Publishing Terms

Quick Reference Guide

Mission Point Press

This vocabulary list of publishing industry terms will go a long way to help you understand the ins and outs of your publishing journey.

ARC (Advance Review Copy): An ARC is a pre-publication version of a book that is sent to reviewers, bloggers, and media outlets to generate buzz before its official release. MPP distributes this in digital format.

Bookshop.org: An online bookstore that supports independent bookstores. Authors and publishers can sell their books on Bookshop's platform while giving a portion of the proceeds to indie bookstores.

Chapbook: A small booklet, typically of poetry or short prose, that is inexpensively produced and often self-published. Historically, chapbooks were simple, small publications containing popular stories, ballads, or religious tracts, sold by street vendors. Today, they are commonly used to publish shorter collections of creative writing, especially by poets and emerging writers, and are often limited in print run.

Copy Editing: Copy editing focuses on correcting grammar, punctuation, syntax, and spelling errors. It also addresses consistency and clarity in language, ensuring the text adheres to a specific style guide (e.g., APA, Chicago Manual of Style).

Cover Design: refers to the process of creating the visual artwork and layout for the front, back, and spine of a book. It involves selecting imagery, typography, color schemes, and design elements that not only attract potential readers but also reflect the genre, tone, and themes of the book. A well-designed cover is essential for marketing and can influence a reader's first impression of the book.

Creative Direction: The overall vision and strategy behind a book's design, marketing, and presentation. A creative director ensures that the visual elements (e.g., cover, layout) align with the book's branding and target audience.

Developmental Editing: Developmental editing involves in-depth feedback on the structure and content of a manuscript. It focuses on elements such as plot, pacing, character development, themes, and organization. This type of editing often occurs in early stages, helping the author shape the overall narrative.

Edelweiss: A platform used by publishers, booksellers, librarians, and reviewers for discovering and ordering new titles. It also offers digital review copies to influencers and reviewers before a book's release.

Galley: In publishing, a galley refers to a preliminary version of a book or other written work that is created after the initial copyediting but before the final proofreading and formatting. It is used for review by authors, editors, and sometimes reviewers, to catch any final errors before the final version is printed or published. Galleys are often unbound or printed in a simple format and are not meant to represent the finished product.

Ghostwriting: A ghostwriter writes content (such as a book or article) on behalf of someone else who will be credited as the author. Ghostwriters often work from outlines, interviews, or ideas provided by the credited author.

Goodreads: Goodreads is a social media platform specifically designed for book lovers. It allows users to track their reading progress, rate and review books, and discover new books based on personalized recommendations.

Hybrid Publishing: A model that blends aspects of traditional and self-publishing. In hybrid publishing, the author often pays for some or all production costs, but the publisher provides professional services like editing, design, and distribution.

IngramSpark: A self-publishing platform that offers print-on-demand services and distribution to a wide network of bookstores and libraries. IngramSpark is known for providing global distribution for independent authors and small publishers.

Interior Layout: Also known as book formatting, interior layout involves the arrangement of text, images, and other elements within the book's pages. It focuses on key elements like typography, spacing, margin sizes, and text alignment to ensure readability and a professional visual presentation.

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ISBN (International Standard Book Number): An ISBN is a unique identifier assigned to books and other published materials for commercial purposes. It consists of 13 digits (previously 10) and helps publishers, booksellers, libraries, and distributors track, catalog, and order specific books. Each edition and variation of a book, except reprints, has its own ISBN. It is crucial for book sales and distribution globally.

KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing): Amazon's self-publishing platform that allows authors to publish ebooks and print-on-demand paperbacks. KDP gives authors direct access to Amazon's large marketplace.

Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN): A unique identification number assigned by the Library of Congress to catalog entries for books and other materials in its collections. It helps libraries and other institutions quickly locate and catalog specific titles. The LCCN is often included in the bibliographic record for books published in the United States but is different from the ISBN, as it is mainly used for organizational purposes within libraries.

Manuscript Coaching: A collaborative process where an author works with a coach to improve their manuscript through feedback, brainstorming, and guidance. It's designed to help authors develop their ideas, improve writing craft, and stay motivated throughout the writing process.

Manuscript Evaluation: A service where a professional evaluates the overall strengths and weaknesses of a manuscript. The feedback usually covers plot, character development, pacing, and audience appeal, but it doesn't involve in-depth editing or corrections.

Preorder Date: The date when a book becomes available for preorder, allowing readers to reserve a copy before its official release. This helps generate early sales and build anticipation.

Press Release: A written communication aimed at media outlets to announce important news, such as the release of a new book. Press releases are used to generate media coverage and public attention.

Print on Demand (POD): A printing model where books are printed only when an order is placed, reducing the need for large print runs and storage. This is cost-effective for independent authors and small publishers.

Proofreading: The final step before publication, proofreading ensures that a manuscript is free of errors in grammar, punctuation, spelling, and formatting. It occurs after all major edits have been completed and is meant to catch any remaining mistakes.

Publication Date: The official release date of a book when it becomes available for purchase to the public.

Sell Sheet: A one-page marketing document that summarizes a book's key information (e.g., title, author, genre, release date, synopsis, endorsements, and pricing). It's typically used to pitch books to bookstores, libraries, and media outlets.

Traditional Printing (Offset Printing): A process where ink is transferred from a metal plate to a rubber blanket, and then onto paper or other materials. It's widely used for high-quality, large-volume jobs like books and magazines because it's cost-effective for large print runs and produces consistent, sharp images. Reference: Printing for Less, Wikipedia - Offset Printing

Traditional Publishing: The process where an author submits a manuscript to a publishing house, which then handles editing, printing, distribution, and marketing of the book. The publisher typically pays the author an advance and royalties based on book sales. In this model, the publisher assumes the financial risk and creative control, while the author benefits from professional services and broad market reach. Reference: Writer's Digest, Wikipedia - Publishing