studio e books

Self-Publishing

Anyone can become a publisher; it is not difficult to do. But there are certain steps you should take to establish yourself and your books.

The first step is to name and organize your company. The simplest way to do this is to call it "Your Name, Publisher," a sole proprietorship. Or, you may wish to register a fictitious business name such as "Ganglion Press" with the county in which you work. In some cases you may wish to incorporate your business, for which you should see a lawyer or accountant.

As a publisher, there are a few basic administrative things you should do for each book you publish:

   (1) (Required) Acquire International Standard Book Number (ISBN)
   (2) (Required) Register your forthcoming book(s) with the ABI/Books in Print database
   (3) (Optional) Obtain Library of Congress services (CIP or LCCN)
   (4) (Optional) Register your copyright with LOC
   (5) (Optional) List or register your books with Amazon.com

1. ISBN: ISBNs are purchased from R.R. Bowker Corporation. You can find Bowker on the Internet at www.isbn.org or www.myidentifiers.com, and follow the links to purchase ISBNs. Name, address, and payment are all that is required (no information about books). Bowker will send you a log book (i.e., a list of your ISBNs) and further instructions. Assign the first number to your first book, and save the rest for future books.

2. BowkerLink: Formerly known as Advance Book Information (ABI) and Books in Print, published by R.R. Bowker, the BowkerLink database is the primary database for commercial publishing in the United States, and is used by all book-stores, online stores, and wholesalers. It lists title, format, page count, subject, price, etc. If a book has an ISBN and is listed in BowkerLink, any seller can order it. Bowker will send further instructions with your ISBN log, or see www.bowker.com.

3. The Library of Congress (LOC) offers two services that are used mostly by libraries: Cataloging-in-Publication (CIP) and Library of Congress Control Number (LCCN). To obtain CIP data or LCCN, please see the Libarary of Congress web pages on these services. (The addresses of these pages change from time to time.)

   CIP is no longer universal. Participation is by application, and LOC attempts to weed out single-title self-publishers. Read the "FAQ" and all information pages before submitting your application. The CIP process, including initial application, can take up to three months, so apply early if you intend to print CIP data in your book. Therefore we do not recommend bothering with it, unless library sales are crucial to your book's success. We can create "suggested subject catalog headings" in lieu of CIP data.

4. Copyright: A copyright notice must appear on the reverse of the title page. Copyright exists automatically as soon as a book is "published" (i.e. copies are distributed); no further action is needed. Registration or documentation only becomes useful in case of a dispute, to prove your date of publication. One way to do this is to register with the Copyright Office of the Library of Congress. See the Library of Congress web site for a copyright form. Allow 3-4 months. (CIP or LCCN is not required for copyright registration.)

Copyright can also be protected by a dated and notarized copy of the book, or by a copy in a sealed USPS-postmarked envelope. Both of these are cheaper and quicker than LOC registration, and all are considered prima facie evidence in case of dispute.

5. List your book(s) on Amazon: Amazon.com automatically picks up listings from the BowkerLink database, and will contact you at your address listed there if they get an order. If you want Amazon to keep your book in stock and give it a full listing with all the bells and whistles, you can sign up for their several publisher programs, such as Amazon Advantage.