Arriba talk 2014-04-30

Ebook publishing for beginners

1. Write your book! Get all the text down, ideally in Word format (.doc).
2. Get as many blunt, honest, pedantic people as you can to look over your text for factual and grammatical errors. This really pays off later on! Make sure everything that should be capitalised is, and that when you open speech marks or brackets you also close them. Make sure all sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop, especially sentences which contain speech or brackets.
3. Make sure none of your text is libellous, and that you have permission to use anything that is Trademark or Copyright (e.g. a crochet pattern for a minion). Avoid using things that require permission as this takes time and can cost money. If you're using someone else's images, make sure you have permission (ie buy "stock images" or royalty free images).
4. Choose your images and cover design. The cover design is extremely important, as it's the "billboard" for your book online. Consider whether the image alone (without text or author name) gives readers the right impression of what your book is about. Images should be JPEG or PNG files (ending .jpg or .png), and the cover will need to be at least 1400 pixels wide, and ideally 1600 * 2400 pixels. To find the dimensions of a jpg, hover your mouse over the file icon. If necessary, resize by opening the image in Paint, but not if you need to more than double the size, or it'll get blurry.

Formatting for ebooks

1. BACK UP YOUR WORK! This is vital, "save as" something like 2014-05-01 backup book file so you know whatever happens your book is safe. Ideally save this file to external storage like a memory stick or cloud storage in case your computer blows up etc.
2. Turn on Word's "show/hide" feature. It's on the toolbar and looks like a backwards P (it's called a pilcrow) ¶. Turning this on will show you all the formatting marks in the documents so you can remove everything unnecessary, such as spaces at the end of lines, tabs, rogue spaces in the text etc.
3. This is the boring bit, go through the text systematically, deleting all the tab indents, unnecessary spaces etc. Do this a few times, as a few always make it through the first pass!
4. Ebooks are designed to display on any size or shape of screen, so the text needs to make sense whether it's viewed on a phone or an ereader, landscape or portrait orientation, and at a range of font sizes. The term for this is "reflowable text". Ebooks also have no page numbers, readers use hyperlinks in the text to navigate.
5. All text needs to be centered or left justified, "normal" paragraph style. Font size should be 11,12 or max 14pt. Never put more than 4 returns in a row because this creates blank ebook pages.
6. Images within the text should be less than 500 pixels wide, compressed to 96dpi and "in line with text", avoid images containing text.
7. Create a linked table of contents by adding bookmarks and hyperlinks via word's "insert" tab. Remove any rogue bookmarks within the document (they usually show up as "hidden bookmarks" with filenames made of numbers). Hyperlink all chapter titles to the beginning of the contents page, call that bookmark ref_TOC so ebook software can find it easily.

Alternatively, if you start each chapter heading with the word "chapter" the software will create a table of contents for you. Test all your hyperlinks by clicking them to check they point where they're supposed to.

Front matter, "about the author"

1. The front page of the ebook needs to have, at minimum:
   Book title
   Author's name
   "published by" (then just your name again if you self-publish)
   Edition (eg. KDP edition or Smashwords edition)
   Copyright 2014 Author's name

   Ideally you should have a license statement reminding people not to give away, re-sell or copy the book.
2. At the end of the book text, add four "#" to denote the end, then have a section "about the author" so people can find out more about what you're up to. Here you can add links to your websites, social media, and other books. Remember to add the links as hyperlinks and use the full web address including the http:// bit. Email address links need to be prefixed by mailto:

Publishing your book online

Different ebook publishers have different requirements, make sure you read through their style guides (free to download) before publishing.

Smashwords and KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing) are the main ebook publishers.

Smashwords distribute to Barnes & Noble, iBookstore, Kobo, Scribd etc.

KDP sell through Amazon. You can sell through both, but don't choose the "KDP Select" option as then you can't sell through anyone else.

Keep the cover image file and main book file separate, you'll upload them separately. The formats you need are:

For Smashwords - .doc (Word 97-2003 document)

For KDP - .htm (Web Page, Filtered)

Cover image needs to be JPEG for both.

Once you browse for and upload the file, it'll take up to a day for it to be available to buy.

You should set up an author profile with both as a place to direct people from your media channels.

Payments

Both KDP and Smashwords work on a commission basis. You won't need to pay anything upfront but they'll take a percentage of each book sold plus a transaction fee. Authors typically end up with 50-70% of the cover price, dependent on a number of factors. KDP pay direct to a bank account each month, and Smashwords pay via Paypal each quarter.

You'll need to fill in a form to avoid paying US tax on sales, but it's only a page and you can fill it in online or over the phone. You'll need to get a number called an EIN, an American social security number, but that only takes a 5-minute call to the US. I can talk you through the process when the time comes.

That's it! Your book published. Then the hard work begins, as you try to get your book noticed by millions of potential customers among thousands of competing books. When your book is ready for formatting or publishing, I can do that for you, at a rate of £30 an hour (max £90 per book), or talk you through the process in person, via email, webchat, or over the phone for £20 an hour (max £70 per book).

To begin this process, contact me at www.shortstorylady.co.uk/contact

Email at theshortstorylady@gmail.com

Visit my author page at Goodreads: https://www.goodreads.com/ShortStoryLady

Or my Amazon author page: http://www.amazon.co.uk/-/e/B00DRAWFDU

Or my Smashwords author page: http://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/shortstorylady