Between the Keys
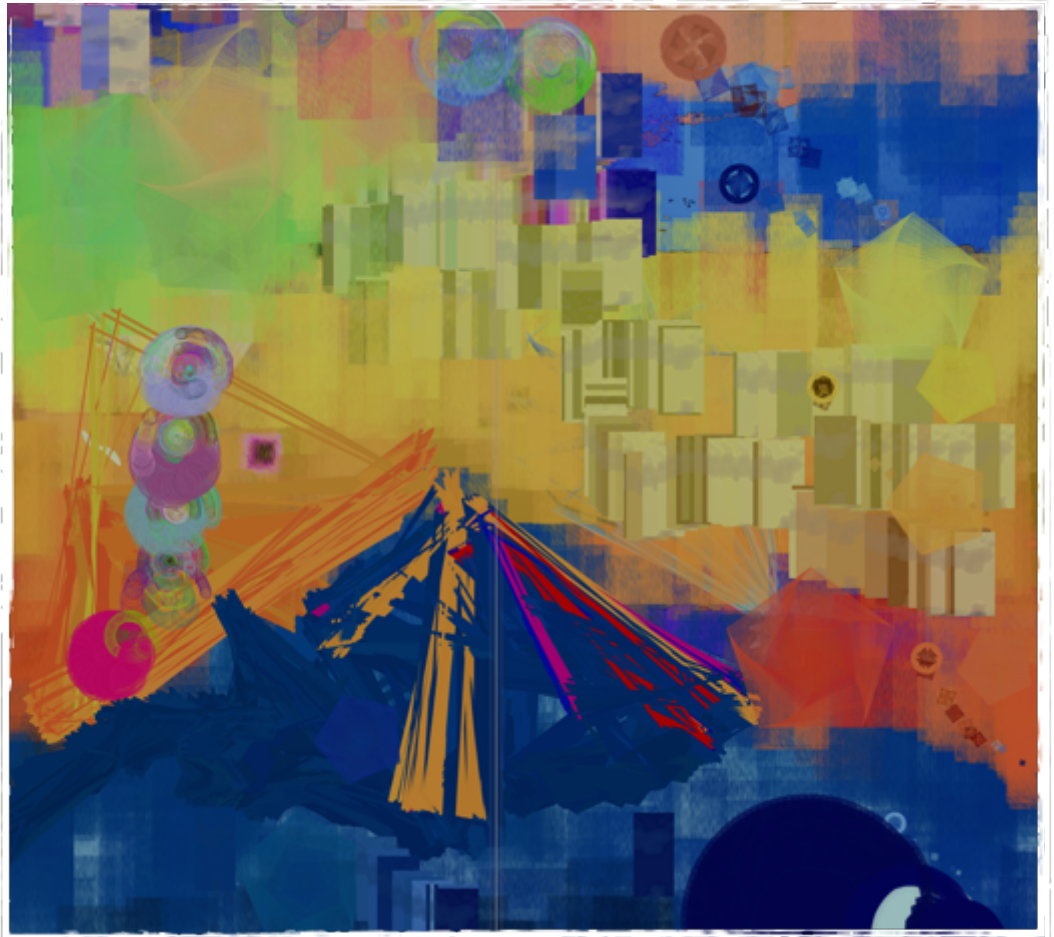

A publication of the JALT Materials Writers Special Interest Group

The Materials Writers SIG was established for the purpose of helping members to turn fresh teaching ideas into useful classroom materials. We try to be a mutual assistance network, offering information regarding copyright law, sharing practical advice on publishing practices, including self-publication, and suggesting ways to create better language learning materials for general consumption or for individual classroom use.

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THE JAPAN ASSOCIATION FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING
全国語学教育学会

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Foreword

Robert Dykes (Publication Chair)

Dear Readers,

The COVID-19 issue. I was wondering if I could write this forward without mentioning it, but how can I not? It already has or certainly will affect nearly every aspect of our lives, our jobs, social life, even JALT. Due to consequences stemming from COVID-19, you will probably find yourself with some extra time on your hands. Perfect to digest this packed issue of *Between the Keys*. We have three fantastic pieces in this issue.

In issue 27.2 Niall Walsh and Brian Cullen gave us an article on learning activities for returnee students. Brian returns for 28.1 with an interview piece with Marcos Benevides who started and runs Atama-ii books, a publisher whose booth you have seen at various conferences around Japan or hopefully you even have some Atama-ii books in your classrooms. This article covers the road Marcos took from award-winning author, to editor, finally on to publisher.

David Kluge returns with part 2 of his 3-part series on the lessons he learned from publishing various textbooks in Japan. David is another well-known name in our field around Japan usually through one of his *Basic Steps to Writing* books. In part 2 David covers his story starting with getting connected with the right people in the industry all the way to getting the book published.

To conclude this issue, John Carle of Kindai University provides a guide on independent publishing. This article differs from David Kluge's in that it covers a lot of the nitty gritty and challenges you need to overcome as opposed to having a publisher help you or do it for you. John has packed this article with links, resources, and tips specifically for publishing and selling an English textbook here in Japan with a Do-it-yourself approach.

Transitioning from Author to Publisher

Brian Cullen (Nagoya Institute of Technology)

Until the 1980s, the options for authors and teachers to create professional-looking materials for students were quite limited, and creating materials or writing a full textbook manuscript would normally be carried out on a basic typewriter with a single font or even written by hand. While it was feasible for a teacher or author to produce simple learning materials for students, producing a professional textbook that could be marketed and sold was generally left to publishing companies who had the resources to carry out the complex image processing and typesetting that was required.

In 1985, the status quo changed when Aldus released PageMaker which is generally regarded as the first popular desktop publishing software. Adobe purchased Aldus in 1994 and continues to dominate the desktop publishing software industry today, offering professional-level functionality for a relatively low price through their Creative Suite including InDesign (page layout), Illustrator (vector graphic editing), Photoshop (photo editing), and many other applications. Today, teachers and authors can use these Adobe products, Apple's Pages, or even Microsoft Word to produce professional-looking books which combine complex layouts of text and graphics.

Many teachers, including those in the Material Writers SIG, have transitioned from author to publisher and are now selling their materials as well as producing them. This article is based on an interview with one author who has made this transition, Marcos Benevides. He explains some of the events which led to this transition, and a few issues that he has had to address along the way.

Background

Like many teachers who are interested in materials writing, Marcos has been developing materials for his own classes for as long as he has been teaching. In the beginning of his teaching career, he was "not a fan of big, glossy, international textbooks," so he always tried to supplement the texts that he had to use with his own self-made materials. In his M.Ed. program, he was specializing in task-based language teaching, and that became the pedagogical inclination in his materials development work

Marcos Benevides

Marcos began to move beyond supplementing textbooks and into writing materials professionally. He took a sequence of lessons that he had developed with his colleague, Chris Valvona, and developed them into a textbook published by Pearson. This textbook was *Widgets: A task-based course in practical English* (2008). After that, again working with another colleague, Adam Gray, Marcos developed a book for ABAX called *Fiction in Action: Whodunit* (2010) which went on

to win both a British Council ELTon award and the Duke of Edinburgh English Book award, the two top prizes in the field of ELT.

From Author to Editor and Publisher

Clearly, the success of these books and the awards he received gave more credibility to Marcos's work and it enabled him to propose and develop, as series editor, a 30-title graded reader series for McGraw-Hill (2012). They were adaptations of the classic 80s and 90s *Choose Your Own Adventure* series. The McGraw Hill series did not sell very well, so Marcos decided to start his own publishing company in 2014, Atama-ii Books, in order to publish his own multiple-path series which *has* been successful. Many writers transition from author to publisher without ever having worked with a professional publishing company. It is clear in Marcos's case that his experience in working with other professionals in the publishing industry helped him to produce higher quality books. His learning curve followed the transition from writer of supplementary materials, to textbook author, to editor, and finally to becoming a publisher whose display booths can often be seen at language teaching conferences all over Japan.

Building on Past Achievements

Recently, Marcos has been focused on the second edition of *Widgets*, now called *Widgets Inc.: A task-based course in workplace English* (2018). After ten years of publishing the book, Pearson was not interested in a second edition, so Marcos and Chris negotiated and got back the rights to the book. Subsequently, they published it themselves through Atama-ii Books. The new edition also won the ELTon for course innovation—which was particularly satisfying for both authors, as it was their "first baby."

It was at this point that the transition from author to publisher became clearer. The second edition of *Widgets* was a major undertaking for Marcos, since—unlike the first time around—the authors who had now become the publisher were now responsible for all aspects of production. Atama-ii Books had to arrange for everything from design to layout, from editing to trialing, and from video production to website design. Marcos notes that "it would have truly been impossible to tackle something of this magnitude without the prior experience we'd had working on other projects with bigger publishers. I'm still a bit in awe that we managed to pull it off, to be perfectly honest."

For Marcos as an author, the most interesting thing about *Widgets* was that it is based on an entirely new organizational framework — a task-complexity syllabus. As an explicit and principled task-based course, the authors needed to avoid the traditional grammar-based syllabus, yet still remain practical for wide use in varied classrooms. While bearing the extra responsibilities of a publisher can be a heavy load, it has the advantage that there is no external editorial or marketing team to constrain the vision of the author.

In the current edition of *Widgets*, they achieved their vision by employing a themed approach, which helped them to sequence lessons within the framework of a larger on-going simulation. In *Widgets*, students imagine that they are interns at an exciting international company, and they go through various stages in their training; this informs and connects all coursework in a meaningful way.

As a task-based course, *Widgets* also employs outcomes-based assessment, which is equally difficult to implement in a commercial course. In short, it means that assessment must be based primarily on whether a task outcome is achieved adequately enough to be viable in a real-world-like context; that is, it must not be based simply on accuracy, prescribed lexis, and so on, as is the case with traditional assessment. Marcos says, "there are so many aspects of *Widgets* that make it different from other coursebooks that it is difficult to pick out just one or two." By taking the role of both author and publisher, Marcos certainly took on additional duties, but it also allowed the book to have the freedom to develop in directions that would probably not have been permitted by the editorial team at a large publishing company.

A Balancing Act

As can be imagined, managing these different roles can be quite a balancing act. With the *Widgets* project in particular, he notes that "the sheer scale and the fact that we were doing it ourselves was overwhelming at times. But at least in this case we could rely on previous experience, and the fact that, as a second edition, *Widgets* would be a smaller financial risk than a brand-new title. Still, it was important to us that the book ends up as good or better than anything by a major publisher, so we were careful to not cut any corners."

There is always a temptation for small publishers to want to cut costs, for example, by carrying out layout, or designing covers or internal graphics themselves even if they lack professional design expertise. In many cases, this results in a product that looks and feels less professional than those of major publishers. In turn, the book then gets less interest than it deserves, and thus fails to get traction. Marcos recognizes this potential pitfall, and although he is quite proficient with graphic design, he will still "force myself to back off and hire a pro designer when needed—which is nearly always. We did this with *Widgets*, and I think the focus on production value shows."

Marcos reminds us not to underestimate the value that is brought to any project by a diverse team of professionals. We all realize, I would hope, that a good editor is indispensable to any writing project—but equally so are a good designer, illustrator, audio and/or video crew, and a team of advisors and teachers willing to pilot our materials in their classrooms. Not to mention as well, the importance of post-production and a strong sales and promotion team.

Marcos and Atama-ii books have clearly learned a lot during the transition from teacher to author to publisher, and he is able to see that his roles do not always necessarily work smoothly with each other. He says that "writers sometimes tend to have the attitude that if an idea is good, then the rest maybe doesn't matter all that much. The idea *does* have to be good... but there is so much else that also goes into creating successful materials than simply the idea itself." For anyone else considering the same kind of transition, he recommends that they be willing to "pay for—and then pay attention to—the work that a good, experienced team brings to a project. ELT materials are a whole package; it's not just the writing that matters."

Perhaps the biggest thing that comes through Marcos's experience is the need for us all to keep learning. Writing a textbook is not a one-shot process, but rather a process that can

continue over 10 years or more, and the nature of the author's role may change considerably. Textbooks go through multiple editions, publishing companies go through editorial and marketing changes, and an author who wants to transition into publishing needs to keep growing and learning in order to keep up with the technical demands of the many aspects of both materials creation and publishing.

This interview was conducted in November 2019. For an overview of Widgets Inc., readers can visit widgepedia.com. Details of the Choose Your Own Adventure series are available at the Atama-ii website: http://www.atama-ii.com/.

Lessons Learned from Textbook Publishing Experiences
Part 2: My Story

David Kluge (Nanzan University)

This is Part 2 of a three-part series on getting your book published. Part 1 (BtK 27.1) was the publishing story of the author. Part 2 is what needs to be done to get your book published. It includes tips on getting your materials published using actual books I have had published, how to complete a book proposal form, and publishing schedules. Part 3 will be an annotated book proposal form that resulted in the book being published.

Introduction

Jeff Haden (2015), in his article "10 Ordinary Beliefs That Inspire Extraordinarily Successful People," writes this insightful observation as the first and most important starting lesson:

> 1. [Successful people] believe success is inevitable only in hindsight. Read stories of successful entrepreneurs and it's easy to think they always had some intangible entrepreneurial *something* -- ideas, talent, drive, skills, creativity, whatever -- that you don't have. They didn't. Success is inevitable only in hindsight. Look back on any entrepreneurial path to greatness and it's easy to assume that every vision was clear, every plan was perfect, every step was executed flawlessly, and success was a foregone conclusion. In reality, success is never assured.

Haden was so right, and his observation has been borne out by my publishing experience. At the most recent JALT conference in Nagoya (JALT2019), one colleague said to me, "I am so impressed by your creativity." I was nonplussed and didn't know how to respond. Why? Because I had just come from the Educational Materials Exhibit and many of the thousands of books there came from people like me, ordinary teachers who over the years created teaching materials that worked in the environment they found themselves in. Through their experience, and a dose of luck and good timing, they were able to see their materials published. I wish I had had a guidebook on what I needed to do when I first started writing textbooks. So, here is that guidebook that I would have liked to have been given. It seems to be a series of advice, but it actually is the story of what my colleague and I learned through our experience publishing. It is My Story or perhaps more accurately, Our Story.

"What Is Needed?"

The topic that always comes up when someone talks to me about the books I have had published is what is needed to get *their* book published. Each case is different, of course, but I have three simple answers: get to know the publishers' sales reps, have a big idea or ideas, and be a published author. Each answer is explained in detail below.

1. Get to Know the Publishers' Sales Reps

To the question of, "Do you have any advice on getting published by a commercial publishing company?" my answer has always been to get to know the publishing companies' sales representatives. They are the most accessible publishing company employee as they often come right to your door. They have knowledge of what sells in the market and can give you good general advice on whether your book has the chance of selling and how big of a chance it has to be accepted for publication. This is how we got our first two books published (*In My Life* and *Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers*).

2. Have a "Big Idea" or Better Yet, "Big Ideas"

Publishing companies are looking for innovative books (but there are exceptions — see the section below on innovative textbooks being accepted but not published). This means that there should be a big idea that is unique and interesting to the target customers. How did my co-author and I get these ideas? Some of them arrived in those aha! moments that come at odd times. Some come as a result of brainstorming sessions. In the case of several of the books mentioned in the first part of this series and also mentioned below, Matthew Taylor, my co-author for many books, and I took walks around a pond or a nearby residential area nestled among copse of trees and interesting gardens, talking over ideas for books. The point is, we scheduled fairly regular times for these "thought-filled" walks. Other times, we brainstormed in my office, writing ideas, sketching diagrams, and crossing things out on a large free-standing whiteboard. The following are some of the "big ideas" we implemented in some of the textbooks that were published.

"Big Ideas" for Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers (First and Second Editions)

The three main "big ideas" in both first and second editions of *Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers* (Figures 1 and 2) were first, making the parts of the paper and the process graphic with the extensive use of maps to show where in the process or the paper the particular item occurs. This was for people who are more graphic-oriented than word-oriented. Second is putting an easy-to-understand, step-by-step explanation of the process of writing the paper. Third, and perhaps most valuable for teachers, was recursivity. This can be seen by looking at the textbook itself. The recursivity appears in the multiple ways of presenting the same information in a unit: Q&A form in the Let's Learn About It! section, the detailed explanation with graphics in the Let's Take a Closer Look! section, the step-by-step listing in

Figure 1. Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers (2007)

the Let's Learn How to Do It! section, application to their own paper in the Let's Try It! section, and the annotated sample papers. All this reinforces the lesson in many ways based on the understanding that teaching something once is insufficient for learning, and it allows teachers to choose the particular section to teach that is most needed by a particular student in one-to-one consultation or by a class of students.
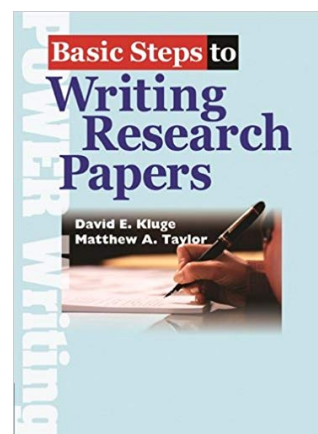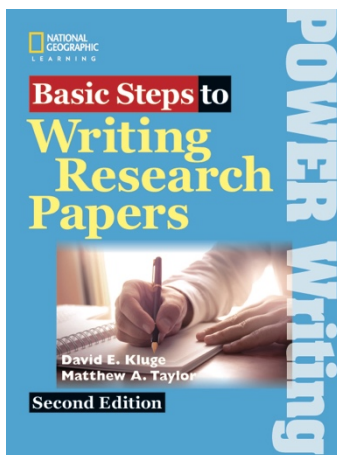
The "big ideas" for *Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers, Second Edition* (Figure 2) were

the addition of Writing Workshops, new sections on primary research, and worksheets. Writing Workshops are sections spread throughout the book that work on writing style and mechanics, and can be used whenever needed. Regarding primary research, at conferences we had the interesting experience of finding out that quite a few graduate students said they use the textbook, but wanted a section on primary research writing, which prompted us to add such a section in three units. Worksheets were added for extra work on important writing areas and for students to have a kind of portfolio of their prewriting, writing, and re-writing progress.

Figure 2. Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers (2nd) (2018)

"Big Ideas" for Basic Steps to Academic Writing: From Paragraph to Essay

The two "big ideas" for *Basic Steps to Academic Writing: From Paragraph to Essay* (Figure 3) were the use of color coding to indicate the different moves necessary in a composition and the use of the Cubing heuristic (six different ways to look at a topic: describe it, compare it, narrate it, summarize an article on it, explain it, and argue it) as a basic organizing pattern for the book.
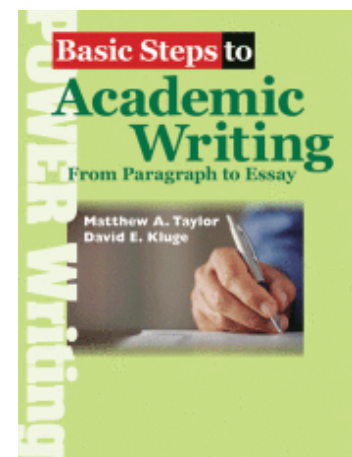

Figure 3. Basic Steps to Academic Writing (2012)

"Big Ideas" for In My Life: Strategies for Personal Communication

The three "big ideas" for *In My Life: Strategies for Personal Communication* (Figure 4) were the use of the scrapbooks with the connected idea of making the students' lives the center of the book, the inclusion of conversation strategies, and finally, the inclusion of body language sections for each unit.
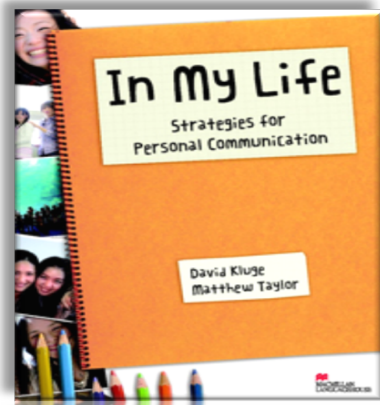
Figure 4. In My Life (2011)

The big ideas became the unique sales points for the books. Publishers liked the idea that their product had useful innovations not found in their competitors' catalogs. These unique, big ideas were necessary in getting the publishing company editors interested in the books.

3. Be a Published Author

It sounds like a joke, but it is true: it is easier to become a published author if you are already published. Being a published author means that you have a proven track record, most important at the company you published for; this applies for other publishing companies too, but to a lesser extent. It means that you have shown that you can come through and produce a book. Sales of the book show that you can produce marketable wares, which is important as the publisher is a company that is in the business to prosper. As a matter of fact, once published, the same company may turn to you and request a book in your field that fills a niche in their catalog or, even better, that fills a niche in other publishers' catalogs.

"What Do I Do?"

What do you have to do to write and publish a textbook? Let's imagine that you have come up with a big idea for a textbook, you have created good relationships with publishing company sales representatives, and you would like to submit a proposal. Here are a few things to consider before you start writing the book proposal:

1. Research the competition

2. Choose the right publisher

3. Write a proposal

4. Write the table of contents and two chapters/units

5. Get feedback

6. Work hard

Each of the items is discussed below.

1. Research the Competition

The publisher wants to make sure you know who your competition is and hopes your book will be better than the other books are. To make a better textbook, or at least a different textbook than the competition, you have to know who your competing textbooks are and

why they are considered good by other teachers. This is why competition research is necessary. Ask your colleagues, look at your library of textbooks, a bookstore, publishers' printed catalogs and online catalogs to see who your competition may be.

2. Choose the Right Publisher

What does "the right publisher" mean? Several things: if your competing textbooks are all published by one publisher, chances are that publisher will not want to publish your book as it will bite into sales of their current books. In addition, the publisher you select should be strong in the markets in which you want to try selling your textbook (e.g., elementary school, jr. and sr. high school, university, language school, Japanese teacher, native English teacher, technology-assisted learning, etc.).

In addition to the major international publishers, you might consider Japanese publishers, small independent publishers, or self-publishing. If you are interested in maximizing profit, self-publishing is probably the best choice, but you will have to do everything yourself, from design to sales.

3. Write a Proposal

Here is some useful advice on writing a proposal:

> 1. Download a proposal form from the publisher's website.
>
> 2. Write in clear, simple English.
>
> 3. Make use of current terminology in teaching, including "buzz words" if necessary.
>
> 4. Refer to research in the field, but not too much.

1. Download proposal form from publisher's website.

Go to the publisher's website and download the proposal form. If there is none listed, contact the representative you know or find the generic email address of the publisher and request a form. By looking at the actual proposal form, you will get an idea of what you need to think about when contemplating getting your materials published. (See the sample successful proposal in Part 3 of this series.)

2. Write in simple, clear English.

Remember three things about the readers of your proposal: they may not have a lot of time to read your proposal; if you cannot describe your proposed book concisely, the reader may think that perhaps you do not know enough about the proposed book. Finally, the reader may be a non-native reader of English. As many Japanese like to say, "Simple is best."

3. Make use of current terminology in teaching, including "buzz words" if necessary.

It is a good idea in your proposal to use new buzz words or concepts and phrases that are currently popular in TESOL. This shows you know the current trends in the field. It also helps your advocate in the company to convince others in the publishing company to accept the proposal, and ultimately assists the publisher to sell the book. Look at the cover and the catalog blurb for one of the books in which I have published a chapter. The main editor used the acronyms CLIL (Content and Language in Learning), CEFR (Common European Frame of Reference), and EAP (English for Academic Purposes) to describe the book on the cover. (See Figure 5.)
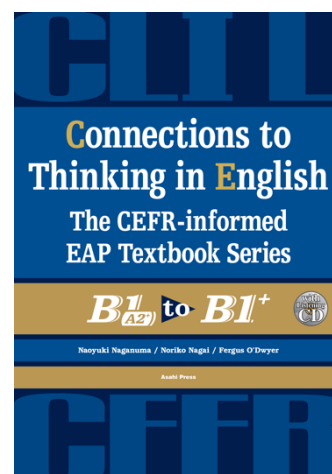

Figure 5. Connections to Thinking in English (2015)

4. Refer to research in the field, but not too much.

The use of previous research helps the proposal to be accepted, but the publisher staff members responsible for making the decision of whether to accept a proposal or not may not necessarily have an academic background in the field of EFL or, more likely, do not have the time or inclination to read pages of research results. It may be best to refer to the research concept, for example "motivation," and then in parentheses add the names of the researchers and years of the research, e.g., "Research shows that increased motivation helps in the learning of a foreign language (Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1959; and Ushioda, 2012)." (See a sample of a successful book proposal in Part 3 of this series.)

4. Write the Table of Contents and Two Chapters/Units

You should include in your proposal a sample table of contents (ToC). This ToC can be modified later but it is necessary here to concretize the concept of the book. In addition, you should include two completed sample units:

> A. First Unit

> B. Best Middle Unit

A. First Unit

Often, the first unit is unique, different from the other units because it introduces new activities or includes prefatory material which is not necessary in following units. It also may introduce key concepts. It creates the pattern for following units. For these reasons, the first unit is a good one to include in the proposal.

B. Best Middle Unit

It is necessary to include a middle unit. Choose one that will be a dynamic example of the best aspects of your proposed book. I usually use one that is my favorite topic or unit because it is usually the easiest to write. Sometimes your favorite unit is not that easy to

write. In that case, you might choose a different unit that is easy to write, or that is already almost complete.

5. Get Feedback

After you are finished with the sample units, get feedback on them. If you have time before submitting the proposal, get the feedback from your friends in the EFL field, especially if you have piloted the book previous to submission of the proposal. After submitting the proposal, you can get feedback from the following sources:

A. From the Editor (done by the publisher)

B. From Teacher Reviewers (arranged by the publisher)

C. From Focus Group or Groups of Teachers in the Field (arranged by the publisher as group discussions on the sample units or as an online survey)

If the publisher does not arrange all of these on their own, you can suggest that they do procedure B and/or C. The feedback will be invaluable in determining the direction of further development of the book.

6. Work Hard

You may think you have been busy creating the book proposal, but after the proposal is accepted, the real hard work begins. You will need to do the following steps:

1. Write the manuscript.

2. Send to editor(s) for suggested changes.

3. Make suggested changes, reply why some of the reviewer's suggested changes are not necessary, and send a revised manuscript to the editor.

4. Repeat #2 and #3 until the manuscript is acceptable. 5. Editor sends to layout editor (often outsourced to a different company).

6. Layout editor sends suggestions (sometimes from reviewers).

7. Rewrite the manuscript including the suggestions or replying why the suggestions are not advisable and send the revised manuscript to the layout editor.

8. Repeat steps #6 and #7 *ad infinitum, ad nauseum.*

Steps #6 and #7 really are important and take up an extraordinary amount of time (and patience) to get the look of the book right and to resolve issues that were not caught by the editor or by yourself.

"What is a Publishing Schedule?"

The answer, "A piece of fiction" to the question of "What is a publishing schedule?" may seem facetious but there is an element of truth behind it. Perhaps a truer answer would be that a publishing schedule is a set of goals to be reached, but since the amount of time needed to reach a particular goal in the schedule is just guesstimated, there is some flexibility in much of the schedule that will need to be negotiated as you go through the

schedule. However, there are some hard-and-fast deadlines that need to be met so that the textbook is finished by the time the target academic year begins.

The following (Figure 6) is an actual publishing schedule of the author and publisher's tasks:

	Author	Publisher
31-Oct-11	Submit TM draft	
↓		Edit, Design, Typeset
07-Dec-11		1st proofs READY
08-Dec-11	Receive 1st proofs	
↓	Proofread	Proofread
18-Dec-11	Return 1st proofs	
19-Dec-11		
↓		Correct 1st proofs
25-Dec-11		2nd proofs READY
26-Dec-11	Get 2nd proofs	
↓	Proofread	Proofread
09-Jan-12	Return 2nd proofs	
10-Jan-12		
↓	Confirm corrections	Correct 2nd proofs
23-Jan-12		Final data READY
25-Jan-12		Final data to Printer
03-Feb-12	TM finished	Printing

Figure 6. Publishing schedule for Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers, Second Edition. Note: this has been revised.

It should be noted that the above is already a revised schedule. It would have been better to have completed the whole process by the original end date of October 2018 so the book could have been ready for display at the major conferences held in autumn. This could not be done, so the publishing company made sample copies from the penultimate galley proof, which means that the sample copy had many mistakes that were fixed in the final stage of the process. This, of course, is not the optimal result of the publishing schedule and should be avoided if possible.

Warning and Rewards

My colleague, Matthew Taylor, after reading the first draft of this paper, suggested that some of the following points be included, and as a good collaborator, I give him the credit for these points. First, he wanted it pointed out that this kind of publishing, at the levels that the books sell, is not a substitute for a regular salary. It should be considered as a source of some supplementary income. It is mostly a labor of love.

In addition, he wanted to emphasize that there was also "the personal reward of hearing nice comments about your material [from colleagues], seeing your titles in advertisements or catalogs, and getting sales reports and finding out that your textbook did better than expected, sometimes much better." I would like to add that for me, the most rewarding time was when my daughter told me about when she and a friend were walking through her university bookstore. The friend wondered why one of the authors of *Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers,* a required book for a course, had the same family name as my daughter. My daughter told her it was because her father wrote the book, and the friend said, "Wow!" My daughter told the story to me with a bemused-yet-proud expression on her face which was worth much more to her dad than the royalty payments.

Conclusion

My story must seem familiar to many teachers. You may see yourself at some point in my story. Perhaps you have gone through all the stages my co-author and I went through and have since gone beyond us. My story is not so unusual. Does reading this make your path to becoming a published author smooth and easy? No — perhaps smoother and easier, but even though Michael Sage wrote, "Experience is a lesson of the past to lessen the burden of the future" (n.d.), an unknown sage wrote, "Experience is what causes a person to make new mistakes instead of old ones." That is why your path to authorship may be smoother than mine, but not absolutely smooth. In any event, these are the things I learned from my journey.

What I also learned from my publishing experience is that getting published is extremely hard work: thinking, writing, rethinking, and rewriting repeated many times is grueling. It takes a long time to go through publishing just one book and is an extremely exhausting undertaking. Like a good marriage, compromise is necessary. The final product may not look much like the original idea because of the many compromises with the editor who sees the project as being not just for one particular teacher's class as the author first conceived it, but as a book for a generic teacher's generic class. However, like childbirth, which is also exhausting and time-consuming, birthing a book can be extremely satisfying. And, again like childbirth, after going through the process once and vowing "Never again," after a while you forget all the pain and hardship and think to yourself, "Ah, this is a great idea for a book . . ." And off you are again, through the crazy process of publishing a book.

**The author would like to again thank his colleague, Matthew Taylor, and Tsuyoshi Yoshida and David White at Cengage Learning for reading and commenting on a draft of this paper (all mistakes are mine) and for several times as a team going through this crazy process of sharing our books with you. He would especially like to thank Rika Kojima for her confidence in two unpublished authors.

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A Guide to Independent Publishing for EFL in Japan

John Carle (Kindai University)

Though there are many good textbooks available from major publishers, often they cannot fulfill the needs of a local market in the way that independent writers and publishers can. Experienced teachers may know the needs of their students far better than distant publishing companies. In order to fulfill those needs, many teachers have thought about writing a textbook. However, getting a project from initial concept to finished product presents numerous challenges. This article shares resources and ideas intended to help deal with many of those challenges. Even if your goal is not to create a fully-fleshed textbook, the resources and ideas offered here may help with the creation of lessons, tests, and smaller projects.

At the 2019 JALT International Conference in Nagoya, Japan, I gave a poster presentation entitled, "A Guide to Independent Publishing for EFL in Japan." This is a written and expanded version of that presentation. There is also a website that has digital links to various resources. https://johncarlejapan.wixsite.com/publishing

This is the story of my journey. In 2018, I published my first textbook, *The English Gym*, under the pen name, Jon Charles. One of the first questions colleagues invariably ask me is, "Why did you choose to use a pen name?" The main reason is that since I was planning to use the textbook in my own classes, I did not want my students to have any bias one way or the other about the book. I wanted them to approach the material objectively and focus on the content. That being said, I did choose a pen name that was very similar to my real name, John Carle. This has been convenient because people can address me as Jon or John and I can sign emails or other correspondence with my initials, JC.
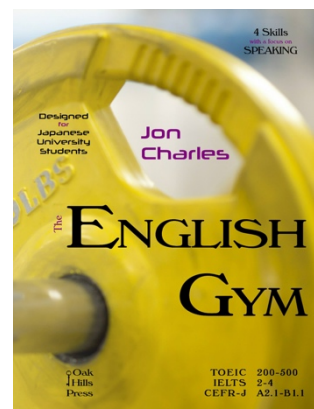

Figure 1. The English Gym (2018)

In its third year of publication, the book has been used at over ten universities by more than a dozen teachers. Each year, sales have steadily gone up. We expect to sell around 900 textbooks for the coming year. This amount may, or may not seem like a lot, but depending on how much you spend on printing, development, promotion, etc., it should result in a profit. Initially, I had no idea on how to go about self-publication. I learned a great deal from my experiences and am happy to share my knowledge with others. Just recently I was able to help a colleague from Kobe self-publish his own book for his film studies classes.

Write Your Own Textbook? Here's What You Will Need!
Amazing Ideas — That's Up to You, Einstein!

Sorry, this article is not about concepts for writing a textbook. Those ideas, of course, need to come from yourself. My advice is to write a book that you think would be useful to yourself and to others. You might need to focus on a particular type of course or particular group of students. I wish you the best of luck coming up with that amazing idea!

Long Hours of Work — Send Your Children Abroad

You will need long hours of undisturbed work time. If you have young children, you know how difficult this can be. I was fortunate enough to be able to send two of my three children abroad for nearly a year. I wrote the bulk of the textbook during that time. I did, however, have one toddler at home, so the most productive working time was the early morning, typically from 4 a.m. Certainly having a supportive spouse is indispensable. To whatever extent you manage it, make sure you have that precious time to get the work done.

Notepad for Ideas — Ideas Come at All Hours

Creative ideas and solutions to problems often come when we are not "actively" working at a desk. Sometimes the best ideas popped into my brain while I was washing the dishes, just waking up, or walking to work. I always had a notepad and wrote the ideas down immediately. This became a habit and I found those notes to be extremely helpful to refer to when I finally sat down at my desk to write.

The other time great ideas came to me was in the classroom. There is no substitute for testing out ideas from your book than a real classroom. You will need to observe how students interact with the materials, take notes and adjust accordingly.

Write, Write, Write — On the Train, at Home, Anywhere

You will need to write a lot for a textbook. And you will have to revise, edit, and write again. I am sure you can imagine the process. It is a very long road. Many of my initial drafts were actually written on the train while commuting to work. I wrote on my phone and later transferred the data to my computer. Sometimes while at home or in the classroom, I used speech-to-text applications to get my thoughts down quickly.

Never Give Up — Overcome All Adversity: "Yo, Adrian!"

You will need to be like the boxer, Rocky Balboa, and keep getting up after getting knocked down again and again. There will be all sorts of barriers that will hinder or block your progress. One near disaster was that my computer died while writing an early draft of the textbook. I had a backup of most of my work on an external hard drive, but some of the software I was using needed to be updated. So, as I was looking for a new computer, I also decided to look for a better desktop publishing program. Fortunately, I found one that was within my budget and could handle the multitude of tasks needed to design the textbook. I will go into more detail about desktop publishing in the next section, but if my computer had not died, I may not have decided to look for new software. As often happens in life, predicaments may lead to other avenues and discoveries. You just need to keep on going. The most important thing is to have passion for what you are doing.

Desktop Publishing Software

You cannot write your textbook in Microsoft Word. Well, you can, in the initial stages, but you will need to transfer that text into some sort of desktop publishing software. Desktop publishing software is necessary to design the book, cover to cover. It will give you the tools for layout, editing graphics, and for setting the specifications for commercial printing. I am not going to get into design or typography, but needless to say, the book should be easily comprehensible and user friendly, both for the teacher and the student.

Many professionals use Adobe InDesign, but it is pricey since it is on a subscription basis and also has a steep learning curve. Microsoft Publisher is a good option if you have Windows Professional. The price is under ¥16,000 JPY ($150 USD) and has all the design tools you will need. For my own design work, I used Serif Page Plus X9. It was a less expensive option, only ¥2,400 JPY ($22 USD) but was powerful, easy to use, and could handle all the design technicalities. Serif can only be used on windows computers.

Whatever desktop publishing software you decide to use, one of the most important things to consider is the quality of your graphics. To ensure that your printed images are crisp and clear, make sure that all your graphics are set at 300 dpi (dots per inch). You can find the specs of your images in the graphics resource manager, which can be found in the menu tab. The graphics resource manager will list all of the graphics in your document and will display the relevant properties, such as resolution specs. If any of your graphics are below 300 dpi, you should not use them. The quality of the printed product will be blurry. If the images that you have chosen are well above 300 dpi, you should reduce the settings accordingly. This will save data space and can help speed up your computer's performance. This can be a factor if you have many images.

When you are making the parameters of your layout, make sure that the inside margins are at least 15mm. This way when the book is open flat, the text can still be easily read.

One tricky aspect of designing the cover was taking into account the spine of the book. You will have to make a separate document for the cover. The number of pages in the book and the thickness of the paper will determine the thickness of the spine. You will have to do some measuring to determine the exact dimensions.

When you have completed the prepress version of your textbook, you will have to choose the settings for professional printing. The printer will need a digital version of your textbook. You will need to choose the PDF/X-1a setting. It is a much larger file than a regular PDF with a specific format for professional printers. It will probably be necessary to set the bleed at 3mm. The bleed area gives the printer a small amount of space to account for slight movements of the paper. The printer may ask you to check other specs such as crop marks or image compression.

As a final thought on the design process, I would suggest getting feedback from people who are more knowledgeable than yourself. Talk to people who know about design, who know about typography, and who know about graphics. They will be able to give you invaluable insights and advice. And if you do not want to do the design work yourself, you can always hire a professional or find a freelancer.

https://www.adobe.com/

https://www.microsoft.com/en-us

https://www.serif.com/en-gb/

(Note that Serif Page Plus is legacy application and is no longer being updated. The company has a new desktop publishing platform, Affinity Publisher.)

Need Engaging Images?

As an independent textbook writer and designer, you will have complete control over the images in your textbook. I have found that images can serve to catch students' attention. Textbooks without images tend to be very boring.

Though images can be pricey from companies like Shutterstock or iStock, quality is assured. However, if you are on a budget, you can try searching through Creative Commons images. Finding the right images can take a great deal of time, but it is definitely worth it. I found several sites which had high-quality images free for download and use, sometimes with attribution, sometimes without. You will have to check the specifics for yourself. Two of the most useful sites were Freepik and Pixabay. Recently I have been using Unsplash as another source for freely usable images.

https://www.freepik.com/

https://pixabay.com/

https://unsplash.com/

One other option is to use freelancers. This may be the best way to get a unique cover design or other graphics. There are several freelance sites available on the internet, like Fiverr or Upwork. You will have to go through a vetting process and decide which freelancer would best be able to serve your needs. In my own experience, I have used Fiverr and have found them to be reliable. Prices will vary but expect to pay at least $50 USD for a cover design.

https://www.fiverr.com/

https://www.upwork.com/

Teamwork

Editor — Ruthless is Better

One of the most essential people on your team would be your editor. I would recommend working with someone who can give you honest, accurate, and insightful feedback. Your editor needs to not only check for typos but needs to offer constructive criticism. Turnaround time is also important. Ideally, your drafts should be corrected in as short a time as possible.

No one works for free, so you will have to work out some sort of business agreement. Your editor, as well as any of the other members of your team may work for a percentage of the royalties, a set price, or even a few beers! You will need to consider your budget and decide on what is fair.

Translator

Depending on the languages used in your textbook, you may or may not need a translator. In my case, it was necessary. Though the majority of the text was written in English, key phrases had Japanese definitions. Luckily, my wife, who is bilingual, was able to do the translation work. My editor, who is also bilingual, checked the translations. If you need to hire a professional, the going rate may be between 4 to 12 yen a word. You will have to shop around.

Guinea Pigs — Students and Teachers to Try Out Your Ideas

Ideas that seem wonderful in your mind may not actually turn out so wonderful in reality. I would strongly suggest trying out every part of your lessons before publishing your book. The lessons should be used in other teachers' classes as well. Feedback from your colleagues will help you to shape the format and content of the lessons. Sometimes what is obvious to you may not be so apparent to others. Ideally, your textbook should be easy to use, not only for students, but for teachers as well.

Need High-Quality Audio?
Recording Engineer — Professional or Good Hobbyist

Some self-published textbooks skip making an audio component because it is too expensive or difficult. I will be honest, it is certainly not easy, and it is not free. But if you have the right people, it can be done, and it can be done well. The key person here would be a recording engineer. I have a colleague who actually studied in this field. He recorded all the voices, added background music and engineered all of the audio tracks that accompanied the textbook. You will need to work very closely with your engineer to make sure the final product is what you envision.

Most likely, your recording engineer will have all of the necessary equipment for making high-quality recordings, such as high-end microphones, pop screens, an audio interface, and DAW software (Digital Audio Workstation). If you are not familiar with editing audio, I do not recommend you do this part by yourself. If, however, you cannot find a recording engineer, you could start off by purchasing a Yeti microphone with a pop screen and download the free DAW Audacity.

https://www.audacityteam.org/

Voice Actors — May Work for Beer

Finding quality voice actors may be a bit difficult. When making the recordings for my own textbook, I was fortunate enough to be working at a large university. My colleagues came from a variety of backgrounds including music and theater or had experience working in radio and television. You will need to find this talent and recruit them.

There are many factors to consider. First, is the quality of their voice, the richness, the accents, and the ability to convey emotion. Second, is their availability. Will they be able to come to the studio at the same time as all the other people involved in the recording? Third is price. You will have to negotiate with the voice actors and come up with an agreement. Some of the voice actors I hired were paid in cash, while others were happy to work for beer! Just make sure they drink the beer *after* the recording!

Recording Studio — Most Schools Have Studios

Another benefit of working at a university is that most of them have recording studios. When doing a professional recording, it is essential to have the right acoustics. You will need to record in a "live room" where no outside sounds will be recorded.

The engineer will set up the microphones and make sure that the voice actors' voices will be recorded properly. You will probably have to go through several test runs and adjust accordingly.

Most likely, you will need a script. The voice actors should have at least several days to go over the script and practice their lines. I would also suggest that you make a demo recording by yourself to give to the voice actors. This was especially helpful for the non-native English speakers. It helped show expression, tone, and pacing.

Aside from having a recording engineer and a team of voice actors, you will need a director. That is probably going to be you! As the recording takes place, you will have to evaluate the performance and give instructions. Sometimes the voice actors will give stellar performances, while at other times, not so stellar. It is much better to get the recording as close to perfect in the studio rather than trying to fix things in post-production.

Free Music Archive

Depending on what you want in a recording, you may need some background music, sounds or other types of audio. I found that the Free Music Archive was a fantastic resource on the web. I was able to find the right type of music to add to our recordings as well as chimes to indicate key points in the audio. We chose audio listed under a Creative Commons license (CC BY 4.0) which simply needed attribution. On their website, there are more details about licensing.

https://www.freemusicarchive.org/

Freelancers

If you do not have access to voice actors, you may be able to find quality performers on the same freelancer sites that I mentioned earlier, like Fiverr or Upwork. You will have to check sample recordings and make sure that they can deliver what you need. I would recommend listening with high quality headphones, not just on your computer speakers. Prices can be as little as $5 USD, but more realistically, you might pay about $50 USD for a 250-word recording.

ISBN, JAN (Japanese Article Number)

Getting an ISBN in Japan is certainly not a simple process. Here is the official website for the Japan ISBN Agency. The website is in Japanese only, but Google translate can help a bit if needed.

https://isbn.jpo.or.jp/ (Japanese only)

To be honest, it was a giant headache. That being said, all the information is on the website. There is a downloadable manual that will explain the required steps to obtain an ISBN. The initial correspondence will be via the website, but you will also be contacted via email, regular post mail, and possibly telephone calls and faxes. The whole process will take at least 15 business days. I would say you will need at least a full month to go through everything. Being fluent in Japanese is also a great help.

One thing you will need to decide on is the name of your publishing house. The name can be whatever you like, so long as no other company is using it. In my own case, I simply used the same name as our language school, Oak Hills. Of course, your business needs to be registered with the local tax office. The simplest type of business would be a sole proprietorship.

I would suggest buying a set of ten ISBNs, rather than just one. The cost for ten is a little over ¥20,000 JPY ($180 USD). The Japan ISBN agency will send you the list of ISBNs assigned to your publishing house. These numbers cannot be transferred to any other publishing house and can only be used for books published under your company's name.

Most books published in Japan also have a four-digit code number. This number tells bookstores what kind of book it is, whether it is about Japanese history, economics, English language, etc. The manual will have a chart indicating the various types of book categories. Typical codes for English textbooks are C0082, C1082, and C3082. You will see this number on the back or inside cover. If the first digit is 0, this signifies a "general" book. If the first digit is 1, this signifies an "educational" book. If the first digit is 3, this signifies a "specialized" book. The second digit is usually 0, because it does not apply to English language textbooks. The last two digits are the most significant. An 82 signifies an English language book.

The other important number that you will need is the JAN (Japan Article Number). You can obtain information for this on the same website as the ISBN. This 13-digit number will include the book code number, as well as the list price of the book. So, for example, the JAN number for my own book, *The English Gym*, is: 192-3082-02800-9. The first three digits is a standard prefix 192, which signifies a domestic publication. The next four digits correspond to the code number of the book, in this case 3082, indicating a specialized English textbook, the next five digits indicates the list price of the book in yen, 02800 JPY. The final digit is a check digit. The last digit of a barcode number is a computer check digit which makes sure the barcode is correctly composed. In this particular case, it is a 9. Below is a simply online check digit calculator.

https://www.gs1.org/services/check-digit-calculator

You will need to register the ISBN/JAN pairing along with title of the book, author's name, name of your publishing house, price, etc. with the Japanese national database of published books. For a small publishing house, the registration cost is about ¥10,000 ($90 USD), which needs to be renewed every three years. The national database allows booksellers to find publishers. Booksellers can then find contact information such as phone numbers, websites, and addresses of the publishing house. Every book published in Japan is listed in the national database. You can visit the database website and try searching for any book published in Japan.

https://www.books.or.jp/ (Japanese only)

So, after you have the ISBN and JAN for your book, you will need to create the barcodes to match. The manual lists some Japanese companies that will do this for you, but you can actually do it easily yourself, online. There is a website called Barcode Tec-It, which can generate barcodes from the numbers you enter. You can then download the images and insert them using your desktop publishing software. You will find a button for ISBNs, but you will not find one for the JAN. Use the EAN-13, instead. The EAN is the European equivalent to the JAN. It is basically the same system, just a different name.

https://barcode.tec-it.com/en

There is one final step in the registration process. After the actual printing of the book, you will be asked to send a physical copy to one of the offices. For more information on the

entire process, you can refer to the Japan Publishing Organization for Information Infrastructure Development website.

http://jpo.or.jp/index.html (Japanese only)

Need Professional Printing?

Obviously, you cannot print your book at home. This has got to be done professionally, and it will probably be your biggest expense. For myself, I decided to print locally at Mojoprint in Osaka, Japan. The company has bilingual staff and professional designers who could answer all of my questions. They were very helpful with advice on getting the prepress version ready before going to print.

Mojoprint website: https://mojoprint.jp/

You will have to consider the type and weight of the paper. For books that will be written in, I would suggest an uncoated matte surface, not glossy. The weight or thickness of the paper must be considered. The printer will have samples so that you can choose. We decided to use a 70kg, uncoated matte paper for the inside pages, and a 180kg coated cover. If the book has a spine, you will need to choose a gluebound magazine type, rather than saddle stitched or staple bound. This produces a durable textbook that is easy to write in.

You will also have to decide whether to print in full color, two color, black and white, or some variation. You might, for example, choose to have a color cover with a black and white interior. Prices will vary, especially depending on how many copies you purchase. For our initial printing, we ordered 1,000 textbooks, full color, 144 pages. The cost was about ¥600,000 JPY ($5,500 USD), or ¥600 per textbook. The following year we ordered 2,000 textbooks, paying ¥700,000 JPY ($6,400 USD), or ¥350 per textbook.

I am sure that overseas printers would print at a lower cost, but I found the staff at Mojoprint to be very professional and that the quality of the finished product was exceptional. You may, however, want to do some research into printers from Hong Kong, mainland China, Korea, or India. And with all printers, the more books you order, the cheaper the per unit cost.

Your Textbook is Good to Go! Now, You Have to Tell Everyone About It!

Congratulations! You made it! The final product is now in your hands. The cover is bright and shiny, there are no typos (hopefully) and it has that new book smell. Better yet, it is *your* book! Now what do you do? Was the book meant only for your personal use? Probably not. Probably you are going to want other teachers and students to use the book. You have got to show your book to your colleagues and convince them that it is the best book in the universe. That may be a bit of a stretch, but your book may actually be just what another teacher was looking for.

One of the best ways to get people interested in your book is to give away free samples. If teachers have your book, they are much more likely to adopt it in their classes. They can easily try out a few lessons to see if they like it. If teachers do not have your book, there is little chance that they will use it. So, I would suggest giving away as many free samples as possible.

In order to get the word out about your textbook, you can organize book looks or presentations at universities and colleges. It might be a good idea to have these events

during lunch time and provide food and drinks to participants. Teachers may or may not be interested in your book, but they will certainly be interested in free pizza. And once you have their attention, you will have a platform to talk about your book. I have even held events at local pubs, coordinating with other authors and musicians, doing pub-quizzes and creating an enjoyable atmosphere.

There are also conferences and expos where you can promote your book. There are two ways to approach this. The first is very straightforward; you purchase a commercial slot and engage with potential customers directly. You can give away free samples and you will also have the opportunity to talk to people for the entire length of the event. For this option, you will need to pay for the space and time.

The other option is to submit a proposal that will contribute to the theme of the conference. Personally, I do not think that the proposal should simply be about your book. You should focus on a pedagogical concept or informative component that can be illustrated using a portion of your book. This may limit the time and scope of your exposure, but the costs will be considerably less than a purely commercial approach.

You can also take to social media for promotion. This approach can be the most cost effective and can inform potential customers of upcoming events. It can also be used to bring attention to ideas that you would like to share with the community.

The teachers who will initially use your book will be colleagues that know you and respect you as a teacher. If the textbook you made matches their teaching style, the content is appropriate, and the students are engaged and learning, then they will probably continue to use the book. On the other hand, not all teachers will love your book. You will need to keep a proper perspective and manage your expectations.

Make a Web Page!

Having a support website that compliments and adds to your textbook can be a great asset. Do not be scared; making your own website is not as difficult as it once was. You do not need to learn coding and you do not need to hire a pro. There are a lot of website builders that you can research. Squarespace, Weebly, and Wix are some popular examples.

I use Wix as the website builder for all of my websites. Wix has a lot of great templates that you can choose from, or you can start from scratch. The best thing about Wix is that it is a WYSIWYG editor, meaning What You See Is What You Get. It allows you to see what the end result will look like while the webpage is being created. In many ways it is very similar to using desktop publishing software, with the added benefit of having cloud-based media including audio and video.

Wix website: https://www.wix.com/

For the support website that I created for *The English Gym*, I included many features that would help students with their studies, and many features that would help the teacher instruct and manage the class. For students, they can practice vocabulary using Quizlet study sets and also access online tests and quizzes. For teachers, they have access to a digital version of the textbook, which is great when projected on a large screen, and have links to pre-made Kahoot quiz games, timers, background music, animated teacher tutorials, and much more. I could include all of the things that I found helpful in the classroom and share them with other teachers. Having a website is a really powerful tool.

Quizlet link: https://quizlet.com/

Kahoot link: https://kahoot.com/

For a commercial site, you will need to purchase a domain name and also get your website hosted. The website builders will offer various packages that you could subscribe to. Expect to pay around ¥10,000 JPY ($90 USD) a year. If you would like to check out an example of a website designed to accompany a textbook, you can click here: https://www.englishgymjapan.com/

Office Manager - Fluent Japanese Speaker

So, you have written the book, obtained your ISBN and JAN, printed the books, made your website and have several teachers who are just dying to use your textbook. The teachers have filled out the university textbook request forms and now the bookstores need to contact you. How do they do that?

On the inside cover of your book, make sure you have all of the relevant information printed in English and in Japanese. You will need the title of the book, author, sales contact person, name of the publishing house, address, telephone numbers, ISBN, book code, URL for your publishing house website, and email address of the publishing house. This page can be photocopied and given to the university bookstore by the teacher ordering the books. Since your publishing house is probably unknown to the bookstore, this will help them contact you. This method works only if you know in advance which universities will need copies of your book.

Eventually, hopefully, someone will want to use your book who has never met you. They will simply fill in the university textbook request form and let the bookstore take care of the rest. Now, the bookstore has to find you. They have probably never heard of Joe Shmoe's Publishing House. They might do a Google search and if your website SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is good, they will be able to find you. But that is not guaranteed.

The bookstores will probably go to the Japanese national database of published books, and do a search by typing in the ISBN, title of the book, author, or name of the publisher. All of your data will be in the database if you have registered it properly. Then from the database, they can find your contact information and will send an email or call.

The last, vital person on your team will be your sales manager. Someone needs to communicate with the bookstores. In our own small business, that happens to be my wife. Most correspondence takes place via email, though there is the occasional phone call, and some stores may even use a fax machine.

The busy time for orders is usually late winter to early spring. Bookstores will often make an initial contact in February. Book orders will generally come in early March and we will ship according to the timeline of each bookstore, usually just before the spring semester begins.

Keep in mind that the turnaround time for domestic printers may be around two weeks. Overseas printers may take longer. You will need to have a good estimate of potential sales, so that you will have enough books in stock. Storage space may be an issue. A thousand books take up plenty of space and weigh a considerable amount! Just ask your back after moving them by yourself! Here is an example from my own experience: 1,000 textbooks, 144-pages, correlates to 17 boxes, about 60 books per box, dimensions 43x31x26cm

(size100), weighing 25kg each. If you live in a small apartment, you may not have the extra space. If you have a large enough house, you will probably be fine. Wherever you store your books, it should be dry. You do not want your textbooks to get moldy!

You will need to negotiate payment terms. Usually bookstores will pay 75% to 80% of the list price of the textbook. So, if your book is priced at ¥1,000 JPY, the bookstore will pay you ¥750 to ¥800 JPY per book. You will also need to determine who will pay for shipping and if you will accept unsold books. Our policy is that we pay for the shipping to the bookstores, but that the bookstores pay the return shipping costs for unsold books. If the bookstore knows that they will sell your book in the next term, they may keep a small stock on hand.

As with any business, you will need standardized forms for estimates and invoices. Do not forget to include sales tax on your billing documents. Small businesses whose sales are under 10 million yen are allowed to retain the tax collected. You will also need a bank account where funds can be deposited. The bookstores will need to know the name of the bank, branch, and account number. The bank account should bear the name of your publishing house. Payments for the spring term are usually received in late July.

We ship out the majority of our books in just one or two days. Occasionally bookstores will order more books in April if their stock has been depleted. We have found the post office to be the cheapest way to ship large amounts of books. If you bring the packed boxes in yourself, and you ship to the same destination within a year, you get some discounts. The maximum weight for boxes is 25kg, which is approximately 100, 70-page textbooks. The price for shipping, with discounts, is about ¥1,200 JPY per 25kg box.

If you want to forgo distributing the textbooks yourself, you could contact a national distributor. You will need to work out a contract with them. They will handle storage, shipping and all the dealings with bookstores. Your book would also be put into their catalogue. In exchange for that, they will probably require 50 to 60% of the sales.

Reach Your Goals!
There you have it, the A to Z of self-publishing. Now your textbook is being used at several universities, you have a profitable business, and you are planning to retire at 50 and move to Hawaii. Well, two out of three isn't so bad. Hawaii may have to wait. But if you write a good book and other teachers want to use it, then you will be successful.

Benefits
The number one benefit to self-publication is creative freedom. You can write the book and design it without any restraints. Another benefit is to actually see your work in action. Hopefully you will be able to use your book in your own classes. If it was designed well, you will see the fruits of your labor in a highly motivated and engaged classroom. And, if other teachers can see the value of your work, they too will use it in their classrooms and see positive academic gains. Finally, if you have managed your expenses well, you should turn a profit in the first year of publication.

Risks
The greatest risk, in my mind, is that other teachers will not see the value of your book and will not use it. If other teachers do not use the book, it will be difficult to turn a profit. You will also run into adversity when some departments do not allow self-published materials.

You will have to convince the people in charge to reconsider their position, which is unlikely. You may end up with hundreds of unsold books in your living room.

Conclusion

Self-publication is an arduous, long, and often lonely road. You will need to have the perseverance and passion to see your project through to the end. You will also need to enlist the help of others. I hope this guide will be of service to educators who plan on publishing their own materials.

Of course, many of the resources mentioned in this article can be used for projects aside from writing a textbook. You can apply the techniques and tools to make engaging handouts, using desktop publishing software and high-quality graphics. You can make a website to add a digital component to your classes. You can use 3rd party software like Quizlet and Kahoot to help with vocabulary building and motivation. The possibilities are vast.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions, need more details, or if you have found other ways to overcome some of the many challenges. I would be very happy to hear from you. I will add any new insights to the website on self-publication.

Good luck, and happy publishing!

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Appendix of Resources

Free Website on Independent Publishing

https://johncarlejapan.wixsite.com/publishing

Adobe, InDesign Desktop Publishing Software

https://www.adobe.com/

Microsoft, Search for Microsoft Publisher

https://www.microsoft.com/en-us

Serif Desktop Publishing Software

https://www.serif.com/en-gb/

(Note that Serif Page Plus is legacy application and is no longer being updated. The company has a new desktop publishing platform, Affinity Publisher.)

Freepik, Creative Commons Images

https://www.freepik.com/

Pixabay, Creative Commons Images

https://pixabay.com/

Unslpash, Creative Commons Images

https://unsplash.com/

Fiverr, Freelancer Site

https://www.fiverr.com/

Upwork, Freelancer Site

https://www.upwork.com/

Audacity, Free Digital Audio Workstation

https://www.audacityteam.org/

Free Music Archive, Creative Commons Music

https://www.freemusicarchive.org/

Japan ISBN Agency

https://isbn.jpo.or.jp/ (Japanese only)

Online Check Digit Calculator

https://www.gs1.org/services/check-digit-calculator

Japan Book Database Search

https://www.books.or.jp/ (Japanese only)

Barcode Creator, Use EAN-13 to Create JAN

https://barcode.tec-it.com/en

Japan Publishing Organization for Information Infrastructure Development

http://jpo.or.jp/index.html (Japanese only)

Mojoprint

https://mojoprint.jp/

Wix Website Designer

https://www.wix.com/

Quizlet

https://quizlet.com/

Kahoot

https://kahoot.com/

The English Gym Website

https://www.englishgymjapan.com/

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Want to write something for the next issue of BtK?

the next deadline for submissions is June 10th, 2020.

For more details, please refer to "*How to Submit*" on our website.

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