

Self-Publisher's Legal Handbook: The Step-by-Step Guide to the Legal Issues of Self-Publishing

Helen Sedwick

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This vital resource for every self-publisher clearly outlines the legal issues authors need to know.

When attorney Helen Sedwick self-published her historical novel, she found that no legal guide for self-publishing writers existed. She solved the problem by writing *Self-Publisher's Legal Handbook*, which is likely to become one of the most valuable resources a self-publisher can own.

In a book that is well written and authoritative yet unhampered by legalese, Sedwick covers a broad range of legal issues a self-publisher needs to know about, including setting up a business, copyrights, trademarks, fair use, public domain, giveaways, government regulations, sales and income taxes, and more. She states early on that her goal in writing the book is not to explain every legal issue in detail, but rather to give a self-publisher the knowledge to control all aspects of the work being produced, avoid scams and lawsuits, and legally maximize tax deductions.

Sedwick begins with a section about how to set up a business, and she offers much more than legal advice. She counsels the self-publisher about incorporation, choosing a business name, registering a trademark, getting a Federal Employer Identification Number, purchasing ISBNs, setting up business licenses and bank accounts, record keeping, and even liability insurance. And that's just chapter 1.

In chapter 2, Sedwick provides an informed discussion of various ways a self-publisher can create a book (do-it-yourself vs. using service companies). This includes an extremely valuable chart that details which service company contract terms are acceptable and which to avoid. Chapter 3 contains a solid overview of employees vs. contractors with information about work-for-hire and tax reporting. Chapter 4 is as clear an explanation of copyright, fair use, public domain, and permissions as any self-publisher could hope to find, with the added bonus of suggestions for where to find inexpensive stock images and music. Chapter 5 presents an overview of how to market and distribute work, with an excellent discussion of unpaid and paid reviews. Subsequent chapters are just as informative and useful. Sedwick even includes a chapter with sage advice about how to find and work with an attorney.

Readers will find the book's addendum to be of unique value as well. Here, Sedwick outlines the terms and conditions for two leading sources of e-book and print book production, Kindle Direct Publishing and CreateSpace, providing her own interpretation of these agreements. She also includes an example of what she calls an "egregious contract" to illustrate legal pitfalls. She provides a helpful resource section documenting books and websites. The pages are nicely laid out, and the cover is handsomely designed.

A book addressing this topic could easily have been hundreds of pages or even several volumes, but the author has managed to expose the self-publisher to virtually every major legal issue in about two hundred pages, no small feat. While Sedwick acknowledges that specific legal questions require the services of an attorney, as an overview, the *Self-Publisher's Legal Handbook* is outstanding. This is a book that is likely to help any self-publisher avoid many headaches.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (August 11, 2014)

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