

tellwell

Guide to Self-Publishing

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PUBLISHING A BOOK IS EASY

We know it doesn't seem that way. There are many options out there, and understanding the publishing industry, especially for first-time authors, can be confusing.

Tellwell created this simple guide to walk you through the publishing process. We'll take a look at the five steps to publishing a book and go over the differences between the traditional and assisted self-publishing models, as well as the do-it-yourself approach. We'll also walk you through which publishing choice may be right for you, and introduce you to Tellwell and some of our authors.



A NEW ERA

You've decided to write and publish a book. Perhaps you even have a completed draft of a manuscript. Congratulations! You are following your dream of becoming a published author.

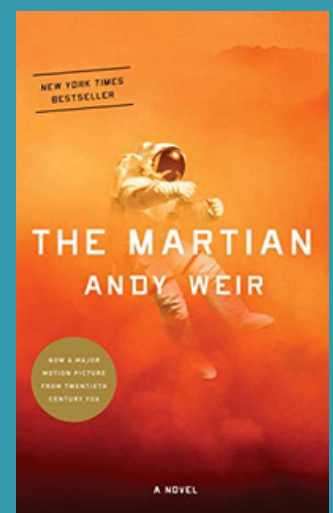
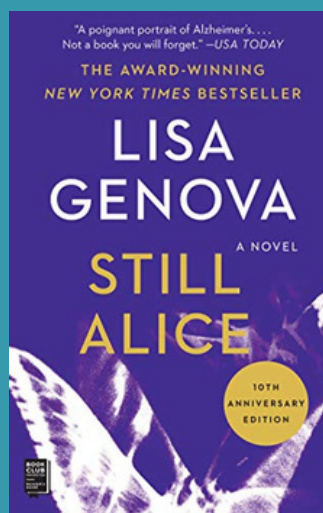
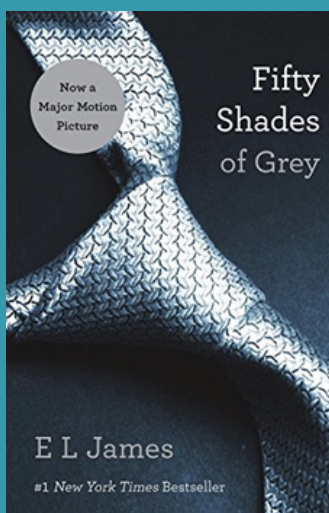
It's an exciting time to publish a book! Technology and new players are disrupting a traditional industry. No longer is it only the large companies deciding who does or does not get published.

Now, the doors are wide open. Readers, not publishers, decide which books succeed. A high-quality, well-edited manuscript; enticing cover design; and a strong marketing effort are crucial to success.

Independent authors are reaching levels of success unheard of decades ago. It's never been so easy to publish a book, motivating more people to share their work by publishing independently.

“ READERS, NOT PUBLISHERS, DECIDE WHICH BOOKS SUCCEED. ”

ISBNs FOR SELF-PUBLISHED TITLES INCREASED OVER 900% SINCE 2006. – BOWKER



E. L. James' *Fifty Shades* trilogy landed her on Forbes' list of the highest-earning authors. Her book was originally self-published.

Lisa Genova was rejected by traditional publishers and self-published. Simon & Schuster later acquired it for a reported half-million dollars.

Andy Weir's *The Martian* was a self-published Kindle bestseller before Random House and then Hollywood came knocking.

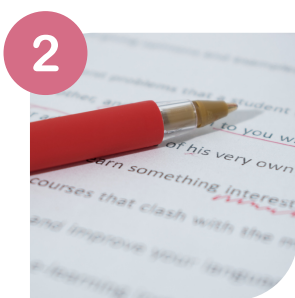
THE FIVE STEPS

The five steps to publishing are the same whether you go the traditional or self-publishing route



WRITING

You can't publish a book without writing it. If you are reading this guide, you probably have an idea for a book or you have already started working on it. If you are at this stage, write, write, write as much as you can until you have a completed first draft.



EDITING

When you write a book, you make thousands of creative decisions. By the time you are finished your first, second, or third draft, it becomes difficult to see how your readers will experience your manuscript. An editor provides fresh eyes and works with you to strengthen your writing.



DESIGN

Once the manuscript is edited, a designer creates a compelling cover that will help the book sell. The designer also lays out the interior of the book to ensure a comfortable reading experience, and confirms the design files meet all print and ebook specifications.



DISTRIBUTION

Now that you have a finished book, it is time to make it available for people to buy! You can make your book available to about 39,000 booksellers, including Amazon, Indigo, and Barnes & Noble. Print-on-demand technology allows for printing one copy per purchase, saving you from having to print books in bulk.



MARKETING

Your book looks great and is available for sale online, but it won't sell itself! Now it's time to let the world know it exists. Book marketing basics include a website and social media presence, and to really create buzz you need to appear in the press and on podcasts, send copies to reviewers, and plan a book launch or tour.

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

VS

SELF-PUBLISHING



In the traditional model, the author must first find an agent willing to represent them. Agents have connections with publishing companies, and once you have representation, they will pitch your book to publishers. They try to get authors the best deal they can, and they receive a commission (usually 15%) for their work.

If a traditional publisher agrees to a deal, they will pay the author an advance for their book and, in exchange, receive exclusive rights to publish and sell the book.

The author then completes the writing of the book with editorial help from the publisher.

The publisher manages and controls the publishing and distribution process. They take on the risk of publishing the book and keep almost all royalties.

The traditional publishing process can take years to complete.

In the self-publishing model, the author controls the publishing process from start to finish. There is no submissions process, and no advance on sales. The author takes on the risks and costs of publishing, but receives much more of the reward, in the form of royalties.

The author is in control of the publishing process: writing, editing, cover design, distribution, and marketing. They retain all the rights to their work.

Authors may decide to take on aspects of the publishing work themselves, such as design, editing, illustrations, and marketing. They may hire contractors to do this work for them, or they may choose to work with an assisted self-publisher, which have the added benefit of guiding authors through an unfamiliar industry.

Self-publishing a book is a much faster process than traditional publishing, typically taking months rather than years.



THE BIG PARADOX



There is a contradiction between what traditional publishers look for in an ideal author and what authors are often looking for in a traditional publisher.

In short, authors are hoping to find a publisher who will do all of the non-writing work, including marketing.

But publishers are hoping to find authors who already have an established audience to minimize the cost of marketing.

WHICH MODEL OF PUBLISHING IS BETTER?

Neither of these models is inherently right or wrong. Selecting the direction that is right for you depends on your goals and resources.

If you are an established author with a large marketing platform, then it may be possible to get a literary agent and publishing offers. In that case, you should weigh the pros and cons of any offers you get by asking: "Does the advance I'm being offered and the marketing investments they say they will make justify giving up creative control, revenues, and my book rights?"

But for the majority of first-time authors who don't yet have a large following, getting a literary agent to represent you and securing a traditional publishing offer isn't a viable option. Self-publishing or not publishing at all become the only two choices.

DO-IT-YOURSELF (DIY) VS. ASSISTED SELF-PUBLISHING



Many aspects of self-publishing can be done directly by a tech- and marketing-savvy author, but it requires time, talent, and knowledge of the publishing industry.

Some of the more detailed steps in the publishing process include:

- Finding and hiring an editor
- Selecting a designer to create the book cover and interior layout, and ensuring they provide design files in the proper format
- Acquiring ISBN numbers, selecting BISAC codes and keywords
- Pricing the book
- Selecting the book's metadata, such as title, description, keywords, and categories
- Choosing a print-on-demand service
- Choosing a printing company for bulk orders
- Creating print-ready and ebook files
- Getting your book into the major ebook retailers
- Going through legal, tax, and banking paperwork with each distribution partner
- Creating and executing a marketing plan, such as building a website, engaging with social media, and generating reader and editorial reviews and publicity

WHY SOME AUTHORS CHOOSE TO WORK WITH AN ASSISTED SELF-PUBLISHING COMPANY

Authors can easily become overwhelmed with all the steps and decisions that need to be made. They benefit from guidance through the process, and a dedicated team to take care of the critical work.

It's why many independent authors choose to work with assisted self-publishing companies such as Tellwell. We act as a one-stop shop for authors to help with the entire publishing process.

Self-publishing companies have a team of editors, book designers, illustrators, marketing consultants, and project managers who work with the author from start to finish.

SELF-PUBLISHING

VS

TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING

PROS

- High royalties
- Full creative control
- Copyrights
- Fast turnaround times
- *You* decide whether your book is published, not a gatekeeper

CONS

- The author covers the up-front costs
- The author has to oversee the project themselves, or work with a self-publishing company
- The author needs to make many decisions
- The author has to market the book
- It takes a lot of effort to get it right

PROS

- Publisher covers up-front costs
- The author is paid an advance
- High prestige in some circles
- It's easier to get your book stocked on bookstore shelves
- May help you market the book

CONS

- Very competitive, with an estimated rejection rate of 99%
- Slow—it may take years to publish
- Low royalties
- You give up creative control
- You give up copyrights

ASSISTED SELF-PUBLISHING

VS

DIY

PROS

- One-stop shop for all your publishing needs
- A talented team to help you bring your book to market
- A team of professionals to guide you through the process and offer advice
- Feeling empowered, educated and supported through your author journey

CONS

- Costs may be higher depending on your package
- The reputation and quality of services of self-publishing companies vary
- Not all companies offer the option of 100% net royalties

PROS

- You can save money if you do everything yourself
- Turnaround time is under your control
- The finished product is 100% a reflection of your work
- If you decide to hire contractors, you can work with them directly

CONS

- It's a lot of work to do everything yourself
- Quality may suffer if professionals are not involved
- Steep learning curve
- If hiring contractors, it can be difficult to effectively manage them all

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN EVALUATING AN ASSISTED-SELF-PUBLISHING COMPANY



There are a high number of self-publishing companies with varying reputations and quality of service. It's important to do your research and ask the right questions. Here are a few key questions to ask.

Does the company offer the option of 100% net royalties?

This should be a simple yes or no answer. Some companies, such as Tellwell, may offer 100% net royalties, along with other options. There are, however, a number of companies who don't offer the option of 100% net royalties at all, while still charging for up-front services. This is something to be aware of in initial discussions.

Does the company have a reputation for quality work?

Companies pop up all the time, but don't last long if they don't do quality work, so it's important to ensure that the company you choose has a track record of delighting customers. Look at Google reviews, the Better Business Bureau, and other evidence to indicate a long list of happy customers.

Is the company charging fair market rates for the value of their services?

Be aware that there are some online commentators who believe it is wrong to charge for any publishing-related work, as if editors, illustrators, and other publishing professionals should all work for free. This is an outdated and incorrect assumption that usually comes from people who don't understand the full breadth of publishing options, and the upsides and downsides to each. The work of a publishing team is critical to creating a quality book and a satisfying publishing experience. The real question is whether the pricing is transparent and fair.

Will I be able to purchase my print-ready PDF files and ebook files—such as EPUB—upon publication?

Being able to purchase your print-ready PDF files means you can work with any printer you wish, in any country. Having the flexibility to choose a printing company for bulk orders means you have more options in the way of pricing, quality, and location. If a self-publishing company allows you to print bulk orders through them only, there is likely a substantial markup and you are not getting the best option. It may also force you to price your book too high to make up for the high printing costs. The EPUB file is important for book-marketing purposes, such as awards, reviews, and blogger/media outreach. Some companies may not offer the option to purchase these files, which greatly limits your printing and book-marketing options.

DECISION TIME: A 5-STEP GUIDE

STEP 1

SELF-PUBLISHING OR TRADITIONAL PUBLISHING?



Traditional Publishing

If you have an established following for your writing and feel confident your work can attract a professional literary agent, and you're willing to forego most future royalties to save the expense of initial production costs, your first step is to start reaching out to agents with a solid book proposal.



Self-Publishing

Are you eager to publish your book in less than a year? Do you want to keep creative control and the rights to your work? Do you want to earn high royalties, and are you prepared to invest in your book project? Then self-publishing is probably the best way to start.

STEP 2

DO-IT-YOURSELF OR ASSISTED APPROACH?



Do-It-Yourself

Are you technologically savvy, with graphic design skills? Do you have friends or family with professional editing or writing experience who would be willing to edit your work? Do you have knowledge of the publishing industry? Do you have time to invest in doing everything yourself? Is your budget limited? Then a DIY approach may be best.



Assisted Approach

Is a high-quality book with a professional cover design and edited manuscript important to you? Do you want help navigating the publishing process? Do you want to work with a team of experts who can offer advice and suggestions along the way? Do you have a budget to hire help? If you would like to work with a professional team who can help you navigate unfamiliar territory, then working with an assisted-self-publishing company is a great choice.

DECISION TIME: A 5-STEP GUIDE

STEP 3

WHAT SERVICES DO YOU NEED?



Do you need help in designing a cover and formatting a book for various distribution channels? Do you need an editor for copyediting or thorough content editing? Do you need an author website and help marketing your book?

Narrow down the services where professional support would be valuable, and start shopping around.

STEP 4

WHICH COMPANY BEST SUITS YOUR NEEDS?



When evaluating self-publishing companies, use our question guide as a framework. You will be evaluating companies on their services, pricing, reputation, and team. As part of your research, you should read Google reviews, look at the company's rating on the Better Business Bureau, and comb through their social media channels and website to learn about their staff and other authors who have published with them. It may be beneficial to keep notes in a document or spreadsheet.

STEP 5

MAKE YOUR DECISION.



Many companies offer free phone consultations, where you can ask questions about their services and packages.

Do your research, then make the decision that makes you the most comfortable!

WHY TELLWELL?

- ✓ With an easy-to-use author portal, Octavo, and a world-class team of publishing professionals, Tellwell guides authors step-by-step through the publishing process with trusted publishing advice, guidance and management suited to their needs and skills.
- ✓ Tellwell offers a full-service team approach. We are a friendly team of experienced editors, designers, illustrators, marketers, and project managers with exceptionally high standards of excellence.
- ✓ We offer the option of 100% net royalties, and have the smartest distribution model in the industry. Tellwell doesn't inflate the distribution costs at all. You are taking the risk, so you should receive all the rewards.
- ✓ We offer flexible printing options, including print-on-demand and competitive bulk printing. But if you prefer to print elsewhere, no problem! We will provide you with the files you need to do so. We do not lock authors into contracts with high printing costs that force them to price their book too high.
- ✓ We take author empowerment and education seriously. We have created numerous resources for each step of the process, including videos, webinars, and informative articles.

4,000+

books published

4.5/5

Google reviews rating

A+

BBB rating

“ We create a vibrant culture by helping people share their stories. ”

ABOUT TELLWELL

We are an experienced and friendly team of publishing professionals who want to give authors an exceptional publishing experience. We know the industry can be confusing and overwhelming. Our consultative approach guides and empowers authors throughout the process.

Tellwell was founded in 2015 by Timothy Lindsay in Victoria, British Columbia. Lindsay started Tellwell after he noticed a gap in the assisted-self-publishing industry. The major self-publishing companies were not offering 100% net royalties, nor were they offering a personalized and transparent approach to publishing. He built a company that offered both, and the best distribution deal in the industry. Tellwell has grown into an international company, serving authors in Canada, the USA, Australia, and Europe.

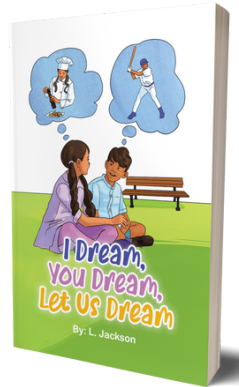
TELLWELL SUCCESS STORIES



Lamar Jackson, Maryland

I Dream, You Dream, Let Us Dream!

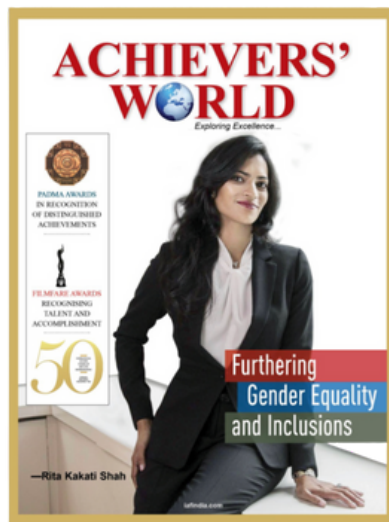
The Baltimore Ravens quarterback published his first children's book about dreaming big and achieving your goals. And who better to talk about going for your goals than the NFL superstar himself! Jackson's book was featured in *Sports Illustrated* and on *CBS News*. He shares updates on his book to his three million followers on Instagram.



Vali Benson, Arizona

Blood and Silver

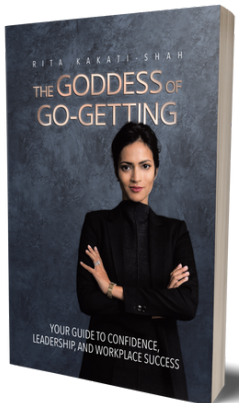
Award-winning young-adult author Vali Benson has been sweeping up major book awards. Her debut novel received a gold medal in two categories at the San Francisco Book Festival, first place at the New York Book Festival in the YA category, and first place in the Royal Dragonfly Book Awards and Moonbeam Children's Book Awards. The Arizona-based author was also a winner at the International Book Awards, the Paris Book Festival, Readers' Favorite Book Awards, the American Fiction Awards, among several others.



Rita Kakati-Shah, New York

The Goddess of Go-Getting

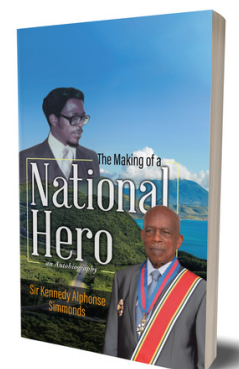
Rita Kakati-Shah is an award-winning entrepreneur, public speaker, media contributor, and best-selling author. She was recognized by President Joe Biden with the Presidential Lifetime Achievement Award for her international mentoring and volunteering to support young people, women, and minorities of all ages. She founded and is the CEO of Uma, a company providing strategic expertise in the areas of gender, diversity, and inclusion to Fortune 500 companies. Kakati-Shah has been featured in *Forbes*, *FastCompany*, *Entrepreneur Magazine*, and *Starter Story*, among others. *The Goddess of Go-Getting* has become the number-one bestseller across multiple categories on Amazon.



Sir Kennedy Alphonse Simmonds, St. Kitts and Nevis

The Making of a National Hero

Sir Kennedy Alphonse Simmonds, the only living National Hero of St. Kitts and Nevis, was the first prime minister of that country, serving from 1982 to 1995. His memoir chronicles his humble upbringing and historic foray into Caribbean politics, as he played a vital role guiding it out of colonialism without further fragmentation.



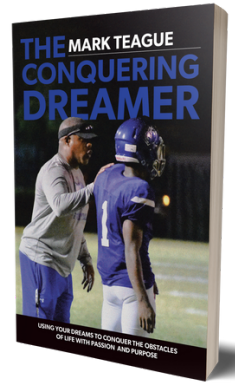
TELLWELL SUCCESS STORIES



Mark Teague, Louisiana

The Conquering Dreamer: Using Your Dreams to Conquer the Obstacles of Life With Passion and Purpose

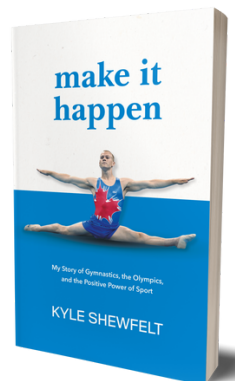
Mark Teague is a nationally recognized American high school football coach. Over his 20-year coaching career, he has become known for turning long-standing struggling football programs into success stories, making him a sought-after public speaker throughout the United States. *The Conquering Dreamer* quickly climbed to the top of Amazon's new-releases list. Coach Teague has appeared on television to promote his book, hosted numerous book events, and his memoir has been discussed in book clubs across the Southern United States.



Kyle Shewfelt, Alberta, Canada

Make It Happen: My Story of Gymnastics, the Olympics, and the Positive Power of Sport

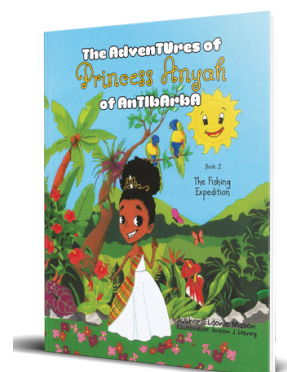
The three-time olympian and gold medal Olympic gymnast from Calgary, Canada, describes his pursuit of gymnastics glory in his motivational memoir. He talks about his courageous comeback from two broken legs and how the difference-makers in his life guided him along the way. Shewfelt has appeared on major media outlets, including CTV News, Global News, and the *Toronto Sun*.



Eldonie Mason, New Jersey

The Adventures of Princess Anyah of Antibarba

The award-winning children's author is an entertainment and business attorney who founded her own law firm and media company. Originally from the Caribbean island of Antigua, she moved to the United States to pursue the American dream. Her children's book is dedicated to her niece, who believed she could not be a princess because she wasn't white with long hair. Mason sprang into action and wrote a tale of an adventurous Black princess with short hair. *The Adventures of Princess Anyah of Antibarba* was recognized by the Purple Dragonfly Book Awards in multiple categories. The author has appeared on the cover of magazines, on the radio, in school classrooms and at community events to promote her book!



PUBLISHING PACKAGES



PUBLISH WITH TELLWELL

Tellwell offers four standard publishing packages for fiction and non-fiction books, and another five packages for children's books and color books.

To customize a package to meet your specific needs, call us and speak with a publishing consultant at 1.800.891.4160.

STANDARD – \$1,399

A graphic designer will compose your book's front and back cover and lay out your interior. There are two revision rounds for each to incorporate your feedback. This package includes comprehensive paperback distribution to 40,000 booksellers worldwide.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

PROFESSIONAL – \$2,799

Included are cover design and interior layout, as well as distribution in paperback, hardcover, and the major ebook platforms. We help craft your book-marketing strategy. We'll also create a book backgrounder to help you get started!

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

ALL-INCLUSIVE – \$5,099


The All-Inclusive package takes your book to the next level by adding substantive editing and an author website. The substantive edit includes one round of content editing and one round of copy editing to enhance the quality of your manuscript. The author website helps you build an online presence, create a fanbase, and market your book.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

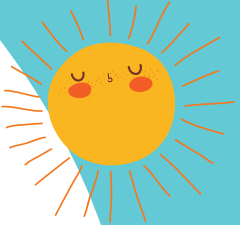
TRADITIONAL – \$10,999

It's called the *Traditional* package because it gives your book a similar treatment to that of a traditional publisher. This includes three rounds of editing: content, copy editing, and a post-layout proofread. Our full marketing support includes a book-marketing consultation and strategy, author website, book backgrounder, and classic marketing package.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)



COLOR & CHILDREN'S BOOKS



STANDARD - \$1,399

The Standard package includes design and distribution. You'll get a book that looks great and is available in paperback format in mainstream sales channels. This package is best for people who don't need help with illustrations, editing, or publicity.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

PROFESSIONAL - \$2,599

The Professional package is perfect for authors who have their own illustrations. We provide editing services to polish your manuscript, and help with marketing your book.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

ILLUSTRATED - \$2,599

The Illustrated package takes it up a notch by offering up to eight illustrations. Your book will be available in paperback format to 40,000 booksellers and online retailers. You have the option to add hardcover, editing, or marketing support.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

ALL-INCLUSIVE - \$5,599

The All-Inclusive includes up to 16 illustrations. We design and distribute your book in paperback and hardcover format. We provide content and copy editing. Plus we develop a marketing plan, create an author website, and prepare a book backgrounder.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)

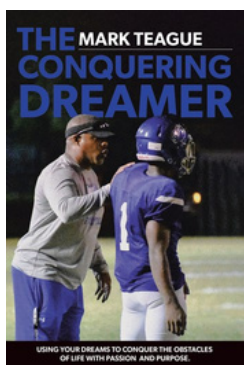
TRADITIONAL - \$7,499

The Traditional package is the all-out experience for children's book authors! It includes full editorial services, and we go the extra mile and execute the children's marketing services on your behalf.

[MORE DETAILS HERE](#)



Testimonials



Tellwell was recommended to me by a good friend who authored a children's book. She led me to Tellwell, and told me how easy the process of getting her work published was for her. Not only was I sold, I experienced the same thing. My project manager and marketing manager were both EXTREMELY helpful, and made sure I was informed of my book's progress to distribution every step of the way.

Mark Teague, Louisiana

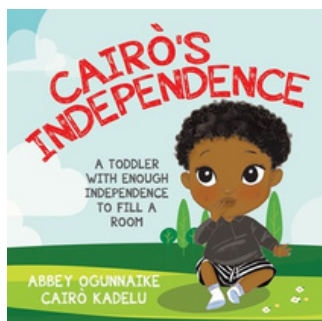
THE CONQUERING DREAMER: USING YOUR DREAMS TO CONQUER THE OBSTACLES OF LIFE WITH PASSION AND PURPOSE



It was like working with family. They cared about me and my project.

Jannie V. Cudjo-Moore, Louisiana

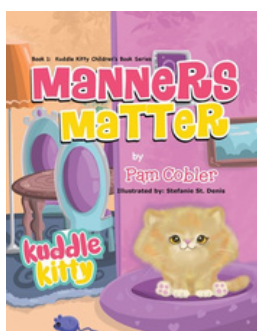
OUT OF THE BELLY



My experience has been seamless so far. One of the most significant advantages as a first-time author was having the project manager walk me through everything. I'm very grateful for someone who pays attention to details and wants you to do great. It's been a great experience so far.

Abbey Ogunnaike, New Jersey

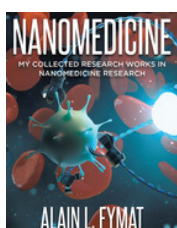
CAIRO'S INDEPENDENCE: A TODDLER WITH ENOUGH INDEPENDENCE TO FILL A ROOM



I have been overwhelmed and amazed at the professionalism, talent, knowledge, and overall support I have received from Tellwell in every phase of publishing book 1 in the Kuddle Kitty children's book series. Everyone has far exceeded my expectations in every way, and I will continue to work with Tellwell to pursue and complete all my literary dreams and goals!

Pamela Cobler, Virginia

MANNERS MATTER: KUDDLE KITTY



My last 13 books have been published with Tellwell. My experience with them has been excellent, with prompt, courteous, and professional service.

Alain L. Fymat, California

NANOMEDICINE: MY COLLECTED RESEARCH WORKS IN NANOMEDICINE RESEARCH

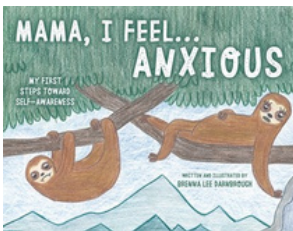
Testimonials



The organization is great, and the people you work with are great. They helped me achieve a dream on my bucket list. My books are mystical, and my grandchildren love the characters. Tellwell not only helped me reach a goal of mine, they helped me build a legacy for generations to come. My grandkids will be able to show their children, and so on. Thank you, Tellwell.

Monique Landry Johnson, Rhode Island

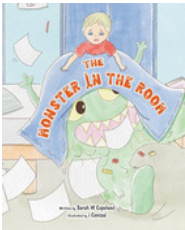
A WIZARD IS BORN



Tellwell is the best!! Everyone that I spoke to in the process was so helpful and kind. Tellwell helped me turn my idea into a reality!

Brenda Darnbroug, California

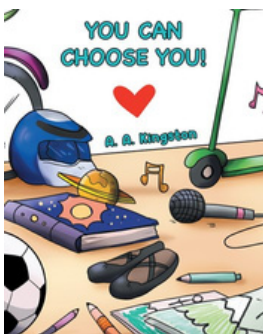
MAMA, I FEEL...ANXIOUS



If you are not using Tellwell as your publisher, then you are not using the best!

Sarah Copeland, Louisiana

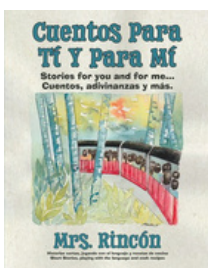
THE MONSTER IN THE ROOM



Tellwell was so supportive and understanding. This being my first book, I was in new territory and everyone was so willing to take the time to explain everything so that I understood how it worked. I did not feel alone in this venture at all. Thank you for all your help!

Andrea Kingston, Arizona

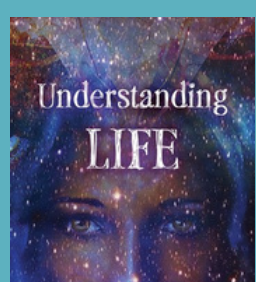
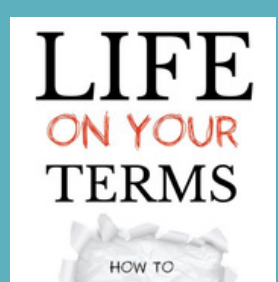
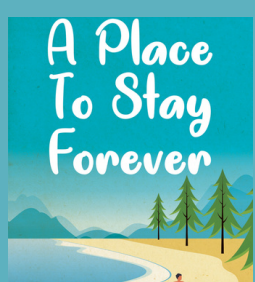
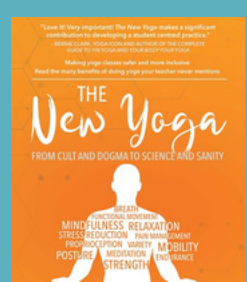
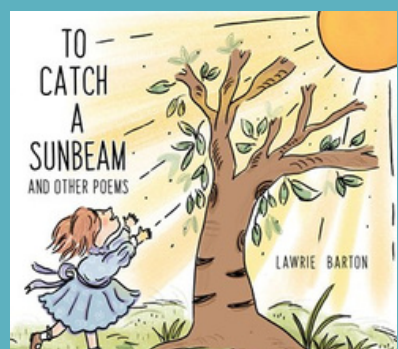
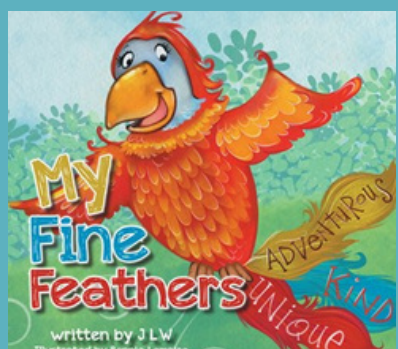
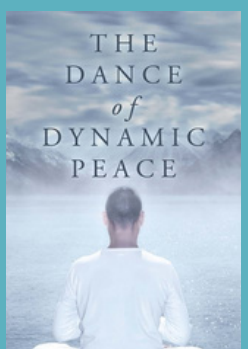
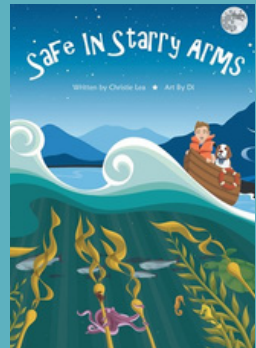
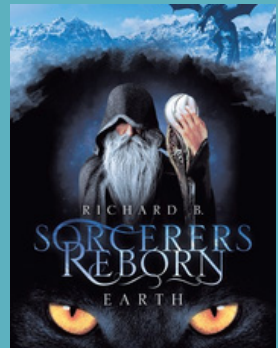
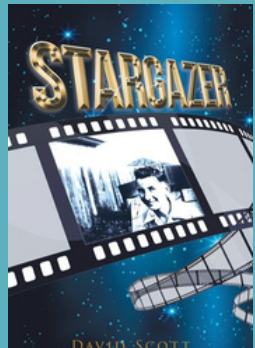
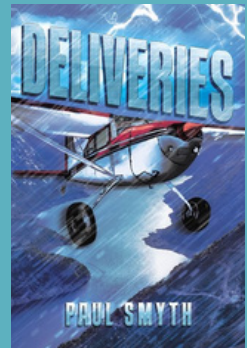
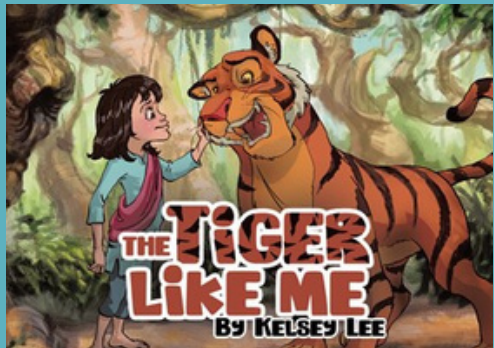
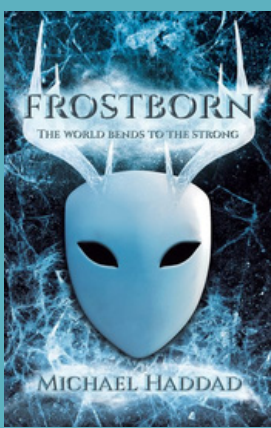
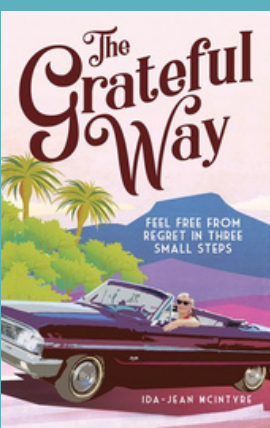
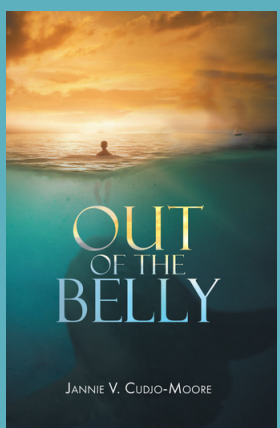
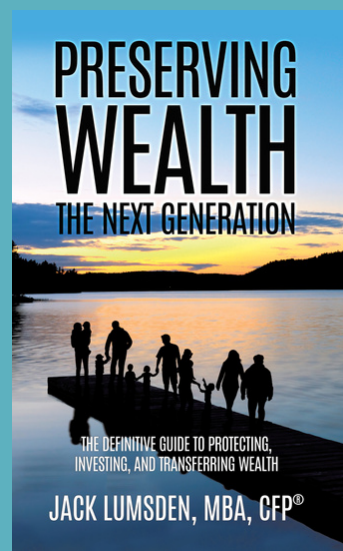
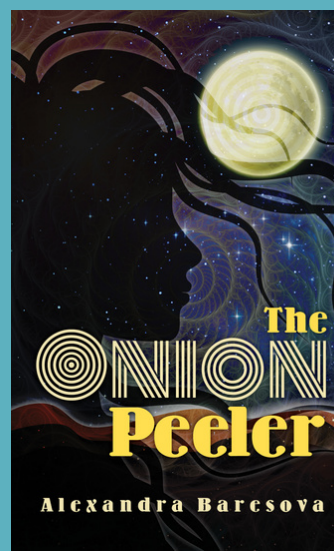
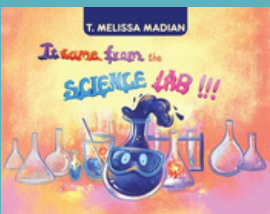
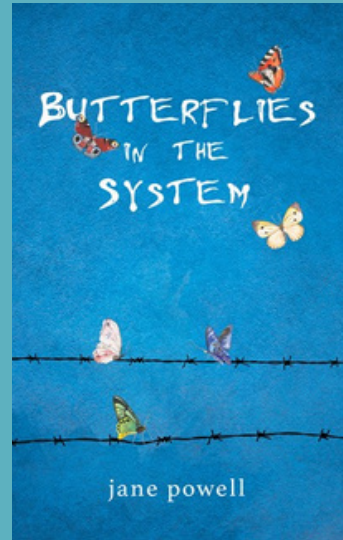
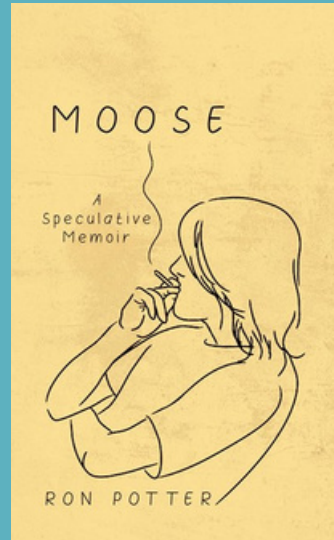
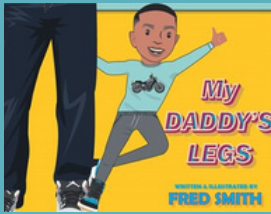
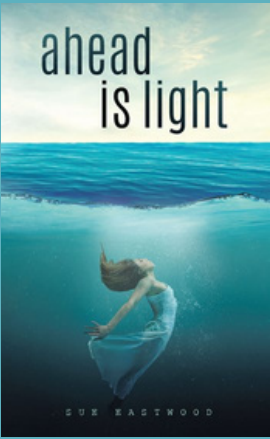
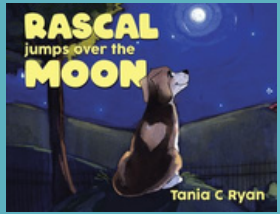
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