

# Demystifying being an Indie Author

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How to self publish and set yourself up for  
**success**

# Introduction

We are:

Jan Foster



Hannah Lvnn



Heather G Harris



# More than our names, between us we have written and published over 70 books!

**Heather G Harris** - Best-selling Urban Fantasy author of the Other Realm series. Over 25 books, many reaching the top 100 in the worldwide Kindle charts. Full time author.

**Hannah Lynn** - Over 40 books, translated into 12\* languages. Kindle Storyteller Winner 2018 and Gold Medalist for the Independent Publishers Awards. Full time author.

**Jan Foster** - Historical Fantasy / Historical Thriller / Children's author / Scriptwriter... Only 10 (chunky, hard to research) books, but a movie in the works... Part time author.

# Now you've seen what's possible, here's what we are going to talk about today

What is an Indie Publisher?

Common Terminology

Planning to publish

Challenges

Scaling for success

Diversifying

Questions / Discussion



# What is an Indie Publisher or an Indie Author?

- Self publishing means YOU are in control of what you publish.
- No gatekeepers (like traditional publishing requiring agent submissions etc)
- No paying someone else to print it for you, only to get back a few copies. This is vanity publishing.
- Control of your own work doesn't mean you do it on your own.
- It does mean you pay for costs yourself
- It also means you receive all the royalties from sales, compared to perhaps 5% with traditional publishing, or maybe 30% with vanity publishing (but you have paid them to do some of the work)
- In almost all cases, getting your book in front of people is YOUR responsibility - whichever way you choose to publish. Indie publishing mean you will do all the marketing.

# Terminology to get familiar with

KDP - Kindle Direct  
Publishing

KU - Kindle Unlimited

Page Reads

Ingram Spark / Draft2Digital

Going Wide

Blurb

ARC's / Beta's

Hybrid

Vanity Press

ISBN's

Launch Team

Pen Name

Pre-order

Print on Demand (POD)

Synopsis

If we say something you don't understand, **please flash your phone so we can clarify!** Any questions - jot them down and ask at the end though.

# The Bad News....

- There is no map, or right way to indie publish.
- It's a steep learning curve.
- It requires investment - both time and money. How much is up to you.
- You are responsible for getting your stories into readers hands, and that means all the dirty work alongside it too. All the marketing, accounts, editing, formatting, cover designing, uploading to print on demand, ISBN administration, stock management...etc.
- The market shifts constantly - last year it was all about TikTok, now it's direct selling.. staying on top of trends can be tricky.
- Publishing a book probably won't mean you can give up the day job... yet.



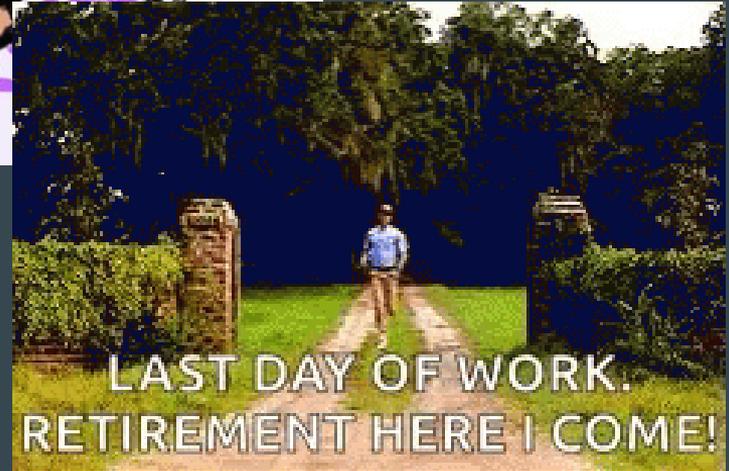
# The Good News

- You aren't alone! Massive and usually helpful Indie Author Community
- Don't like doing something or can't? Get expert freelance help.
- Writing and publishing can be fitted in around your other commitments (work, family, life...), as long as your expectations are in line with your ability to invest.
- You are in control of so many aspects of your publishing journey.
- You are the sole beneficiary of your own hard work

Are you ready to get down to brass tacks?



What is success to you?



# What is success to you?

- How do you measure it?
- Why are you publishing?
- What do you want to achieve? Why is this important?
- What are your timescales - for publishing and to be successful (as you have defined it for yourself)?

# Are you ready to be a business owner?

Mindset

Plan your business:

- What is your product?
- Who will read it?
- How will you set up your business? Bank accounts / location / where will you work?
- What software will you need? How much is it?
- Think about finances - where will you get money from? What will you spend it on? What will you do with the income you generate?
- How will you market your books?

# Considerations

Read. Yes, this can be a justifiable business expense.

- What books are out there which are similar to yours?
- Genres and tropes - understand reader expectations

Research.

Who are your readers? Where do they hang out?

Understand the market and how to reach it.

How much does your work 'fit' with what you have learned?

Can you do it again? Is it a series?

- Why this is important

# Nuts and Bolts - the DIY steps to take to set yourself up for success

- 1) The Story (or nonfiction book). Write it the best you can.
- 2) Leave it. Re-read it a little while later. Is it still as good as you thought? Does it match the reader expectations you have identified? Can it be better?
- 3) Editing.
- 4) **TIP - Friends and family will NOT give you honest advice (because they like you). Nor are they likely your intended audience.**
- 5) Formatting
- 6) Proofreading
- 7) Getting ready to publish - what do you NEED....



# Self publishing 101 - THE BARE MINIMUM

## KDP / D2D / Ingram Account Requirements:

Your legal name, address, and phone number, as well as your/a business bank account and routing number for payments.

You'll also need to provide tax information, including your TIN (Taxpayer Identification Number) if you're not a US author, and may need to verify your identity with a photo of a government-issued ID/passport. Tax form for US sales (tick for the treaty)

**NB - Personal or Business?**

NB 2 - You can use your existing Amazon account to sign in to KDP.

NB 3 - The name provided in the Author/Publisher Information should be the legal name of the author.

**BE CONSISTENT WITH WHICH EMAIL YOU USE - IF YOU CANNOT 'REPLY' USING THAT EMAIL, WILL CAUSE PROBLEMS DOWN THE LINE**

# Self publishing 101 - THE BARE MINIMUM - YOUR KPD PAGE

## Create. Manage. Publish.

Publish a new title by clicking Create. Or manage your existing titles from your books below.

**UPDATED** Create a new title or series.

Reach readers in the format they want. You can now publish an eBook, paperback, or hardcover book. If publishing a series, you can create an Amazon series page and add your books.

+ Create

**New to KDP?** Learn more about our resources to help you get started:

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Submitted on November 16, 2024

\$0.99 USD

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KINDLE EBOOK ACTIONS

Promote and Advertise



# Listing your book...

Format: KDP offers ebooks (Kindle), paperbacks, and hardcover books. Beta on Audio books for some authors (AI). Each format has different royalty rates and printing costs.

Price: Your book's list price directly impacts your royalty. As does it's size, number of pages, trim etc.

Royalty Rate: KDP offers a 70% royalty rate for ebooks sold through KDP and a 35% royalty rate for ebooks sold. Check your download size/price threshold.

KU - a program that limits distribution and pays per page read (e.g. £0.004 per page read in an e-reader).

For paperbacks, the royalty rate is 60% of the list price, minus printing costs.

Printing Costs: Printing costs for paperbacks and hardcovers vary based on trim size, page count, ink type, and the Amazon marketplace where the book is sold. Usual US paperback/hardback book size is 6x9 inches, UK is 5x8 paperback or 6x9 HB

**YOU CAN ONLY CHANGE SOME THINGS ONCE YOU HAVE PUBLISHED - BLURB, KEYWORDS, PRICE, CATEGORIES.**

KDP and Ingram. Ingram vs D2D vs Lulu, Bookvault etc. Different publishers - different distribution and print quality/effects.

# To list your book ANYWHERE you need the following ready:

Cover(s) - in line with genre, reader expectations. Unless you are a pro designer, pay someone to prepare it for you. NB different formats and sizes.

Title and keyword stuffed subtitle

Blurb - you can change/tweak this whenever you like (except if you use on your back cover for printed copies - can get costly)

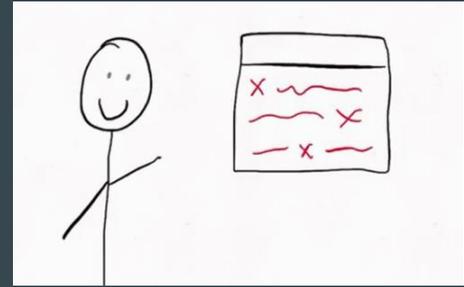
Categories - 3 you can select, KDP may add more, IS and Neilson uses a different system

Keywords - more later!

# To list your book ANYWHERE you need the following ready (yes there's more....)

- Formatted Manuscripts - PDF/Doc/epub file
- ISBN's - 1 per different format. Free vs own. Neilson. Neilson title editor.
- Use a free barcode generator to create a barcode from your ISBN (per format - needed on paperback and hardback books)
- Expanded distribution
- Pricing strategy - compare to others!
- KU or not KU?

# Timescales

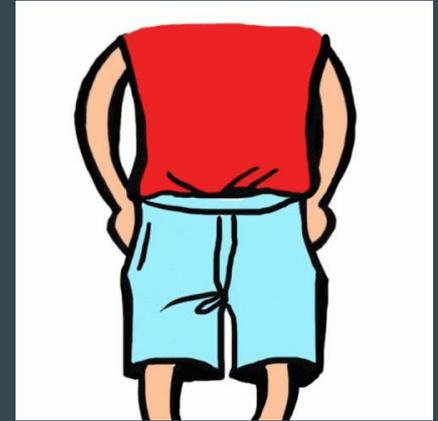


- No right or wrong answer
- Give yourself decent lead times - something always goes wrong!
- Once listed book, will appear within a few days - quality checks etc
- Launch date can be set in advance but **CANNOT** be changed. Don't hit publish by accident!
- ARC readers - for early reviews 1-2 months
- Simultaneous - Pre-order period - build hype 1-2 months. Do a marketing plan (more coming...)
- Think launch period in terms of a **YEAR** rather than Launch Day

# The Business End

How cheaply can I self publish? What is worth spending money on?

- KDP/IS/D2D - free to use - to actually publish
- But, account for -
- Editing / Proofreading - can do for free/contra deals/using Pro-Writing Aid/Grammerly as a bare minimum. Freelance editors - avoid Fiverr, use Reedsy or word of mouth recommendations but genre specific.
- Software to write on - can do for free - Googledocs, Reedsy. Word (but you pay Microsoft annual fee). Recommend Scrivener (£55 Windows, lifetime license) when getting serious/complex.
- Formatting - can DIY for free, Reedsy/D2D have built in generators for epub/print-ready PDF's but limited formatting options. Recommend Atticus (c.£120 - lifetime license).
- Covers - can do your own - Canva/Bookbrush. Recommend use a pro - cheapest & best (if not pressed for time) - [www.getcovers.com](http://www.getcovers.com)
- NB YOUR COVER IS THE FIRST IMPRESSION TO READERS - MAKE IT COUNT



# The Business End

- Keep a record of all invoices / expenses - use a spreadsheet
- Easier to do accounts if have business bank account.
- You will need to register as self employed with HMRC within 3 months of publishing (easier to do it before creating accounts with KDP etc so you have tax numbers), and prepare to do self assessments.
- Royalties are paid 1-3 months in arrears, depending.

# Launching a book

- Step One - write a GOOD book.

To do this, do two things:

ONE - Read in the genre you want to write. What common elements do you notice? We call these tropes e.g. there's only one bed!

Tropes are your friend if you want to meet reader expectations and be commercially successful.

TWO - Study craft.



# Launching a book

## Craft Tips

- Make sure your readers can empathise with your main character.
- Vary sentence structure and length.
- If you want it to be accessible, don't unnecessarily be sesquipedalian - loquacious vs chatterbox.
- Write often, not perfectly.
- Show, Don't Tell. (Except for when telling is better). Avoid Adverb overload i.e. He said it "angrily"?
- Start with ACTION, not setup.
- Read dialogue aloud. (We tend to use contractions in speech).
- Kill your darlings.
- Be specific (car pulled up, vs the beat-up Ford Focus crawled to a stop.)
- Finish SOMETHING. You can't polish an MS that isn't complete.



# Launching a book

## Practical steps

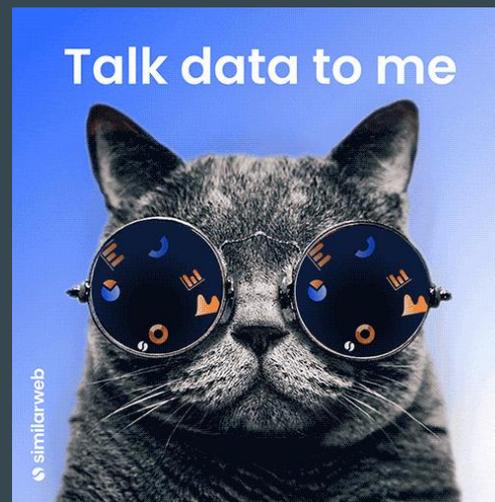
- Get your book edited, get a decent cover, write a good blurb that signals tropes (ACOTAR)
- Get your book on Bookbub
- Get your book on Goodreads (even if you don't want to be there much yourself)
- When you put your book on Amazon, carefully consider the keywords you put in
  - Always do the plural - witches instead of witch.
  - If you can, utilise publisher rocket.
  - Use keyword strings that make sense.

# Launching a book

## MARKETING.

Marketing is the overall process of promoting, selling, and delivering a product or service. It includes everything from understanding your audience to building your brand and creating long-term customer relationships.

- **Market research** (Who are you talking to? What do they want?)
- **Branding** (Logo, tone, visuals, vibe)
- **Product development** (Making something people actually want)
- **Pricing strategy** (How much should it cost?)
- **Public relations** (fandom)
- **Content creation** (blogs, newsletters, podcasts - SEO)
- **Advertising** (often used synonymously, it's part of marketing, but it's not the same thing!)



# Launching a book

## Marketing

- Strategy-focused
- Long-term in nature
- Involves market research, branding, content creation, and pricing
- Pulls customers in
- Builds trust

## Advertising

- Tactic within marketing
- Short-term bursts of promotion
- Involves paid promotional efforts
- Pushes a message out
- Builds awareness

# Launching a book

Learn more about marketing with David Guaghan's FREE course, *Starting From Zero*.

Advertising your book:

You cannot release a book into the ether and expect it to do well. You need to drive readers to it. When you start out, this is by social media, FB genre groups, ARC teams, street teams which are all free options.



# Free Marketing

**Street Team** - find them from FB, or Instagram.

Don't be afraid to give your book away for free, it will build reviews, and word of mouth, but be wary of offending KU rules.

## FB Genre groups / Takeovers

**Reader Magnets** - often a prequel story, it should be from the same POV, following the same characters. It should have the same levels of action, humour, spice. This is the free taster, it needs to be *good*. Don't just knock together something with a "that will do attitude". Deliver via Bookfunnel or StoryOrigin.

# Launching a book

## Advertising - Paid options

Paid newsletters. Again, seek out David Guaghan's recommended site, and learn about promo stacking. For a newbie, this is the best option.

Facebook Ads/Amazon Ads/Bookbub Ads - there are some free courses, but personally I recommend the Ads for Authors course by [SelfPublishingFormula.com](https://www.selfpublishingformula.com). It is pricey, but fantastic value for money as it is a one stop shop. There are options to pay in instalments across three months. It is around £500-£600 but it was easily worth it for me, as they update content all the time.

# Launching a book

## Advertising - Purpose



What is your advertising purpose? ROI/Exposure/Lead generation (The last one is to build your Author Newsletter which is an essential weapon in your arsenal)

Your Newsletter list belongs to you (not fb, not instagram etc)

You can build engagement and fandom with your newsletter, deepening the connection and building superfans.

When you launch a book, you will tell your newsletter fans all about it, and they will buy it = success.

# Newsletters / Websites / Automation

Utilise proper channels to send your emails. Gmail won't do. Get a free account with Mailerlite, mailchimp, convertkit, flodesk, to name a few.

Build in Automation. When they get added to your email list, they get a welcome email, with a photo of you, and your dog/cat/flowers/hobby, and a link to your FREE book. Next email, send them another free book, and another picture of you. After that, give them a link to your paid book on Amazon, which hopefully they may buy, and then they get added to your subscriber list who get an email from you every week or month or whatever regularity you want. I'm chatty, I send two to three emails a month. \*I\* don't want to just email every time I have a launch.

Have a website. Even a basic squarespace one. It gives you SEO, and *validity*.

# Launching a book

## Branding

What can readers expect from you? What is YOUR VOICE (it transcends genre).

My readers know they will always get a strong female protagonist, an animal sidekick, humour, fast paced action, and a slow burn fade-to-black romance.

Knowing my brand, helps me share that. For example, I don't share spicy memes because I write fade-to-black, that's off beat for me. I choose to always be positive. I never complain, I use my platform to lift others up. I DO frequently share memes because my writing is funny too.

I share about myself, about my life, and I build relationships and connections with my readers. This leads us to Fandom.

# Launching a book



## Fandom

Build Superfans.

To do this you **MUST** be your authentic self with your readers. Trying to keep up a pretense is wearing, and on some level they'll sense it's false. To create superfans, readers need to connect with **YOU**. So they'll buy every book you write without even reading the blurb.

Check out Jennifer Lynn Barnes podcast on the psychology of reading - we like experiencing things through an avatar, but successful books have common themes like wealth, beauty, secrets/lies, danger/competition, friendship/comfort.

Leave some things unsaid, so you readers can make up fan theories.

Make your books cosplayable/easy to create themed parties or something they strongly associate with your characters.

# Building and maintaining a readership

I utilise social media to do engagement campaigns. Every social media post I do, has a question my followers can answer.

Keep it simple so EVERYONE can join in.

Do games! Keep it fun.

Reward loyalty with giveaways, thank yous in dedications, give snippets and sneak peeks, tell them first about sales or new projects. Give them a reason to be on your NL list.

# Scaling your success

You have a book, it's doing great. What next? AUDIO. Audiobooks are the biggest growing market. In 2024, the global audiobook market was valued at approximately **\$8.7 billion**. The market is projected to reach **\$35.47 billion by 2030**.

Scale up Ad Spend (or start advertising if you haven't already!)

**Diversify:**

YouTube Channel

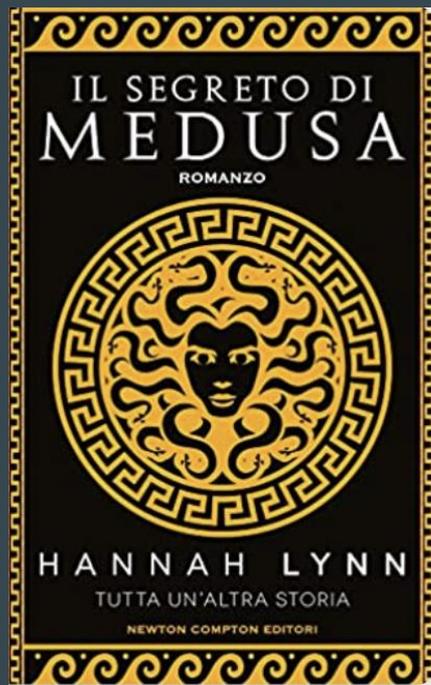
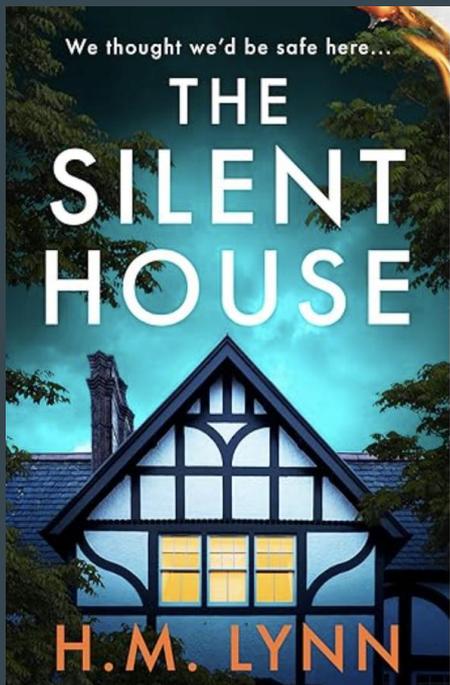
Direct Store - Merch

Patreon

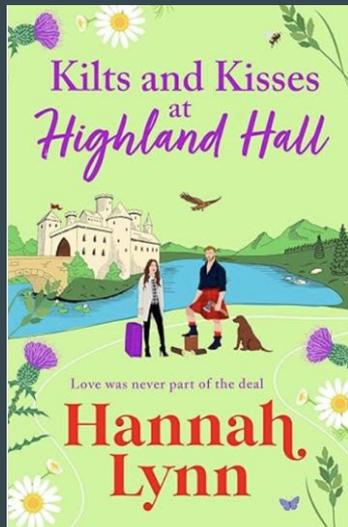
Translations

Special Editions/Crowdfunding/Kickstarter

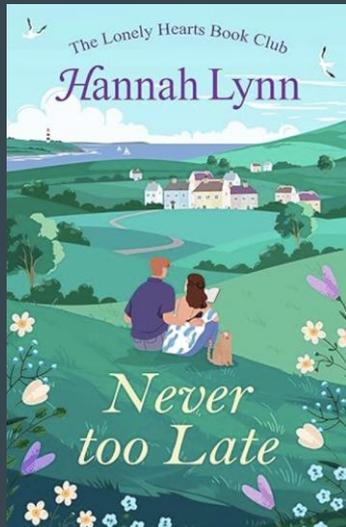
So many options...



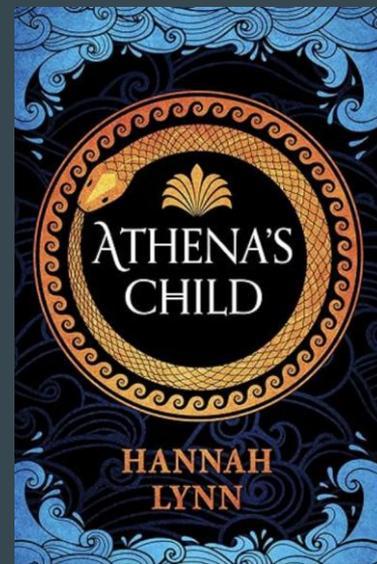
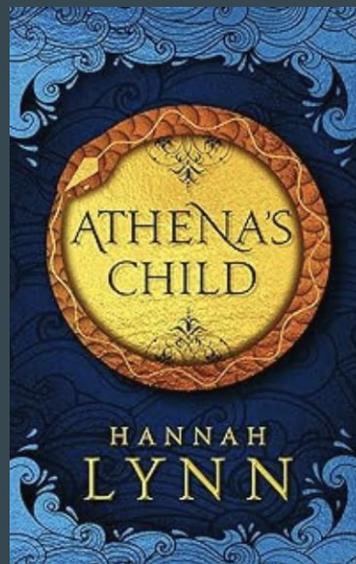
# Hybrid publishing - what it is and what to consider



VS



VS



# Don't waste your money on....

- Social Media influencers
- Vanity presses / publishing 'packages'
- Courses on advertising / self publishing
- Swanky cover designers (yet) - prove your book has a readership first
- Other scams?????



# Market Trends

# Recommended FREE courses

General sites - great for research courses too.

- Coursera
- Future Learn

# Routines and Habits of an author

- 10 minutes a day adds up to over 60 hours a week
- To know if you're improving, you have to monitor what you're doing.
- Anything can be edited and improved except a blank page, so get the words done first.

# Expectations Vs Reality - Managing what success looks like

Not all writing is for publishing. Some is for learning.

There are stages of success, and you never see the journeys there.

You want to be the next Rebecca Yarros?

She wrote 14 books before Fourth Wing.

# Questions