

# Perfect Bound

How to Navigate the  
Book Publishing Process  
Like a Pro

**Katherine Pickett**



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ISBN 978-0-9914991-1-3 (paperback)  
978-0-9914991-2-0 (e-book)

Library of Congress Control Number: 2014907683

Cover and interior design by Suett Communications  
Cover photograph copyright © iStock.com/Ryan Kelly

Hop On Publishing, LLC  
P.O. Box 2794  
Silver Spring, MD 20915  
[www.HopOnPublishing.com](http://www.HopOnPublishing.com)

Printed in the United States of America

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# Introduction

Publishing a book is a long road, and it is easy for the unsuspecting author to be waylaid at various points along that journey. Considerations like preparing a business plan, improving your knowledge of the market, and choosing the best route to publication can become lost in the shuffle when simply writing the book takes a thousand hours or more. The goal becomes typing “The End” on the last page of the manuscript, while thoughts of how to sell the book once it is completed—whether that is to agents, to publishers, or directly to readers—are pushed to the back of one’s mind. When that happens, rather than creating a high-quality, highly marketable book that sells, aspiring writers may find themselves with a completed manuscript that no one will ever read.

The challenge to stay the course is even greater when authors don’t know what to expect on the road to publication. Who will they be working with? What is it like to work with a designer? How does the acquisitions process work, and what do proofreaders do? All of these questions signal hidden potholes that can take a good book idea and send it bouncing off the road. Once that happens, it can require a lot of time, money, and effort for authors to get heading in the right direction again. Unfortunately, some authors discover the problem when it is too late to fix it. After years of work, their book is published to poor reviews and stalling sales. That terrible fate could have been avoided. What they needed was a guide to direct them around the obstacles. What they needed was *Perfect Bound: How to Navigate the Book Publishing Process Like a Pro*.

My intention with this book is not to teach you how to become a great writer. There are a multitude of critique groups, workshops,

conferences, websites, and classes intended for that purpose, and I do believe they will guide you better than I can. In fact, I encourage you to research these opportunities in your area and get involved in the writing community. Hone your craft, because solid writing is essential to your success. But as I will say many times throughout this book, good writing is only one of the tools you will need as you endeavor to publish your book. You also need market savvy, professionalism, and drive. Only you can provide the drive. This book will help you improve your market savvy and professionalism so that you can create a book that sells.

Over the course of eight chapters, I guide you on the road from manuscript to completed book and introduce you to the many professionals who will be involved in your manuscript's transformation. Although fiction and nonfiction books have different needs, all manuscripts go through roughly the same steps to becoming published, and your role in the process is largely the same. From choosing your route to publication to acquisitions and manuscript development, through design and layout and on to printing, binding, and e-book conversion, each chapter of this book includes what you can expect, what is expected of you, and a step-by-step explanation of that stage of the publishing endeavor. At the end of each chapter I highlight the most common mistakes—the Potholes—that promise to delay you and cost you money, and I offer practical steps you can take to avoid them. Determining your audience, researching the competition, strengthening your marketing hook, and attending to research and permissions are all covered. Further, you will learn what to look for when you review your page proofs, how to use design to its greatest effect, what to include on your copyright page, and what you can do to move forward after rejection. Finally, in the last chapter I present some brief, practical guidance on how to get media exposure, how to use social media to promote your book, and how to make the most of your time online.

Throughout the book I offer case studies—highlights and lowlights from my career as an editor—along with interviews with nearly a dozen other authors and professionals in the field, so that you can learn from those who have gone before you. You will also find inside tips that can save you time and money, plus information

on the various accommodations you have to make for books with special needs, such as those with a large art program, children's books, and academic titles. An annotated Resources section at the end guides you to selected books, websites, and organizations that will bolster your understanding of how to approach agents, write proposals, and market your book and will assist you throughout your publishing venture.

To get the most out of this book, I recommend reading it through completely one time while you are still writing your manuscript, before you embark on the book publishing process. The explanations of the Potholes and how to avoid them have been placed with the stage of production where they are most relevant, but even if you skip some of the production process, I encourage you to read all of the Potholes to ensure that you are not falling victim to one of these avoidable mistakes. Then, when you are ready to move ahead, return to the relevant chapters in this book as you make your own way through production so that you have the details of the process fresh in your mind. You will soon discover that when you know what to expect and what's expected of you, you save yourself considerable time, money, and embarrassment while at the same time making a high-quality, highly marketable book.

I have seen a lot of mistakes in my day, a lot of good book ideas that never made it. Will your book suffer the same fate or be a smashing success? With *Perfect Bound*, you have the advantage. Take it!