

Marilyn Ross on Everything E-Books

Contributed by
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Marilyn Ross is hooked in and she can hook you up, especially if you are one of the daring self-publishing adventurers. With an impressive web of sites and books, the affable Ross leaves no stone unturned when it comes to marketing your book via the internet. In a phone interview we focused on the emerging e-book phenom.

E-Books are Hot!

E-book n. A computer file that is formatted to look like a regular book. They are viewed on computers, or on various handheld readers. The antiquated person might print it out.

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Though e-book technology became available in the late 90's it was clunky and there wasn't much content available, Ross considers that it was more of a fad at that time. The popularity has increased dramatically since 2004. Ross quoted a statistic from the International Digital Publishing Forum (IDPF), "Figures from 2005 show a 23% increase in e-book sales over 2004 and then in January of 2006 the sales jumped over 50% from the previous period." This is largely due to easier to read handhelds combined with a new ink process (which allows handhelds to pick up the text more clearly), making the read easier on the eyes. Ross sees this rejuvenated viability as a "reading revolution"--she also maintains that it is the raised-on-screens younger generation that has mostly jumped on board at this time, and "travelers love it, too." Ross says the biggest fiction sellers are science fiction, romance and erotica--it's no surprise that in the non-fiction category, self-help, educational and business books do best.

"Publishers Weekly ran a story in May with the title, The Digital Future is Now... so here we've got the trade journal of the publishing industry saying that."

One could make a good case for the art of a book and the pleasure one feels in turning pages flying out the window with the rise in popularity of the e-book. But, Ross is right to point that we "live in a world of instant gratification" and she's got a convincing list of pros.

- E-books are more affordable—most costing between \$4.95 and \$12.95.
- You can order your book standing on your head, in your underwear, in Japan while eating pizza at 2:00 am and receive it moments later.
- Authors can more easily reach an International audience.
- Companion pieces to books can be updated frequently. All manner of collateral material can be developed, much like the extras section on a DVD.

- Readers in search of informational books can simply purchase the chapters that are pertinent to their needs rather than the whole book.
- Authors can regain rights to their out-of-print books and bring them back from the dead.
- Self-publishers can make a profit from the very FIRST book they sell.
- Less energy and resources are consumed. No fuel or paper to make the book, deliver the book to the warehouse, and eventually to the store or consumer,
- None of those nasty returns to the publisher.
- Your niche market book can more easily find its niche market crowd.
- E-books can be used for review copies, not galley's, review copies. (And they won't end up on amazon as a used copy)

This list is only to wet your appetite... read on. To say the least Ross is uber excited about this technology. "You can generate passive income," says Ross, "I see it as a retirement strategy." In the electronic world your book can be available for a very long time. "Your book may even sell better in five years as more people learn about this technology." Ross used a free resource (www.dpppress.com) to make her e-book, *Shameless Marketing for Brazen Hussies*, available. Here, the author receives between 30% and 60% of the price depending on different factors. Because it is free and the return is so great Ross says it makes e-books an extremely affordable, profitable viable way to get your materials in the hands of the public.

It is the job of a marketer to be ahead of the curve. Ross had the foresight to include an electronic rights clause in her book contracts before the current boom, "Back in 2002 when I negotiated with Writers Digest S & W for a new edition for *The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing* I changed the verbiage in the rights section to read that if they had not exercised the electronic rights within 18 months they reverted to me. They didn't, I have." Ross recommends that authors who have backlist books look and see what their contracts say about electronic rights, "they may be able to get them back, or they may not have been addressed in the contract in the first place." The time is nigh to get on board this trend. "Today they will typically want them, but you still might be able to include something, such as such I just explained, that if they don't take advantage of them within a certain time limit to go ahead and exercise them yourself." As a last bit of contractual advice Ross warns against signing any kind of exclusive e-book contract. "You should be able to sell your e-book on all kinds of sites!"

But, as any traditionally published or self-published writer will tell you, writing your book is likely the easiest part—then you have to get the word out. The internet makes marketing and publicizing your e-book a low to no overhead experience according to Ross. "Let's say you did a book on parenting, there are tons of parenting sites, you can do a whole marketing campaign to those people, and it really doesn't take any money."

Even though any Miss or Mister can put their book out into the ether Ross encourages e-book potentials to have their manuscripts professionally edited, provide a great cover (because, YES, they are still important even in an e-book) and have great promotional materials just as you would with a paper book. Oh, and e-books, as with audio books etc. do have an individual ISBN number. You can include blurbs, shiny author photos and whatever else you want along with your e-book.

When Ross put out *Shameless Marketing for Brazen Hussies* as an e-book, she put it out just as the paperback was, but she updated the links. "These links are particularly handy in an e-book because they are "hot links" meaning that "you can read along and then click on the link and it takes you right to the site—it saves you a great deal of time!"

"You can repurpose your material a lot of the time as a document of some other sort. For instance, if you have a non-fiction book you can sell chapters or excerpts. I'm looking at doing this for my self-publishing guide. There will be one price for the whole book and a lesser price for single chapters. So if they want three chapters it will be less than the whole book and they can get what is strictly relevant to them. Dividing the book up into chapters is really a good way to

provide new products. You could also create a booklet or a special report or write a white paper. You can offer your information in serial form. "

White Paper, n. a fairly sophisticated evaluation of a given subject.

One feeds the other. When people buy stories or excerpts electronically they will buy books by the same author as well. Think about it like downloading a single by a band, liking what you hear, and the buying the CD.

The possibilities are great when it comes to the different ways you can "slice and dice" your book or concept. "You can create companion products: tip sheets—Ten Reasons Not to do This or, 14 Ways to Succeed. You can do instant updates for non-fiction books." You can practically see Ross working out her cheerleading routine. "Or, the other thing you might do is create an interim report, like every quarter you do this kind of as a subscription thing and every quarter you give them an update electronically that updates the original product. You don't even have to have a book, you could do this with articles, special reports or white papers!"

Ross is busy completing the companion piece to the 4th edition of *The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing*. She says it will include up-to-the-minute links and contact information as well as current procedures for all relevant information. It will cross-reference to the pages in her paper book. "Anybody who buys the paper book can have easy access to very up to date links, the newest forms and procedures and whatnot." Once again, one is feeding the other.

You can reach Marliyn @ marilyn@marilynross.com or www.selfpublishingresources.com.

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