



The Road to Indie Publishing: 101 Technical Milestones

by Carol Bloom Levin

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Most of my author visits cater to the Kid-Lit crowd. We have fun reading *Haggadah Regatta* on a matzah raft with my puppet sidekick. I vary our programs for the audience, adjusting for age and interests. This winter I tell a personal story about *Haggadah Regatta* to an older audience.

I have a study group for adult learners at

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at U-M. My focus is the technical and business skills that I developed while bringing my picture book to life.

“The Road to Indie Publishing” traces my journey as an author and illustrator. The class gleans the highlights of self publishing, starting with my initial inspiration. What can the group learn in a two-hour session? How a children’s non-fiction Haggadah evolves; how sketches and watercolors become digital art; how a book layout takes shape; how books are printed and bound. On the business side, the class learns why I formed an LLC. I share a freaky history about my first book distributor. We explore tips for the internet and networking. Every author’s journey through pre and post-publication will differ. Each book presents new skillsets to acquire.

My do-it-yourself account reveals the actions I took. My handout, “Indie Publishing: 101 Technical Milestones” identifies eleven critical areas. This list serves as a springboard for discussion: Creating the Book - Printing Options - Distribution & Fulfillment - Selling Tools - Business Needs - Kid-Lit Network - Website - Book Trailer - Social Media - Email - Author Events.

In the first hour, the class examines the juxtaposition between text and image, the interaction between writing and illustrating. We compare original art with final illustrations. We analyze layout and design. After the break, we get down to business, exploring marketing, branding and author events. The class will learn the challenges, disappointments and reasons why I persevered. Participants will have time to ask questions about my process.

I hope to embolden pre-published authors and illustrators. Go ahead and consider indie publishing. Step into the journey. Grow with the experience.

Carol Bloom Levin is the author and illustrator of *Haggadah Regatta* (January 2019). Her first picture book, *A Rosh Hashanah Walk*, was published by Kar-Ben Publications in 1987. Learn more: www.carollevin.us. - Contact: carol.levin@gmail.com

Indie Publishing: 101 Technical Milestones

Carol Levin, Author & Illustrator of HAGGADAH REGATTA, a family Haggadah for Passover

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Create the Book

1. Write, edit & revise
2. Make storyboard
3. Make book dummy using text boxes
4. Query agents & publishers
5. Sketch, paint, photograph, scan & digitize illustrations
6. Layout pages
7. Confer with art director at Thomson-Shore press
8. Format PDF to printer specs
9. Create computer file system
10. File art in portfolios

Printing Options

11. Select paper, binding, cover, gatefold & print run
12. Consider print-on-demand, eBook & audio book
13. Request pull sheet
14. Review & approve proof

Distribution & Fulfillment

15. Consider selling through an Amazon business account
16. Sell on website
17. Consign to book sellers
18. Comp books to influencers
19. Engage Seattle Books
20. Options post-bankruptcy
21. Engage Itasca Books
22. Send books in double-wall cartons with UPS or Fedex

Selling Tools

23. Research SEO - Search Engine Optimization
24. Use keywords in title, title tag & meta description
25. Study Amazon listings of comparable books
26. Revise book handle & bio
27. Coordinate branding image
28. Create AuthorCentral page
29. Create Goodreads page
30. Create bookmarks
31. Create event poster
32. Get Square Reader

Business

33. Create LLC
34. Create logo
35. Register business with state
36. Open Bank Account
37. Keep financial records
38. Collect & pay sales tax
39. File tax return
40. File annual report with state
41. Apply to Bowker for ISBN
42. Get Library of Congress number

Kidlit Network

43. Join SCBWI
44. Join a writing group
45. Attend conferences & workshops
46. Get an agent critique
47. Send ms to agents
48. Submit review copies long before book launch
49. Follow blogs & podcasts
50. Write & submit blog articles
51. Attend author events
52. Notify news media
53. Send book to reviewers

Website

54. Consult web designer
55. Add link to pre-order book
56. Update pages, adding...
57. Photos
58. Reviews
59. Author Event calendar
60. Author articles
61. Author visit info PDF
62. Activity projects PDF
63. Teacher guide PDF
64. Hebrew text insert PDF

Book Trailer

65. Attend trailer workshop
66. Watch YouTube trailers
67. Learn Quicktime Player with techie grandson
68. Edit script, music & images
69. Put trailer link on email, website & social media

Social Media

70. Limit number of platforms
71. Master Instagram, Pinterest & Facebook
72. Consider separate accounts for author & personal
73. Read how-to guidebooks
74. Watch YouTube tutorials
75. Work with mentor
76. Post & repost weekly
77. Format Canva posts
78. Keep a favorite-tags list
79. Comment with hashtags & your @handle
80. Post images
81. Grow friends & followers

Email

82. Update address book
83. Send eBlasts about events & reply to all who respond
84. Ask friends to review book on Amazon & Goodreads
85. Create an email signature in settings to link website, media, blog & trailer

Author Events

86. Make a potential venue list
87. Schedule book signings
88. Schedule book fairs
89. Clarify terms and logistics
90. Vary event to suit audience
91. Create puppet, matzah raft, activity cards, coloring pages
92. Create author visit flyer
93. Create Book Order Form
94. Provide school with letter for parents
95. Get WiFi password for Square Reader connection
96. Create list of buyers
97. Take photos at events
98. Make video in prep for presentation
99. Display book on book stand
100. Elicit feedback
101. Use facilitation techniques