



A huge and growing number of U3A members now want to self-publish their own books - biographies, autobiographies, memoirs, fiction, poetry and everything between. Self-publishing is very different from what it used to be. No longer the poor relation of “proper” commercial publishing, it’s increasingly how authors – established ones as well as novice ones – will get their work before the public, or before that part of the public they want to reach. And that is particularly true of e-publishing – of publishing books exclusively for Kindle and other electronic reading devices. It is now possible to publish a book relatively cheaply without having any printed copies at all. And a very few self-published e-books have been significant commercial successes.

But of course not every self-published book will achieve its objectives, whatever they are. So the U3A has set up a self-publishing service for members, to help them produce properly edited and designed work which reaches the people they want it to reach, and to give them the best chance of getting back the money they invest in it.

It’s important to understand what this is NOT. U3A is NOT publishing your book. And it is NOT offering to advise on seeking a commercial publisher – for that you need to go to an agent. If an author has decided to go down the self-publishing route, we will find you established professionals whose fees and expertise we have vetted, and we will run seminars to equip you with the marketing expertise to sell your work.

Some people can handle some parts of the process themselves – the editing, or making their book available to Kindles, or marketing. So the U3A is to adopt a pick and mix approach. Authors can buy in only those services they actually need. Four skills will be on offer:

1. An experienced book editor to take an overall look at a book and suggest how it might fare in the market, and what structural changes would help. Cost will vary according to the size of the book but will normally be between £50 and £200.
2. A copy editor. All books should be copy edited, to give them a consistent style and eliminate mistakes. Costs will vary according to length and the state of the manuscript, but a 100,000 word book could cost in the region of £500.
3. Formatting a book for the Kindles, and setting up an Amazon account so the author can sell the book. Again costs will vary but reckon on spending about £100.
4. Print-buying, for those who want to produce a hard copy edition.
5. Marketing. The authors can be their own best salespeople, so U3A will offer day-long seminars on marketing self-published books. The first will we hope be in March, and details will be sent out as soon as possible.

Authors should contact Francis Beckett, saying what help is required, and he will refer them to the relevant professionals, with whom the U3A has negotiated a scale of fees for members.