

Publishing Timeline and Tasks: *Swimming Up the Sun*

1986 -

Gave Toastmasters speech on my adoption search

1992 -

Began writing book in earnest (also, had a baby)

1997 -

Completed manuscript, got an agent through asking other writers. Agent suggested I rewrite the first 30 pages, tell more about my background. It was really hard but I did it, took a year to complete

1998-1999

Agent sent manuscript to 40 well known publishers. Lots of nibbles and nice word, a few bites, no sales. Eventually, agent asked me if I had another book he could sell.... Put manuscript in the drawer and wrote more plays

2000 – 2005

Many developments in my adoption search. I wrote new chapters; eventually, rewrote the beginning, discarding the previous rewrite. Decided to publish it myself

2005-2007

Decided I'd try again to find another agent (mine had retired) and publisher before publishing it myself. After carefully selecting and approaching 59 agents and 16 independent publishers, lots of nibbles and nice word, a few bites, no sales. I was a fork with three roads:

- 1) Continue doing what I was doing, which wasn't working
- 2) Give up and put the manuscript back in the drawer
- 3) Publish it myself

2007 -

Educated myself about publishing business. Two methods:

- 1) Subsidized press: small and big houses such as iUniverse and AuthorHouse
- 2) Become a small publisher who manages the process herself

2008 -

Apippa Publishing Company published *Swimming Up the Sun: A Memoir of Adoption*

Publishing Tasks

- Create business plan (enough to get going, identify customers, have a goal)
- Name and register publishing business in State of Maryland
- Register with Bowker, purchase bundle of 10 ISBN numbers
- Register copyright with Library of Congress
- Contract with book designer for cover and text
 - Call local university presses
 - Ask for referrals and/or names of their best designers (they all freelance)
 - I used NaylorDesign.com (Debra Naylor – just does book covers and book designs)
- Hire professional editor to edit manuscript
- Prepare manuscript (loads of revisions)
- Create website
- Choose an easy to remember URL (use your name if you can and keep the website your whole life)
 - Find a friend who'll help you design it
 - Think about what tasks you can offer your customers on your website
 - Look at lots of writers' websites. Alison has lots of great features
- Get manuscript typeset (cover designer will have referrals)
- Print promotional materials: bookmarks, postcards, business cards, flyers
- Set up launch party, readings, events
- Contact press
- Send galley to professional reviewers such as *Booklist* and *Publishers Weekly*
- Market your brains out! Books don't sell themselves.
 - AAC Conference
 - Libraries
 - Bookstores (supply own books)
 - Amazon.com, Search Inside this Book, Kindle
 - Online blogs, listservs, websites
 - Radio and TV interviews
 - Local and national newspapers and magazines
 - Arts festivals
 - Book festivals, etc.

Publishing Costs ~ \$5,200

\$2,800	Cover and Book Designer
\$ 0	Editing
\$ 300	Bowker – ISBNs
\$ 300	Website – domain URLs and hosting
\$ 0	Website design
\$ 100	Lightning Source Printer set-up
\$ 100	Bookmarks
\$ 100	Postcards and business cards
\$ 300	Table runner
\$ 200	Postage
\$1,000	AAC conference (registration, hotel, airfare)

Printing Information

\$15.00 Retail book price

\$11.00	Net profit (hand sales)
\$15.00	Retail book price
-\$ 4.00	Printing cost

\$ 5.00	Net profit (Amazon.com and bookstores)
\$ 9.00	40% wholesale discount sales price
-\$ 4.00	Printing cost

Recommended Vendors

Printer: LightingSource.com
Book Designer: NaylorDesign.com (Debra Naylor)

Promo Materials

Bookmarks: PrintRunner.com
Postcards: VistaPrint.com
Business cards: VistaPrint.com
Table Runner: PCNameTag.com
Life Coach: CoganCoaching.com (Jeanine Cogan)
Domain Name
Search: GoDaddy.com

Lessons Learned

Writing

- Memoirs/books may not be well received by some family members. Nothing is enough to prepare them for the enormity of a published book. People may feel exposed; be empathetic. They didn't ask to be "outed". Prayer and patience, one hopes, will restore good relations.
- Publish anyway.
- Have a support network; adoption challenges never end. Writing and publishing are hard work.
- Be patient. It takes time to write a book and time to publish it. Lots of revising—it's worth it to make the manuscript as fabulous as possible. Flannery O'Connor said that reviewing pre-publication drafts was "about as much fun as chewing on a horse blanket."

Self-Publishing

- Feels great, it's very empowering to be a business person.
- Publish the book 3-4 months before the official publication date (for Amazon, bookstores, etc.). Stamp "Printer's Galleys" on the title page and send to professional reviewers. This may change but they still follow the traditional publishing schedule that requires *months* to "typeset" a book after the manuscript is ready. With print-on-demand, it takes about a week.
- Give the book the latest possible copyright date so it's considered "new" for as long as possible.
- Develop a web strategy: create video promos about the book. Use social networking. Write a blog and offer interesting resources, such as the first three chapters of the book free in print (PDF) and audio files. Try and figure out what pays in terms of time invested. It's not clear to me what does.
- Take breaks in promoting the book. As publisher, you control the schedule. Stay fresh for the long haul. *Your* book is not going out of print!
- Think movie and TV options. Cable TV channels, such as LifeTime, seem to be receptive to adoption stories.
- Encourage book groups to read your book; participate in person or by phone in their discussions. You won't necessarily sell more books right away (they've already bought your book) but you'll get great word-of-mouth publicity.
- Giving the distributor a 40% discount means that the bookstore only gets a 20% discount, and that may not be worth it to them to order your book.
- Carefully gauge the return on investment of book festivals and arts festivals. Don't "pay to play" more than a nominal fee.
- Almost all book competitions are scams to take your money as a writer or self-publisher (especially *Writer's Market*). Reputable competitions don't require you to pay more than a nominal entrance fee, if that.
- Create your own review lists and pull quotes from readers' praise and comments.
- Encourage readers to write Amazon.com and Goodreads.com reviews; they sell books.
- Ask other adoption authors and adoption leaders to read your book and write a short comment of praise. Make it easy for them by drafting it yourself and having them put their

own spin on the language.

- Network in the adoption reform community and attend the AAC conference. People in our constellation are generous and supportive.
- If you can get an agent and/or traditional publisher and a decent publishing contract, take it. You'll potentially make money sooner and not have to put up the printing funding yourself.
- When you're querying agents and publishers, don't forget to adapt the letter and email query all your friends. You never know whom someone knows in the publishing business.
- Use email as much as possible; you'll save on postage.
- Always check an agent's or publisher's website; it may list more up-to-date information and will tell you a lot about their business.
- When soliciting agents and publishers, give them a reasonable date by which they must respond, no matter how long they claim to need. How long does it take to read a three-paragraph email and decide if you want to know more? One minute. How long does it take to reply? One to four minutes. Don't give them more than a month to do a task that takes five minutes. Send a reminder right before the deadline; if they don't respond by the due date, take them off the list and move on. They don't deserve to represent you or publish your book.
- A life coach is a good investment.
- Create a web presence and keep building on it as you learn. It's a priceless, flexible resource for selling and promoting books and ideas. Nudge yourself to experiment with new media and technology; ask for help (lots of young people are happy to assist); do what you *can*, not what you *can't*.
- Choose a website domain name carefully. Get your name if you can (e.g., nicolejburton.com), and use it for the rest of your life and all your books and projects. Purchase other domain names, such as your book name, that resolve to the same website. I purchased 2-year contracts for the domain name in case the company goes out of business.

Recommended Books and Websites

New Media

Shel Holtz, blog.holtz.com

Steve Crescenzo, www.crescenzocomm.com

Marketing

SethGodin.com, especially

Advice for Authors I & II:

sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2006/08/advice_for_auth.html

sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2005/07/advice_for_auth.html

Self-Publishing

Self-Publishing 2.0, www.fonerbooks.com/cornered.htm (Morris Rosenthal)

WriterBeware.com

Publishing Books

Print-on-Demand Book Publishing, Morris Rosenthal

The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing, Tom & Marilyn Ross

How to Get Happily Published, Judith Appelbaum

Jeff Herman's Guide to Book Publishers and Agents