How to Write, Polish, Produce, and Publish Your Novel

Chapter 1: Introduction

I guess I must be crazy, taking on such a task. It will be a bit of a Herculean effort. There will be no fee, no charges to you. No doubt you will immediately have questions. And no doubt this will prove to be a long haul. But so what - here goes.

Who am I to promise such a thing?

Well I have published some twenty books, roughly half of them fiction and half of them non-fiction, and achieved bestseller status in both fiction and non-fiction. I am a writer of the year for the *New York Times Book Review* and also taken the front page review for the *New York Times*, The *Washington Post*, the *Kirkus starred review*, and had many high-ranking reviews throughout the English-speaking, and foreign-speaking, world.

I have also run a very successful small press publishers, where I have managed to publish, and market, bestsellers.

It's going to be hard work but a very interesting exercise. It will only work if you, my visitors, contribute your views, ideas, plans, hopes, and questions. I really want this to be intensely interactive. Say what you want, nobody will criticize you. That's the only way it is going to work.

There will have to be ground rules. I cannot read your novel typescripts. I simply do not have the time. But I might read an example page and give you advice. I shall use the example of the four book bestselling epic fantasy I have just published, The Three Powers, as an example to demonstrate techniques and explain characterization. I shall also explain some of the problems I personally encountered and how I overcame them.

So get those itchy fingers, and creative minds, honed and ready. Let's get the show on the road.

We'll start with how to write . . .

I'm assuming we're talking about a book, whether a novel or non-fiction. And I shall make my first relevant comment right at this starting point. If you are new to writing you will find it easier to get a publisher to take on a non-fiction than a work of fiction.

Why?

Because it is easier to sell a work of non-fiction by a new author than most works of fiction. The explanation is very simple. People are more inclined to buy a work of non-fiction if the subject matter interests them or may prove useful to them, even if they've never heard of the author, than they are to picking up a work of fiction by an author they have never read before. This latter fact is a major hurdle for a publisher, whether mainstream or self-publishing author, with marketing a first novel.

So my tip is that you need to take this on board at the very beginning - even before you sit down to begin to write that first novel.

What can you do about it?

Choose your category of novel with great care. Certain categories are easier for a new writer to engage with and, ultimately, to market. You will already know this. Categories such as mystery, thriller, fantasy, romance are all popular with a lot of readers. Thus if you choose to write in such a category, you're giving yourself a better chance of success later on.

If you are inclined towards contemporary novels, you are entering one of the most difficult of all categories, so don't be surprised if you experience difficulties with initial engagement with publishers and readers. That doesn't mean you should desist. Just that you should know from the very beginning what you are taking on.

The next tip is also fairly obvious. Write in a category you yourself like to read. Working in a familiar category has the advantage that you are already familiar with what readers of that category tend to like and to buy.

The next tip is not so obvious. Spend some time thinking about your plot, and characterization, before ever you start to write. See if you can put a new spin on plot and character - so your book, while fitting the category, will also thrill the reader with the novelty of plot and characterization. Only somebody who has already read widely in the category will know what is likely to be startlingly and attractively novel in that same category.

A final tip in this Chapter - and a vital one. Do not rush the writing. Most importantly of all, do not rush to present the finished book to a publisher. You will have spent a great deal of time writing your novel. Don't spoil your chances through impatience at the key stage of sending it in. Make sure you don't send your novel to a publisher until you are absolutely certain that it is as good as you can possibly make it.

To come . . .

What is the purpose of chapter construction? Why do most writer's first novels fail to engage a publisher? Why am I starting off with such very basic steps? Well - to answer the last of these important questions - if you fail to develop your novel with an understanding of these basic steps your novel will fail. That's why.
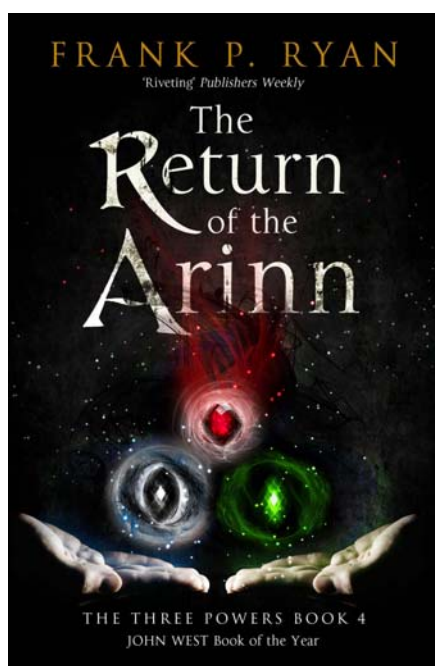
So you've reached the stage where you have a good idea where the story line of your novel is taking you. In particular, if you're like me, you know where it is going because you have a good idea of how it will end. I inevitably work towards that end all the time I am writing a novel. The characters have come alive. They have personalities, strengths, faults - always take care to give them weaknesses. It may well be that your readers will identify every bit as much with their weaknesses as they will with their strengths.

And now you have get to work on actual chapters. Some writers dislike the artificiality of chapters so much they have done away with them, leaving the narrative as one lengthy continuous stream of prose. In fact readers are most unlikely to read the prose in a single continuous effort. They will break it down into chunks that allow them to break off from reading from day to day. Thus chapters are a convenient way for the writer to have a say about when it is convenient to have a break in the narrative. They also allow the writer to switch points of view, usually by switching characters.

Conventional wisdom has it that you should not switch point of view in a continuous narrative. Switching point of view inside a chapter is always bit awkward and the separate points of view should be separated by clear line breaks.

Tip - when you begin that all-important first chapter. Look at its structure when it is first written. Have you eased in gradually, or have you started off with a bang? However you do it may vary with the type of novel you are writing. With a thriller it is permissible to start with a bang - sometimes literally so with a gunshot. A trick might, for example, have you start with such a dramatic moment. Then break in the same chapter (or move to the opening of the following chapter) and bring in a flashback that is more measured of what happened before the actual bang. It's all about achieving that important narrative hook early on. I shall talk a little more about narrative hooks later. But here we are talking about chapters and how you can make the most of what chapter structure has to offer.

Tip - ask yourself after you have written a chapter what this chapter offers in moving on the story line. A chapter that does nothing to move on the story line may be a serious fault in the narrative. If I concluded that a chapter was not contributing to the narrative, I would remove it entirely or rewrite it so that it did contribute. In revising and editing the fourth and final book of my epic fantasy, *The Return of the Arinn*, I ruthlessly expunged three whole chapters for this very

reason.

In the next chapter, I'll divert to the hangover feeling of rejection and how to deal with it. If you've already experienced it you'll find yourself in good company.

Chapter 2: Dealing With Rejection

Okay - so I'm now in the position of preparing to write a new stand-alone fantasy novel. What's been holding me up? Two things. I wasn't entirely happy with the planned characters and I wasn't quite sure of what would be the "mood" of the book. By the latter I mean, whether to write it dark, or light. The latter is really important. And the two reasons for delay are inter-related. The right characters will help set the mood - and the mood will demand the right characters. I also refuse, utterly, to compose a fantasy novel that has any less attributes than a high quality contemporary novel. In other words, I demand intelligence of my readers, as indeed I expect them to demand of me. So there will be no simple story line. No predictable character developments.

So I took myself off to the Canaries for ten days on my own. I stayed in a rambling place with four bedrooms, three bathrooms, and a heap of character. I made contact with an ornithologist to show me round the more secret places on the island. I returned with mood and characters now settled in my mind. Mood - light. Characters to suit. Melded two into one as part of the plan. Ready, steady, go - I've begun to write the chapters.

And now I shall explain what I am doing and how I am doing it, without giving any of the plot or characters away before they are ready for the world. This in spite of the fact that one or two of the characters from the epic fantasy are attempting to break out in a literary rebellion of their own. Hold on there, Gully Doughty. You cannot have your own Twitter feed. I know you're bored, but think about Penny . . .

Oh heck, I had better move on before I get myself involved in argument with my creative offspring . . .

Meanwhile, as they say, we have another pan of fishes to fry . . . Have you guys yet had to suffer the dog's breakfast of your aspiring novel (aaaggghhh, novels, plural?) suffering the put-down of rejection? Would you like me to offer a few words of balm and cheer for this altogether common misery?

The Hangover of Rejection

For many would-be writers, the very notion of their work being included in slush piles, picked at by dubious editors, can be an incitement to fury. But I now have the experience to know that the rejecting editors are not unfeeling. I've had to deal with a slush pile. You wouldn't believe how bad many of those failing scripts are. Think about the X-factor and those slightly weird or even totally crazy people who take part, imagining they are talented enough to win it. I'm afraid quite a few of the offerings within those slush piles would appear to come from the same sort of hopefuls. A commissioning editor will spot this equivalent within a few minutes of picking up an introductory letter and sample chapters. The quality of the writing will be very poor. There will be no flair and, very likely, many grammatical errors. The editor is unlikely to write a personal letter of rejection. He or she will have no hesitation in returning a "rejection slip".

More difficult are the submissions where the language, plot and characterization are all perfectly decent – even good. Unfortunately, the editor knows that "good" is not enough to sell a book by an unknown writer. It will fail to shine with reviewers who are bombarded with novels by established writers. From the commissioning editor point of view, that first novel must, for some reason or another, strike him or her as being "exceptional".

Okay, so let's shift our own point of view to the writer. Let us assume that you and I have a good working knowledge of the English language, and its grammar, and the brains to put an engaging story together. And yet, alas, we find ourselves on the receiving end of the rejection letters. So what's' really going on?

To some extent, it may reflect the difficulty of getting that first toe in the door. Let me give you two examples of this. If I recall correctly, *Lord of the Flies*, by Nobel Prize winning William Golding, was turned down 26 times. On the twenty-sixth submission, the dilapidated typescript, complete with editors' teacup stains on the cover, was about to be turned down again when the editor, who had dismissed it as a load of rubbish about kids on an island, asked another "reader" to take a look at it. The reader described it as brilliant. J. K. Rowling went through the same series of rejection from many publishers before an editor realized its potential. And then, when she wrote a new kind of novel, with the pseudonym Robert Galbraith, a rejecting editor

responded: "I regret that we have reluctantly come to the conclusion that we could not publish it with commercial success." The publisher then listed various tips, including that she "should take a writing class".

So you see that the vast majority of successful writers have had to endure rejection. Sometimes it derives from the fact that novels are very personal things and what would appear a work of genius to one editor might appear pedestrian to many others. But there is a second, and perhaps equally enlightening, reason. It was the reason I had my first three novels turned down – two of them only sent to a single agent and a third sent through all the rounds of likely publishers in London. Iain (M) Banks confessed that it also applied to him, when his fifth novel resulted in acceptance. In my case it was the fourth – but then, for both Iain and myself, we had the satisfaction of reworking at least one of those earlier rejects to be welcomed by the same publishing world that had earlier rejected them. Was this because we needed to get the toe in the door? No. Indeed Iain and I are in agreement on this. The truth is that we had both been on a learning curve.

So this is the first comfort and working tip: You need to learn the "craft" of writing.
Like many other arts and skills, writing has two interwoven elements to it: "the art" and "the craft". We are born with the art. It is this art that inspires the desire to write. And it probably does show in those early, failed novels. For example, if you have had some positive comments from the rejecting editor or agent, they probably spot the art in you but turn it down because the craft has not yet matured. But then, when the craft has matured – which it can only do with practice – you are in a position to rewrite those earlier failures.
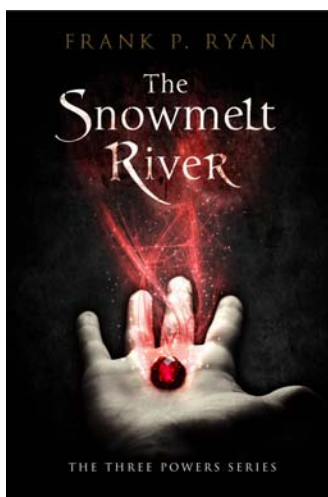
Chapter 3: The Narrative Hook

It never ceases to amaze me that other people will sit down and bother to read a book I have written from cover to cover. I suspect that many writers feel exactly the same as I do. It's kind of weird, but also a very satisfying feeling, that they will have the patience and interest to do this. But if you want to seduce your readers into reading your story, or novel, you must capture their interest right at the start. This cunning strategy is called the "narrative hook". And here's tip no 1 for this section. A narrative hook is just as important in a non-fiction book, or a short story, or a magazine, or on-line article.

One of the most famous of all narrative hooks is the lines from the novel, The Go-Between, by L.P. Hartley, which reads, "The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there." But there are very many different types of narrative hook. It could be constructed by the introduction of an interesting character, or place – or a controversial viewpoint seen through the eye or mind of a character. Indeed, if you are really clever and writing a novel rather than a story, it could comprise an entire, usually fairly short, opening chapter.

Why don't you have a look at the opening paragraph of *The Hobbit*, or Book One Chapter 1 of *Lord of the Rings*? The hooks are right there in the opening paragraphs.

I used a short chapter as a narrative hook in the opening pages of my fantasy series, The Three Powers, Book One of which is *The Snowmelt River*. Did it work? Go look at the free preview on the book page of The Snowmelt River here on Goodreads – or go download it from the book page on my website, www.frankpryan.com.

Readers will have to decide for themselves – but *The Snowmelt River* did enter the spic fantasy top ten bestsellers in Amazon Kindles.

Assuming you have decided what your fantasy story, or novel, is going to be about, and you already have those characters popping out of your head, can you now think of something really gripping you could put into the opening paragraph, or whole first chapter – it could be a strange question, or a minor observation that seems out of place, something that is likely to startle or intrigue your reader and make him or her want to read on?
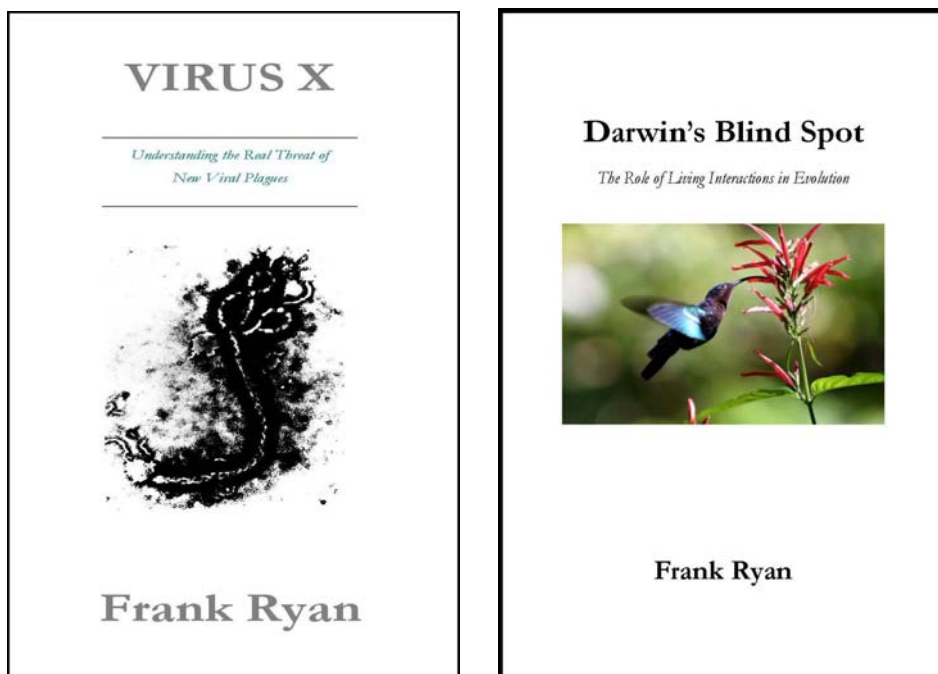
So this is all more about tip no 1 in this section. But if you take a mental step backwards and think a little deeper . . . What is the first aspect of your book that the reader will encounter? It isn't the opening chapter, is it? Indeed no – it's the cover. So the cover is actually another kind of hook – but this time it's a visual hook. And if that hook doesn't grab your prospective reader, nothing else will matter because they won't look any further into your novel.

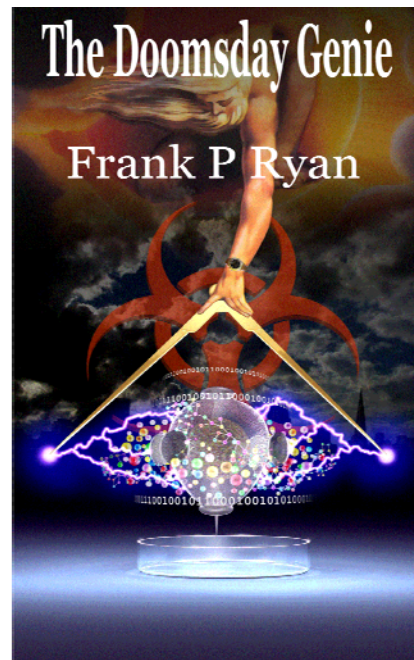This is what I'll talk about in my next chapter.

Chapter 4: Editing, Cover Design and More

Cover and copy editing

When you're publishing your own book, and you don't have a great deal of money to spend on it, it is very tempting to save money on the cover. This is possible, but rather easier to do with non-fiction than fiction. I would recommend that visitors take a look at the kindle of two books I published through my own small press outfit, Swift Publishers, on your local amazon website. These are the kindles of *Virus X* and *Darwin's Blind Spot.*

I should explain that both books had been published by big name publishers in both the UK and US. My reason for publishing the kindles was that both titles had been wound up in the UK long before interest had waned. I produced the covers myself at no cost. The central artwork was kindly provided by others, who were acknowledged. The actual cover construction was kept very simple, though there is a small subtlety in the cover lettering and tone. So you really can do a decent cover at little or no cost. But with fiction this is more problematic. Let me illustrate this with another book produced by my small press publisher, Swift. This is the apocalyptic thriller, *The Doomsday Genie.*

The cover of this book is one of the most powerful – probably the most powerful – visual hook of any of the twenty or so books I have written. This is a book in which family and survival matter. I wanted the cover to show the actual meaning of the "entity" that threatened America. So I engaged my friend and much-admired artist, Mark Salwowski, to it. Mark created the cover artwork in the great Iain M Banks sci-fi novels when they first appeared. I wanted the best and so I paid for the best. Mark has illustrated the various twists and turns we went through before getting the cover that appeared on the novel on his beautiful website http://www.salwowski.com/Latest.html#.... And what a powerful composition it still is. Check it out for yourself.

My guess is that it was this cover that resulted in *The Doomsday Genie* becoming the biggest kindle seller for my minuscule, but very successful, small press publisher.

The other thing a self-publishing author needs to bear in mind is high quality editing.
I know you probably don't have a lot of cash to spare. But if your book, maybe your first born, goes out there without editing . . . Boy, are you asking for a beating! Since *The Doomsday Genie* is based in America, I took pains to get the English right. Though based in the UK, I had widely travelled in the US. I love the US. I love the creativity and flexibility of American English. But that wasn't going to be enough to get the English right in what I treated as a major enterprise. So I engaged an American copy editor. Between us, we got the English right. But even then, a small number of typos remained – perhaps a dozen or so in all. I can't recall having read a book in

which there were no typos at all. But consider the fact that every one of those typos were pointed out by readers, even though they weren't so bad that anybody stopped reading.

Are you getting the message? Every single typescript ever offered to me as a publisher, no matter how experienced the writer, had significant editorial errors in it. The vast majority coming from would-be authors, were full of them. Reading a book like that would stop most readers dead.

Some might point out that Fifty Shades of Grey, the massive bestseller, had quite a few errors as well as much that could have been improved by editing when first self-published as a kindle by the author, E L James. Okay – but I'm afraid E l James' success is like winning a rollover lottery. For the vast, almost all, population of authors, this sort of thing will matter.

So can I plead on behalf of your own new-borns, hey guys please don't send them out into a perilous world without the midwifery of editing and good covers.

In the next Chapter I'll move on to show self-publishing authors how to produce a high quality POD and e-book, including that all-important kindle.

Chapter 5: Getting Published

So you've written your brainchild book. It doesn't matter whether it is a masterwork of fiction of non-fiction. Oh, there will be some differences between the two – like for example a non-fiction might involve reference marks in the text and perhaps a bibliography, notes or reference section at the end. All of these will now be taken care of in a proper professional fashion. If a novel, don't even think of references, or footnotes. Don't put in anything that breaks the narrative flow of sensation, curiosity, involvement with plot and character, and general couldn't-put-down excitement of the reader.

Hey – this is becoming somewhat exciting! But don't let's get carried away by the excitement of it all. Let's tick off a series of important milestones at this point. We just have to get this right. The book is now as good as you can possibly get it. You have polished it yourself as hard and ruthlessly as you can, with a final read through of the whole narrative script in which you have read your own words aloud. You may be surprised at what daft errors, repetitions, stupidly over-the-top adjectives, purple prose, etc, that become apparent when you read your script aloud. Take your time and don't rush it. Read no more than 50 or 60 pages a day, perhaps with rest breaks after a chapter at a time.

Only when the script has been checked in this way should you pass it out to others to criticize and edit. It will be a waste of time passing it to friends who have little knowledge of English, or writing. They'll find little wrong with it and praise it to please you. My advice, given already in this series of Chapters, is to pay for a professional copy editor to work through the script at this stage. Do you think somebody going out into some business, or trade, would hesitate to pay for what is the most basic tool, or necessary assistance, when they are first setting out? And here's another key tip at this stage. Try to choose an editor who specializes in the type of book you have written.

Just how, on earth, do you find such an editor? One solution is to get hold of a magazine that is distributed to professional writers. In the UK it is "The Author". Go to the ads at the back, which illustrate services for authors. Pick an agency that has many different editors on their books. The likelihood is one of their editors has this special experience. Failing this use Google or social media to ask around, while stating what your category of book falls into. Some of these

agencies, and editors, might even have some feed into commissioning editors or literary agents, so there might even be a bonus there for you if they are really impressed by your book. Take their advice even if it hurts. Their perspective will be much closer to that of a prospective publisher or agent.

Okay, we've cooled our natural excitement. We've hired the editor. The editor has made suggestions that you have carefully considered during a final revision. If the changes are relatively small, or confined to specific chapters, you only need to read through the changed script or chapters for a final time. But again do read it aloud. You might be surprised what additional minor squeaks and squawks have entered into the text.

We are now faced with a very important choice. The script is ready to submit to a publisher or agent without any more ado. Do not send a pdf to a publisher. They prefer a Word document, more often an introductory letter, synopsis of the book and sample chapters. If that's what they want, send them exactly that. Do not send them the entire document. They will ask for that soon enough if they are interested. How do you choose the right publisher or agent? You take great care to submit only to publishers and agents who already publish or agent your category of book.

A publisher is most unlikely to choose a book in a category they don't publish already. It would be a monumentally difficult thing for them to do, since they have already hired editors who specialize in their type of list; their marketers and sales force specialize in this list. When an editor takes on a new writer, it's a big thing for the organisation. The editor must defend his or her decision at round table discussion meetings at which all of the other parts of the organisation will be present – and potentially hostile. So do take care who you submit to.

And here let me give you another tip. Take your time with your introductory letter. Keep it sharp and to the point. Take as much care with the synopsis as you would with an opening chapter of the book. That synopsis has to show them not only what the book is about but also that you have the quality as a writer they would like to recruit.

You should always try to engage an experienced and dedicated publisher. But getting your foot in the door can be very difficult, since there are vast numbers of potential rivals as well as large numbers of published writers out there. Thankfully these days you have a second choice, which

is self-publication. Actually it always has existed since writers throughout the entire history of books have sometimes published their own books. Yes – it used to be almost standard for poets and it has involved very famous names, such as Charles Dickens and, I hazard to suggest, Shakespeare – or perhaps to extend the idea somewhat, his theatre company friends. The arrival of Amazon kindle, and many other organisations, as well as the potential for marketing through the social media, have made it much easier for authors to self-publish these days. Are you heading in this direction?

Then let's allow a shared moment of excitement. Hooray! We're ready to turn the Word script into a high quality printable, readable, book.

This will involve creating a pdf file of the document. This is also so important that it just cannot be hurried. In the next Chapter I'll show you how to do so, which will in turn enable you to print paperbacks on demand (which greatly reduces the risk and cost of printing) and also produce a high quality kindle.

Chapter 6: Taking the Plunge into Kindle and POD

How to publish and market your novel

By now your typescript should be complete. You've been smart enough to avoid publishing in haste and regretting at leisure. It is edited and as close to error free as you can make it. Well done! Some readers will wish to progress to some publishing software that makes the progression to print easier. If so good luck! Here I assume that you are working with simple programs like Word, so that from here we shall take a series of logical steps that will help to avoid errors in publication.

Step 1: Choose the right typeface

The typeface will have a subtle psychological impact on your reader. You can have some fun playing about with different typefaces. See the effect, say, of reducing to font size 11, or 10 (usually close to how it appears on the page). See what happens if font size is magnified to the font 26 or 24, which is how it appears on a title page, or say, 18, which is roughly the size one might use on a chapter head page. See again what happens when you put the font into italics in ordinary print, chapter head and title page size. Look at a range of books in your own library that are within the category you're writing. Look at the rights pages (on the back – or verso – of the title page). Here you will sometimes find something like "typeset in Sabon" or "set in Garamond" or whatever. Choose a typeface that suits your book. I like Garamond for non-fiction because the ordinary page is very easy to read and yet one gets a very stylish big print italics for chapter heads and title page. My fantasy series, The Three Powers, used the font family known as Swift (nothing to do with but a delightful pun on my own small press publisher, Swift). I don't know what type face Bantam, who published George R.R. Martin's Song of Ice and Fire in the United States used, but HarperCollins, who published it in the UK, used Minion; Orbit published Iain M Bank's science fiction novel, Inversions, in Stempel Garamond; and Robin Hobb's fantasy, Dragon Keeper, was set in Sabon.

Have fun for a while changing typefaces over a page that includes big capitals, italic big capitals, ordinary script, ordinary script italic, and so on. But be sensible in your final choice. Use a

smaller type size than you would in a word document. I usually down size from, say, type size 12 to 11 in changing from document to book. This varies with different typefaces, so you can experiment.

Step 2: Setting the page settings and boundaries

Don't worry. Even without special software, it's not too difficult for most purposes. Decide what size your book will be. This varies between countries. The simple thing to do is to pick an example, whether hardcover or paperback, and get out your rule. Let's say we pick a paperback – a book that in the UK would be termed "B-format". I now have a copy of the first book in my epic fantasy series, The Three Powers, in front of me. The title is The Snowmelt River. When I measure the width of the cover it is 12.75cms. Top to bottom it is 19.7cms. So this would also be the overall size of the pages. In inches, which is how this size was originally set out, it would have been the more rounded 5 x 7¾ inches. I would suggest you now work with the bigger screens available on a desktop, but you can do it all on a smaller screen if necessary.

Go into Word and click on "File" in the top menu bar. Within File, go to Page Setup and set your page dimensions to fit with these measurements. This is the correct setting for a blank page. Now we need to set the header, numbering and text within the blank page. To do so let's take a look at the example of The Snowmelt River. Within the text, the header margin is 2.5cm, with 1.5cms at sides and bottom. In practice a typesetter would allow a slightly bigger inner side margin, say 2cm, to allow for the fold. In the left side ruler line, you can now pull the margins to create the header and footer margins. And you can set your right and left text margins using the left and right indents in the overhead ruler margin. For this size of book I would suggest you set the indents at 1.75cm for both left and right. In fact you can modify the basic idea to any size of page since the text margins will be much the same.
When you've finished, your page, and your text settings, should be sitting central with the view set at 100% - or normal magnification. During subsequent editing, it might help if you take the magnification down to, say, 75%, so you can see the entire page with all margins within a single screen. Next we can move on to the preliminary pages.

Step 3: Dealing with the prelims

Make a separate Word file of the preliminary pages (the "prelims"), which, by custom, will numbered in small case Roman numerals, such as i, ii, iii, iv, v, v1, etc. You can set this pattern of

numbering in the page numbering controls. But do remember to keep the text pages numbered in the normal fashion. Look at a few books in your library and see how the prelim pages are set out. Usually the first recto side will contain brief author's details, the verso will list previous books, or can be left blank, the second rector will be the formal title page, with the book title in big bold letters, the author's name, a subtitle if appropriate. Verso of the title page will be a statement of rights, acknowledgement of cover artist, internet contact details of publisher, etc. Third recto page is the place for a dedication, if there is to be one, and third verso (page vi), is usually left blank.

Now take a look at your sample books and how the prelim pages are set out. Prelims i and ii should be straightforward, with justified text on i and, very likely, centralised text, perhaps with a bold-set heading on page ii. Spacing in general should be 1.5 lines, which approximates to what you find in a typical book, though this will be very different on the title page and will differ in the region of chapter heads. Indeed the title page, iii, will also involve a good deal of creativity on your part. Here the typeface you chose will enable a big bold and evocative title, a sub-title if appropriate, and your justly proud name. You will also include your publisher (and logo if there is one).

Prelims iv will, in smaller centralized text, set out your rights. You can pretty much copy the sort of statement made in your sample books but, of course, adjust it to your specific circumstances. If this goes on to be printed, be sure to send a print copy to the appropriate copyright libraries, which vary from country to country, but can easily be found by Googling or enquiring from your local public library. Page v can carry your dedication and page vi will usually be blank.

Save your prelims in at least three separate storage sources, including detachable flash drives, sticks, or disks, and print it out so you can look at the printed copy for errors and potential improvements.

Step 4: Dealing with the text proper

Now set up a separate file for the text of the book, with normal page numbering and the same page set-up. Work through the text with chapter numbering and chapter heads, if appropriate. If this is a work of non-fiction, you can put in reference marks in hypertext, since it will, as you will discover, be possible to link up from text marks to the actual references and back again in e-

books, such as kindle. I usually reduce the size of the numeral by one point, say from type 12 to 11 or from 11 to 10, so it isn't too obtrusive to the reader. With non-fiction you can also insert chapter head quotes if you like. I tend to use type size 26 and bold for chapter numbers and italics and one font size smaller than the normal text font size for chapter head quotes – say a reduction to 10 from 11. If you do this please ensure you do exactly the same hypertext and font size for every reference in every chapter. If I employ chapter-head quotes, I also inset the quotes on either side to make them stand out. With fiction many authors simply number their chapters, but this varies with the type of fiction. You should judge for yourself, taking note of books in your category whose print appearances you like. With non-fiction, I also include a chapter list at the beginning of the text. This is only meaningful if the chapters also have explanatory headers. If you want to see what I mean, take a look at the kindle of Virus X or Darwin's Blind Spot and try clicking on reference marks in the text, or chapter heads in the initial index and see how you are transported to the appropriate reference or chapter. This is, of course, a useful improvement on a print book, where the reader has to hunt for references or to find the appropriate chapter from a page number.

Now once again save, save and save again. This saved Word file will has now become the equivalent of depositing your book in the bank.

Step 5: Check it out in print

Why not try converting the two separate files at this stage to pdf? Since your book is saved in Word you have nothing to lose – and it might be an interesting exercise to see how it actually looks with every chapter, line, word and letter set on the actual page. This is how your book will look in print. Look it over. Print the prelims and a couple of chapters and look again. Are there any improvements in layout, prelims, chapter heads, that you would prefer to alter. To change things at this stage all you need to do is to go back to the Word document and make your changes.

Take your time. The temptation to rush into print is strong but it is prudent to suppress this and give yourself time to make improvements.

If you have any questions, or are experiencing difficulties, comment below. Next time we move on to actual publication of your POD and e-book (kindle).

Chapter 7: Let's Get Published

Step 1: Cover design

As indicated earlier, the cover of your book is your single most important marketing aide. If you enclose your creative offspring in a poor wrapping, you are increasing your risk of failure. If you care to examine websites that contain lots of self-published books, it will be painfully self-evident how poor the covers are on many of these. This is self-defeating, so let me help you avoid killing your own creative offspring.

If your book is a work of non-fiction, I would suggest there is no problem since you can mould a cover around a photograph – or even a computer generated image. Your readership simply wants a hint of colour and effervescence while their interest is in the contents. Thus the two kindle books I have already indicated, *Virus X* and *Darwin's Blind Spot*, show how simple this can be. With permission for (and acknowledgement of) the photographs, I was able to generate a decent cover for my purposes in about an hour each. You can also experiment with the size, and colour of text. Fiction is more testing. I'm afraid that unless you are a gifted artist/designer, you will be obliged to spend some money. If you can afford it, there's no problem. There are many gifted artist/designers out there. If you can't afford something like $1,000, how can you get something decent? You may have your own ideas. If so the best of luck – and I always mean this sentiment. But if you are somewhat at a loss, can I suggest you consider something relatively subtle. Take how my current publisher, Jo Fletcher, dealt with the covers of my four book epic fantasy, The Three Powers. Jo was looking both for subtlety and a common cover theme for all four books.

To explain what I mean, I should explain that in book one, *The Snowmelt River*, I introduced a conceptual metaphor. Three of the four teenage friends communicated through their mobile phones (cell phones). In the narrative of *The Snowmelt River*, Granny Dew converted their phones to communicating crystals. Thus in fantasy I bridged the crossing between worlds to allow the same immediacy of communication between the friends. These crystals would subsequently be extrapolated to oracula of great power – but this power had to be earned through courage and struggle, and in each individual case would reflect the different personalities of the friends. The

Jo Fletcher designers and photographers (Jem Butcher and Farendon Lee) thought up the brilliant concept of a human hand bearing a crystal of power that was effulgent with a starry firmament. In this way the four covers followed the central theme of the series. This is the kind of thing you might want to think about. An idea that is captured at a glance yet is truly representative of a central theme of your book, or your series.

Whatever you come up with, good luck!

Now, with cover and text prepared, we are ready to move on to the actual production of your book.

Step 2: Producing a print POD

To produce a cover for a Print on Demand book, or POD, you will need a wraparound artwork that will include front cover, spine and back cover. There are software programs you can buy that will enable you to do this for yourself if you so wish. I have constructed many book covers in this way. But it is probably not cost effective to buy and then learn to use this type of software for a single book. If so it might be easier and more cost effective in time and money to pay somebody else to do it. There are groups out there who will offer to do the whole thing these days for relatively modest amounts of money. If you decide on this route, ask around. Join writer's groups, join other groups here on Goodreads, and find out how reliable these providers are. Be sure to look up examples of their work and see how professional the end result turns out. Be conscious of all the effort and creativity that has gone into your book. Don't spoil it all by wrapping it in a shoddy amateurish cover. Get it right, with a good quality cover, easy to read spine (this is often what you see in a bookshop), and make sure the design and complexity of the back cover is easy to follow, with fitting blurb, ISBN and price bar codes.

For a print book (and perhaps for an e-book too) you will need an ISBN. This is an important part of your book's identity and your copyright protection. To get an ISBN you will need to apply to the issuing authority and request a list of ISBNs for a specific named publisher. One way of doing this might, for example, involve a local writers' group issuing its own publishing label and applying for ISBNs for the label, so that specific ISBN numbers could then be allocated to self-published books by members of the group. And now, with cover prepared into PDF format and your text fixed in the same format, you are now ready to get your book printed.

To get a printer to line up your book for a POD, all that you will need is the pdf of the full wraparound cover, the prelims and the text pdf files.

So off you go . . . !

Is there a simpler and cheaper way to publish your book? Of course there is – it's called an e-book, and the easiest e-book of all is the kindle.

Step 3: Producing an e-book, such as Amazon's kindle

An e-book needs no spine or wraparound cover. All you need to submit to an e-book program is a front cover artwork and the prelim and text files. Amazon doesn't even demand an ISBN for its kindles but I prefer to issue an ISBN for all e-books since I still regard it as part of my protection. So I include the same rights page in the prelims of my kindles. Publishing a kindle with Amazon is a neat way of presenting your work to a potentially large variety of readers. A very important aspect of Amazon's kindles is the fact they have in-built protection against dishonest people out there copying your e-book and either passing it around among their friends and acquaintances for free – or even selling it to third parties without compensating you.

How then do you go about publishing your book as a kindle? You need to convert your pdf text to a format known as Mobi format. This will also involve paying a third party to do it for you, but this is easy to do and relatively inexpensive. There are many groups out there who will do this for you. I can recommend two groups who have converted book texts to Mobi for me with a high degree of professionalism. These are Nick Caya in the UD (e-mail nick@word-2-kindle.com) and Swift ProSys in India (e-mail mohan@swiftprosys.com). All you need to do is to send either, or both, an e-mail, explain that you wish to prepare an e-book in Mobi format. Tell them you'll provide the pdfs of prelims and text, let them know how many pages (or the total word content), and, especially if you are publishing a non-fiction title, indicate that you would like the Mobi to contain active links that will allow readers to link to references, chapters, etc. They will give you a precise quote for the service you need.

When they convert your book to Mobi format, you will need a special software, Calibre, to read it and check it out for errors. Calibre provide a free software package which can be downloaded on-line – it is called Calibre e-book management. This not only allows you to read your book in

Mobi format but also to store it the Calibre library and to convert between the two key formats, Mobi and E-pub. You might need E-pub to create other types of e-books. Both the above providers will allow you to get back to them if you find any small errors in the Mobi file that need correcting. In my experience there will be very few such glitches.

You are now ready to publish your e-book. And nothing is simpler than converting it to a kindle.

Step 4: Publishing a kindle

To publish your book as a kindle, you should keep the front cover pdf or other suitable picture file of the front cover separate from the Mobi file. Amazon offers simple instructions on how to create an author presence with them and how to download your Mobi and cover files. Once you develop your own author's page with Amazon, you will also have the facility of asking them for advice. I find them very helpful whenever I have a query. Just follow the instructions and, hey presto, within hours, or a day or so at most, your book will be out there, and looking professional rather than amateurish, before a large potential readership.