of your book are prime real estate. These are the chapters that will be read most, by both people who buy your book and people who don't. These chapters serve two purposes.

...

18. Using quotations

I make extensive use of quotations at the heads of my chapters. Perhaps I make too much use of them. Perhaps using quotations is a little bit vain and self-serving. Still, I like them because they break things up. They also validate my arguments by pointing out that others have similar thoughts - even when they come from a completely different context. Quotations inject humour too, they can be opaque, thought-provoking or reassuring. Hopefully I get the balance right.

...

19. The #NoProjects story

Sometime in 2013 Steve Smith, Joshua Arnold and I started talking about the evils of the project model of software development. On Twitter this went by the #NoProjects hashtag and could provoke a lot of heated debate: some tweets went viral.

...

III Production

20. After the writing

Once you have finished writing the work really begins. Up to this point you might have been able to do everything yourself, but from here on you will benefit from getting specialist help: a copy-editor, a graphic designer, an indexer, an actor, reviewers and possibly a fan club.

Working with other people injects delays, ...

21. Copy-edit

I keep mentioning copy-editing without explaining what it is. Copy-editing is the process of going through the text, finding and correcting spelling, punctuation, grammatical (SPAG) and other lexical nonconformities.

...

22. Third-party copyright

If every word and picture in your book is your own creation, you probably don't have to worry about third-party copyright, because you already own the copyright to everything. Copyright exists whether you put a (c) mark on your work or not.

I say probably, because you might have signed away some of your own work. This might happen, for example, if you publish a journal article which you then decide to recycle into your book. Some publications, usually print journals and those who pay, will ask you to sign an agreement before publication. In that agreement you turn over copyright to the publisher, or possibly agree an exclusive licence.

...

23. Illustrations

Apart from the third-party clipart and pictures I use, almost all the illustrations and graphics in my books are my own creation. Modern graphics packages, like Visio on PCs and OmniGraffle on Mac, are pretty good for this. I've also used mind mapping software for diagrams but these, even to my eye, tend to look less than professional, so I try to avoid using them.

Still, my images could be better, ...

24. Layout and page size

I am a regular disappointment to my copy-editor, because I settle for second best when it comes to layout. In addition to copy-editing he is an expert at book layout – or typesetting as it is also called. To his eye my layouts are less than beautiful and could be better.

From my point of view my layout is good enough: to my eye it is fine, ...

25. Book cover

One image you most definitely want to invest time and money in is your book's cover. Despite the popular adage, people do *judge a book by its cover*. And unlike the images inside your book, for which black and white might be good enough, you will want a multi-colour image for the cover.

Many more people will see your book's cover than ever read a word of it. Your cover - both in a bookshop and online - is your opportunity to capture readers' interest. Remember that potential buyers will encounter your cover picture as a fairly small image, so detail will be lost.

...

26. File sizes and download costs

When you buy a printed book there is usually a charge for package and posting, although this is sometimes waived by the seller. When you download a book there is no delivery charge, but someone somewhere still needs to pay for the bandwidth.

As a buyer your download costs are set in the contact with your ISP. But as an author you might be expected to pay some of the download costs incurred by the seller.

...

27. ISBN

Once upon a time the *International Standard Book Number* was a good way of getting hold of a book. Give a library or bookshop the ISBN and they would get the book. You can still use ISBN numbers like that, but modern search technology means it is easier to search for 'Allan Kelly Continuous Digital' than '978-0-9933250-9-0' - and certainly easier to remember the former.

While you don't need an ISBN to sell your book on LeanPub or Amazon, you will need ...

28. Audio books

Once you have finished your book it is time to think about an audio version. Like copyediting and printing, this is best left until the content has stabilized - you don't want to have to go back and make audio changes every time you edit a chapter.

There are two key reasons for considering an audio version of your book.

...

IV Publication

“Publish and be damned!”

Attributed to Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, 1824

29. Amazon

KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing) is Amazon's self-publishing platform. KDP started, as its name suggests, as a platform for publishing e-books. Although KDP began in 2007, two years after Amazon acquired CreateSpace, the two were separate until fairly recently. Today KDP offers book, Kindle and print publishing, while CreateSpace has disappeared almost entirely inside KDP.

While LeanPub is a great place for writing and selling early versions of your book once you have completed it, you really want to be on Amazon. ...

30. Printing

Although print-on-demand services were my entry point to the world of self-publishing, it took me a while to realize the importance of printed books. Today the print versions of my books substantially outsell the e-book versions. Nor am I alone: I hear from other authors that print sales often exceed e-book sales.

...

31. Pricing

Publishers often have predetermined price scales based on the number of pages in a book. I suspect this is less to do with how much it costs to print a book and more to do with the buyers' perceptions: 'More pages, more information, more useful therefore more valuable'.

Unless you are aiming to maximize sales with the lowest possible prices, Walmart-style, you don't want to set price based on production costs: price should be set based on what people will pay. If they won't pay more than a book's production costs, don't sell it.

Cost-based pricing is almost always a bad idea. ...

32. Print pricing

Printed books cost more to produce and ship than e-books, so production costs are a bigger consideration in pricing. Selling price still needs to be based on what the market will pay, however, rather than on the production costs.

Printed books can command a premium over e-books. ...

33. Playing with price

As a self-publisher using digital tools you have much more control over pricing than when you work with a publisher. With a publisher they set the price: end of story.

...

34. KDP Select and Kindle Unlimited

Amazon would really like you to enrol your e-book in *KDP Select*. Joining is free and there are two big advantages, but there is also one noticeable downside that may not be an issue to you.

The first advantage is ...

35. Categories and keywords

Book categories tell bookshops and libraries where to place a book, on which shelf, in which section. Should it be in fiction or history? Romantic fiction or science fiction?

Some readers may remember searching libraries using *Dewey Decimal* and *BIC codes*. I say ‘remember’ because digital books and search engines mean that hunting through library shelves is a becoming a thing of the past. Indeed, the BIC (Book Industry Communication) Standard Subject Categories scheme is itself due to be retired in 2024.

...

36. Digital rights management

Digital right management (DRM) is both boring and controversial. As a reader if you stay within one ecosystem, such as Amazon's Kindle e-book system, you might not even notice it exists. But if you want lend someone a book, or move materials between ecosystems, perhaps to read a book bought from Google Books in the Apple Books app, then you start to notice it.

As an e-book author and self-publisher you have a big decision to make: *will you best meet your goals by applying DRM to your books?* or *will your goals be better met by leaving your books DRM free?*

...

37. Tax

It has been said that only death and taxes are inevitable. Although anyone who has observed the tax-efficient strategies of Amazon, Meta and friends may wonder if tax is really inevitable. However, for the self-publisher tax needs to be paid.

...

38. Legal deposit

In many countries publishers are required to deposit copies of a new book with a national library or libraries of record. This is known as [Legal Deposit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal_Deposit)¹. You only need to submit to library(s) in the publisher's own country even if you sell in many.

...

¹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legal_deposit

39. Academic publishing

What can I say that will interest academic writers and publishers? After all, I am not an academic: I come from outside that world and don't understand it in detail. At the same time, because I am an outsider and don't understand the vested interests and vestigial practices, maybe I can offer a new perspective.

There are two reasons this chapter exists. ...

V Marketing

40. Amazon

Amazon is not the only bookseller. It is not even the only digital bookseller. Neither is it the only digital publishing platform. While it may dominate physical book sales, electronic book sales and even, through Audible/ACX, audio books, it does not command even 50% of the market.

...

41. Reviews

You probably don't need me to tell you how important reviews are to buyers. How often do you buy a product online without looking at its reviews? Unless you are buying something you have bought before I'll bet you read the reviews first.

...

42. Speaking

Have you ever noticed how many radio talk-show guests have recently published a book? That's not by accident: they want to talk. People who haven't recently published a book aren't so keen to appear on the radio at 6.30 am.

Public appearances are a time-honoured way of promoting your book. ...

43. Promotions, sales, discounts and free books

Everybody loves a discount and the word 'free' has an amazing way of grabbing our attention. Reducing your price on a limited-time basis or to a limited audience can be a very effective way of increasing sales.

The questions you have to answer yourself are *how much extra revenue will you earn from people who would not normally buy your book?*, and *how much revenue will you lose from people who would buy your book (sometime) but will take advantage of the discount?*

...

44. More Amazon and money

There is a lot to Amazon and it changes all the time. Part of me is nervous that I've written about things here that might have changed by the time you read this book. I'm also conscious that Amazon's offer differs from country to country: I know that outside the US some features are not available. I know that because I've read other authors who describe some feature and when I look it isn't there. A little bit of searching and you may find 'Only available in the US'.

Still, there are some parts of Amazon which do seem to be available globally and can make you a little more. But there is also the thorny issue of tax to think about when talking about money.

...

VI Tools

45. Word processors

There is nothing to stop you writing your masterpiece longhand and have someone type it for you. I suppose there are those out there that will do that and have a hit book, but they are in the minority. It also misses the point of digital.

...

46. Formatting tools: Pandoc and LaTeX

You might get by writing a book with Word and publishing on Amazon, or perhaps with your favourite text editor, Markdown and LeanPub. That's just fine, but there are some tools that can come in very useful and might fit your way of working.

...

47. Citations, references and bibliography

If you are writing for an academic publication, including citations and references is essential. For the rest of us references are optional, but there are several reasons why you might want to include them. First, ...

48. A quick guide to Markdown

Markdown might look complicated, but it is no more complicated than changing styles in Word. In fact, because you can't change Markdown styles, it is simpler. It is just that it requires a little imagination.

...

Postscript

As if to show what a dynamic business book publishing has become, things changed even as I wrote this book. Some of them were things I just hadn't kept up to date with, such as Amazon retiring Mobi format and introducing KPF. Others have literally changed in the six months I have spent on the book. Take pricing: if I hadn't written the notes on book prices in Chapter 31 I would not have believed what I see now.

...

Also by Allan Kelly

Changing Software Development: Learning to be Agile, John Wiley & Sons, 2008

EuroPLOP 2009 proceedings: 14th annual European Conference on Pattern Languages of Programming, Allan Kelly and Michael Weiss, Hillside Europe (Lulu), 2010

Business Patterns for Software Developers, John Wiley & Sons, 2012

Xanpan: Team Centric Agile Software Development, Software Strategy (LeanPub), 2012–2021

An Agile Reader 2012 (3rd edition), Software Strategy (LeanPub), 2012–2021

A Little Book about Requirements and User Stories, Software Strategy (LeanPub), 2015–2017

Project Myopia: Why Projects Damage Software #NoProjects, Software Strategy (LeanPub), 2015–2018

Continuous Digital: An agile alternative to projects for digital business, Software Strategy (LeanPub), 2016–2018

The Art of Agile Product Ownership, Apress, 2019

Succeeding with OKRs in Agile, Software Strategy (LeanPub), 2021

Thank you

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