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Libraries and Micropublishing

You have genealogy enthusiasts who want to publish their family histories, but the results might only be interesting to a dozen family members. At least 1 percent of your patrons, probably more, have family histories or genealogies they'd like to see in print form. Your library can help.

Beyond formal family histories and genealogies, more and more of your patrons may be gathering remembrances worth keeping and sharing: great-great-great-grandmother's narrative of crossing the plains to California or Utah. Great-great grandfather's story of growing up a slave and becoming a trusted member of the community, or mother's memories of the Civil Rights Movement. Grandfather's story of war, sacrifice, and change in the first half of the 20th century. Your generation's stories of growing up with technology, being in garage bands, coping with the conflicts between social networks and privacy. Some of these are powerful family and community narratives worth preserving in book form. Your library can help.

Your community is surrounded by parks and wilderness preserves with scores of hiking trails—and more hiking and interesting walking routes in the urban non-wilderness. Members of a local hiking group have gathered comments on the most interesting (and least known) trails, including drawings and information to share those trails with other hikers. Chances are nobody outside your community and neighboring communities will care, but those within your community might find this a great resource. Your library can help.

2 *The Librarian's Guide to Micropublishing*

A group of teens in your community forms a writing club to inspire one another's creativity and review one another's prose and poetry. At the end of the first year, they have a collection of the best works they'd love to have bound copies of—and so would their parents. Your library can help.

Local historians have produced a first-rate history of your community, but your community's not big enough to attract a traditional publisher, given that the history might only attract 20, 30, or 300 readers. Your library can help.

Your academic library serves as the sponsoring agency for one or more open access scholarly journals using Open Journal Systems or other open source software and publishing articles on the web as PDFs, perhaps totaling two dozen papers and 400 pages for a journal's annual volume. You believe a handful of libraries and a handful of authors would love to have proper print volumes of the journal, but there's no way to justify a big print run. Your library can help.

You can probably think of hundreds of other examples, cases where there are stories to be told within your communities, stories worth preserving that won't attract a big publisher and that don't justify spending thousands of dollars for a big press run. Chances are, at least one out of five of your community members has a potential book in them—and at least a quarter of those potential books would be worth having for some number of readers. Your library can help.

Consider an extreme case. Someone in your community wants to gather some family stories or put together some advice—and only wants one copy, a single hardback volume to be handed down to the next generation. Your library can help.

Or another extreme: A person or group in your community is an expert in a narrow field, one so narrow that his or her expertise *might* only be useful for two dozen others in the world—but it might turn out to be attractive to two thousand or more. Your library can help.

And it won't cost your library a dime—other than this book, possibly in multiple copies. Your library can enhance your community and increase the library's role in that community by helping patrons and groups of patrons tell their stories using free and low-cost tools.

Stories come in all lengths and flavors and include fiction and nonfiction. We use stories to share wisdom and ideas as well as experiences. Everybody in your community has stories to share; many people in every community have stories that others can benefit from.

Everybody has knowledge others can learn from, and lifelong learning is one of the primary missions of public libraries. Some of that knowledge is and remains local; some begins at a local level and should be shared more broadly.

People also love to share experiences—living vicariously but also gaining background for future adventures. Your library may already host travel presentations by community members. Cumulated experiences make great books, and micropublishing can make those books real. They can also serve our natural tendency to be interested in ourselves and those around us; local experience carries special flavor. Micropublishing strengthens a community by sharing its stories.

Every public library—from volunteer-run libraries serving 200 people to well-funded systems serving millions—can use micropublishing effectively, as facilitator, micropublisher, or both. So can many academic libraries, especially smaller ones in colleges and universities without a university press.

This book will show you how micropublishing works, cover the steps of book publishing and how micropublishing affects those steps, identify the tools you need to proceed (tools you and your patrons probably already own), and show you and your community members how to get from “good enough” micropublished books to ones that look almost as good as anything from the biggest trade publishers.

Defining Micropublishing

What is micropublishing?

Historically, the term refers to publishing in microform, on microfiche, reel microfilm, or microcard. Recently, the term has been used for a variety of niche publishing techniques. Increasingly, however, the word is being used as defined here:

Micropublishing uses print on demand fulfillment services to publish books that may serve niches from one to 500 copies, by producing books individually as they are needed.

In the past, I’ve used POD—publish on demand—for what this book calls micropublishing. But the accepted and broadest expansion of POD is *print* on demand. Many publishers use Lightning Source (www.lightningsource.com, a division of the Ingram Content Group),

BookSurge (www.booksurge.com, a division of Amazon), or Replica Books (www.unlimitedpublishing.com/bt, a division of Baker & Taylor) to keep books alive by producing a few copies as needed, rather than the thousands required for an economical press run using traditional techniques. For that matter, some academic publishers and smaller publishers use POD for *all* book production. At this point, tens of millions of books each year are produced through print on demand; it's an established technology.

Given the ambiguity of POD and given that publish on demand uses print on demand techniques, it makes sense to adopt a different term: micropublishing.

A key element of the definition above is “print on demand fulfillment services.” For the purposes of this book, that means Lulu and CreateSpace, two companies that handle the entire back end of publishing (printing, binding, order taking, money handling, and shipping) with no up-front charges except for optional added services. These companies may very well use Lightning Source or BookSurge to print the books. (Since CreateSpace is a division of Amazon, it's fair to assume it uses BookSurge as a printing partner. Lulu has printing partners in several dozen countries.) It's quite possible that we'll see a future in which some bookstores and libraries have self-contained book production devices, such as the Espresso Book Machine, with links that make it feasible for micropublished books to be produced on site.

Micropublished books may not carry a formal imprint name or may carry a name created for the purposes of a single book—or the author's name as publisher. Micropublished books may or may not have ISBNs or jacket prices. Some micropublished books may not have formal prices at all: It's quite plausible for a micropublished book never to enter any formal sales channel, produced only for use by a family or group or for promotional purposes. What micropublished books have in common is that they're produced in very small numbers.

Why Libraries Should Be Involved in Micropublishing

Why micropublish? To produce niche books, books that are not expected to sell many copies. To avoid the complexities and overhead of

becoming a small publisher, including costs and accounting issues of sales and fulfillment. To test the waters for a new concept that might or might not have broad appeal. And to do any or all of these with little or no capital investment.

Why libraries? Because it's a great fit with your mission and a new niche that should improve your community standing.

Public libraries serve lifelong learning and serve to collect, organize, and preserve the stories that make up our civilization. Micropublishing adds new local voices to that set of stories.

Most public libraries serve as community centers with a particular focus on the community's literary and learning needs and desires. Many public libraries have writing groups, book clubs, and other story-oriented groups. These groups can form natural support groups for micropublishers and, along with teen groups and other groups that meet as part of library programming or within library spaces, can be great sources for new micropublished works.

Nearly all public libraries have public access computers with most or all of the software needed for micropublishing—and with broadband access to support micropublishing's uploading requirements. When the library adds explicit support for micropublishing, it becomes a creation center, a place where people make their stories formal and permanent.

In short, public libraries already gather the resources to make micropublishing work well and to benefit from its possibilities. It's a safe bet that there are people within your library community—no matter how small—who would not only benefit from micropublishing but would add worthwhile new voices. Who better than the library to facilitate that process?

Academic libraries may increasingly be involved in publishing to assist faculty and (in some cases) students or to take over functions that might otherwise be handled by university presses. With the growth of open access journals, especially in smaller areas in the humanities and social sciences, academic libraries can be natural centers for new journals. In the case of journals, micropublishing can provide an extension of ejournals to print form with very little effort and no new costs for the library. In the case of monographs, micropublishing can reduce the capital investment required for publication and make it feasible to do niche monographs. At least one academic library already uses micropublishing to support a virtual university press; more will follow.

Making the Most of Micropublishing

How should your library promote micropublishing to make it an effective service that improves the community and your library's standing?

For most public libraries, the first answer is on your website as a tab or a link: genealogy. Your library probably serves genealogical researchers and family history enthusiasts. Contact the local genealogy society or the family historians who use your library; let them know about micropublishing and this book. Almost certainly, there are two groups of people who will use micropublishing and benefit from it: people doing family histories for the first time, and people who have existing family histories, frequently prepared as typescripts or spiral-bound photocopies, that they'd like to update and turn into good-looking, lasting books.

The next major focus overlaps with the first: local history. Does your library have a local history room or collection? Is there a local history group? Micropublishing offers a way to produce better local histories and make them more usable.

Does your library have special collections—specifically documents that aren't suitable for circulation but matter to your community and your patrons? If you have appropriate rights or documents old enough to be in the public domain, you might consider micropublishing—combining documents into books that may be of special interest to those in your community. Such books might even be modest fundraisers for the library.

If your library already has writing groups, such groups will find micropublishing useful. Let them know about this book. If your library is expanding its work to foster community creativity, micropublishing is a natural part of such work.

Service groups within the community will find micropublishing worthwhile to serve their own needs and to extend their reach. So will other community clubs and groups.

Once one or two of your patrons or community groups have micropublished books, they may be willing to do workshops for others who would be interested. With appropriate publicity and early examples of the resulting books, a significant percentage of your community may show interest. Every community is rich with people having special interests, distinctive personal knowledge, and local connections. It's possible that at least 10 percent of your patrons really do have books in them, ones that may not make commercial sense but that offer stories—history,

knowledge, perspectives—that at least a few others will want to read. Micropublishing makes that feasible and inexpensive; your library can and should be a center for this creative activity.

The library is a natural center for creativity and for sharing. Where better to form editing circles, where thoughtful, literate people can improve one another's writing? With micropublishing tools, once the words are right, the rest is straightforward.

Library: Publisher or Facilitator?

Should your library be a micropublisher, or should it serve as a facilitator for micropublishers within the community?

The answer for many libraries will be yes—your library might very well serve both roles.

If you're publishing collections from writers' groups, youth groups, and other library groups, and those involved agree that profits should go to the library or the library's Friends group, it makes sense for the library to establish an imprint name and micropublish the books directly (or do so through your Friends or library foundation). That's also true if your library publishes local history and other works.

In most other cases, a more plausible library role is facilitator—offering advice (including copies of this book or photocopies of Chapters 4–6) and possibly tools, but not using the library's imprint or the library's Lulu or CreateSpace account. Your library probably doesn't want to extend its reputation to cover all books micropublished by community members—and you almost certainly don't want to set up an accounting operation to pass book profits through to the authors.

Is your Friends group a plausible home for some micropublishing? That depends on the group and your relationship with it. It's certainly worth discussing, as Friends could be a great source of assistance, and micropublishing could be a source of revenue.

Self-Publishing, Vanity Presses, and Micropublishing

If your library facilitates micropublishing, you're encouraging a special form of self-publishing. There's nothing wrong or shameful about self-

publishing: It has a long and strong history and continues to be the source of some of the best books around (as well as many of the worst). Mark Twain was a self-publisher. It seems probable that technological and economic trends will make self-publishing more important and make the already vague boundaries among self-publishers, small publishers, and just plain *publishers* even fuzzier.

That's not new. There are tens of thousands of small publishers in the U.S. and around the world, and many of those small publishers started out as self-publishers. Micropublishing makes it easier but also allows micropublishers to avoid the overhead of small publishing.

Some commentators confuse self-publishing and micropublishing with vanity publishing. Vanity publishing is a very different economic model, although some contemporary firms have done a good job of making this boundary vague as well. Vanity publishers invite authors of books to submit manuscripts for review. A vanity press will typically applaud every manuscript submitted—and then let the author know about the “modest” costs to handle publication processes, costs that will run to thousands of dollars (or, with POD as the backend, possibly in the high hundreds of dollars).

Vanity publishers are imprints—but they're imprints that charge authors for editorial and production costs shouldered by regular publishers, making their profits up front rather than through book sales. In most cases, vanity publishers give lip service to editorial support and other publishing skills. In many cases, the author receives some number of bound books: The up-front costs may even be disguised as a minimum required order of books. In some cases, with actual books produced on demand, the author receives one copy and can purchase more. The book will be listed in *Books in Print*, and the publisher will probably register copyright.

That's where it stops. Unless the author pays even more, vanity publishers will not publicize the author's book in any meaningful way and are unlikely to succeed in distributing the book—especially since many vanity imprints are known by bookstores and libraries to have fairly crude publishing standards. Before beginning this project, I read a novel from my local library—by a local author, which probably overcame the imprint name. The text itself could have used a lot of editorial work but was no worse than some of what you'll see from trade publishers. But I noticed as I was reading that the book felt odd and realized why when I stepped back a bit from the sentences themselves.

Every paragraph in the book was indented. That's a minor point; some trade publishers leave things this way to save time. More to the point, although the text was justified, there was no hyphenation—which meant that many lines had enough space between words to interfere with reading.

As far as I could tell, the author's manuscript had been "typeset" by dumping it into a canned book template without further inspection. There were no widows (a single line stranded at the top of a page). "Orphan" in typography means both single lines stranded at the bottom of a page and short words or part of a word as the last line of a paragraph. The book had none of the former (stranded lines), but many of the latter (very short last lines of paragraphs). Note that Microsoft Word and other word processing programs control for widows and the first kind of orphan by default, but do nothing to prevent paragraphs from having very short last lines.

The author paid to have this work done. The author could have produced a more readable book herself and saved thousands of dollars by becoming a micropublisher, using the tools and advice in this book.

I believe there's a simple distinction between the service agencies that fulfill self-publishing and agencies that are, at least in part, vanity publishers. If an agency requires up-front fees for anything more than a single proof copy of a book, it is at least partly a vanity publisher. A proper fulfillment agency can and should offer lots of services for fees, but it should never require an author to use those services or pay for services the author neither needs nor wishes to use.

Walking the Talk: This Book and Micropublishing

I've micropublished several books since 2007, including a few that weren't expected to sell more than one or two copies (annual paperback versions of *Cites & Insights*, my free ejournal), one that has sold several hundred copies (*Balanced Libraries*), and several that have had very small sales. My wife has micropublished two volumes of family history for two branches of her family, and by the time this book appears, she may have produced new books based on handed-down stories from her extended family.

This book uses the tools of micropublishing, even though the trade paperback edition is traditionally published by Information Today, Inc. (ITI). It's traditionally published so it will reach as many libraries and community members as possible, and it has the editorial advantages of professional editing (and professional indexing)—but I prepared the layout and the template (with advice from the professionals at ITI). Apart from the cover, Microsoft Office 2010 on Windows 7 is the only software used to create this book. Specifically:

- I created the book template `bk6pv.dotx` (Book, 6" x 9", Palatino and Verdana) using Word 2010. That book template is available for downloading; see details in Chapter 4.
- I used Word 2010 for all writing, editing, and layout. I used Microsoft Excel 2010 to keep track of chapters during the writing and revision, but I could have done that with a table in Word.
- While ITI professionals provided line editing and copyediting suggestions as well as proofreading, I made all actual changes, and did copyfitting and page balancing in Word.
- The index was prepared by ITI, then sent to me as a Word document, which I imported into the book document.
- The PDF version was created using Office 2010's "Save as PDF" function, with the PDF/A option checked (see Chapter 9). (For efficiency reasons, a visually identical but smaller PDF was created using Adobe Acrobat 9.)

ITI prepared the cover. For previous micropublished books, I've generated covers using Paint.NET (or, in some cases, old versions of Corel PhotoPaint) to trim and modify existing photographs and overlay cover and spine type. For one book—used as an example in Chapter 10—I created the cover using nothing but Lulu's built-in tools.

A Few Key Terms

A few terms will be used frequently in portions of this book. They're also in the glossary.

Pica: One of two key measures of type size and spacing used throughout this book. In modern publishing, a pica is one-sixth of an inch—there are six picas to an inch. A 6" x 9" book (like this one) is

also 36 picas wide and 54 picas tall. Most overall measurements and spacing measurements are in picas.

Point: The key measurement for type itself. There are 12 points to a pica or 72 points to an inch. Points are also used for smaller space measurements. For example, the body type for this book is 10 point Palatino Linotype set with 3 point leading (extra space between lines), sometimes stated as “10 on 13” or “10 over 13.”

Microsoft Word and Microsoft Office: This book was prepared using Word 2010, but I generally refer to Word and Office rather than specific versions. As noted in Chapter 3, other than full PDF generation, earlier versions of Word should be able to do everything discussed in this book.

The Rest of This Book

I wrote this book for librarians and for authors. Librarians need to think about this chapter and Chapter 13 (particularly academic librarians). Every author should at least skim through Chapters 2–12. Most authors will want to spend extra time with Chapters 4 through 6 as they’re working on their books, and ITI and I have agreed to allow Chapters 4 through 6 to be photocopied (on a limited basis) as an allowed use. (See the copyright page for details.)

While the rest of the book isn’t divided into formal sections, there are four informal sections, as follows.

Chapters 1–3: Micropublishing Background

This chapter is just the beginning of a thorough background discussion of micropublishing.

Chapter 2 offers a quick introduction to the steps and processes involved in creating a book and shows how micropublishing affects each step. It’s useful to consider how much extra effort (beyond writing) micropublishing may involve and where important processes may fall by the wayside if you don’t pay attention.

Chapter 3 discusses this book’s approach to micropublishing—a low-cost/no-cost approach using software you and your community members probably already own. Where additional software may be required, Chapter 3 includes low-cost options. Chapter 3 also discusses the two

primary no-cost micropublishing service providers, Lulu and CreateSpace—what they do, how they do it, and what they don't do.

Chapters 4–6: Layout and Typography— The Heart of Micropublishing

These chapters are aimed directly at authors and editors—those actually doing micropublishing. Chapter 4 discusses Word templates and the `bk6pv.dotx` and `bk6pvex.dotx` templates created to support this book and available for your use. I show why you should always use Word styles rather than tabs and spaces for headings and other formatting, and how to modify the existing template to change the look of your book.

Chapter 5 discusses layout decisions and includes examples of typefaces you might consider and other layout options. Chapter 5 looks a little different, as it is heavily composed of actual samples of options discussed—including some options you'll want to avoid and why.

Chapter 6 tells you specifically what you need to do to improve the look and readability of your book from so-so to top notch: a few techniques to get professional results without paying for new software or steep learning curves. You'll want to review this chapter once or twice as you finish writing and editing your book and get closer to actual publication.

Chapters 7–10: Special Topics in Micropublishing

Once you write a book-length manuscript and follow the steps in Chapters 4–6, you'll have the body of your book ready to go—but there's more to a book than just the body.

Chapter 7 discusses the stuff that comes before and after the body—front matter and back matter.

Chapter 8 considers choices for creating a cover for your book and what you need to know in order to do it entirely on your own. It also deals with extras and outsourcing: Whether you need an ISBN, what you should do about copyright, what you can pay to have done, and sample prices for outsourcing.

Chapter 9 is, for most authors, the final stage of publication: making sure your PDF is right and dealing with Lulu or CreateSpace.

Chapter 9 also discusses special cases for PDF, cases where you'll need or want more than the built-in PDF support in Office.

Chapter 10 deals with books other than perfect-bound paperbacks consisting of text, monochrome graphs, and line drawings. You can't include a few pages of glossy photographs in a regular micropublished book. You can't even include a multicolor graph. This chapter discusses special considerations for photographs and options for color. Depending on your supplier, you can also produce hardcover books and, in some cases, use special bindings; Chapter 10 discusses those options and also offers quick notes on ebooks.

Chapters 11–13: Now That Your Book Is Complete

You have your first copy. It looks great! You've made the book available for purchase by others (unless this is a truly private micropublished book). Now what?

Chapter 11 provides notes and resources for the most essential step if you hope for substantial sales: publicity and marketing. This chapter also considers options for a micropublication that turns out to be more successful than anticipated.

Chapter 12, primarily intended for academic librarians, considers the special case of journals published online and how you can serve the typically small number of authors, readers, and librarians who want proper print copies, especially shelf copies of each full volume.

Chapter 13 offers a few concluding notes, including comments on why publishers still matter.

Finally, a glossary provides definitions for key terms used in the book, and a brief bibliography notes sources consulted while writing this book and additional sources that you may find useful.

First Have Something to Say

The primary title for my first professionally published book of the 21st century is *First Have Something to Say: Writing for the Library Profession*, published by ALA Editions in 2003.

It's also the key piece of advice for any would-be micropublisher. *First have something to say*: an idea that you can turn into a worthwhile

book. That book may be you working alone; it may be a collection from a group.

I can't help you write your book. There are many places to go for advice on how to write and how to improve your writing; there's even a little advice in the book I just cited.

Before you start putting your words into chapters on your computer, read Chapter 4 or at least take this piece of early advice: Use Word's styles for your headings and other aspects of layout—don't simulate styles by changing the typeface, size, alignment, and spacing manually. Using styles will save you time down the road, as you won't have to undo manual changes in order to ensure a consistent overall look.

Once you're sure you have something worth publishing, use the rest of this book to help you make the best book you possibly can. You don't need to spend money to do that; you do need to spend time and pay attention. The results are worth it.

You have something to say. Micropublishing can help you say it as effectively and economically as possible.