

Publishing Books Using LULU (www.lulu.com)

On-Demand Publishing

On-demand publishing is a desirable way to present genealogy reports, family trees, and biographies in library grade hardcover books. In the past, publishing a book required startup costs, large quantities, and dedicated mass-production runs. Book publishing used to require advance payments, inventory commitments, and many times book handling for any sales and shipments.

Things have changed for the low volume book author. Today it is possible to create professional quality hardcover and paperback books published “on demand”. Each book is created when there is an order for it. No waste and no inventory. Anybody with internet access can order the book. The order can be for just (1) book or for thousands. Lulu handles the entire order, pays the author the agreed profit margin, and ships the books directly to the customer.

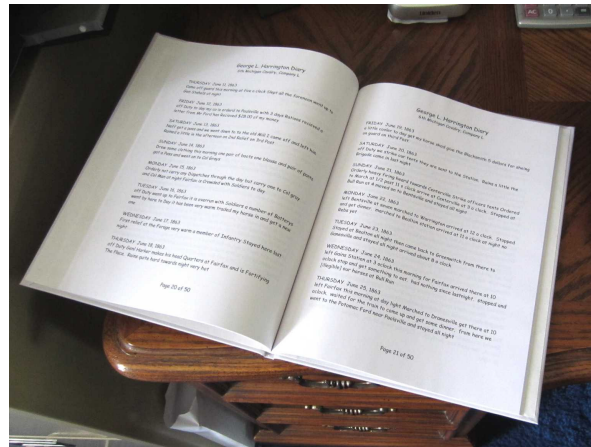


Figure 1 - Sample 64 page Lulu book

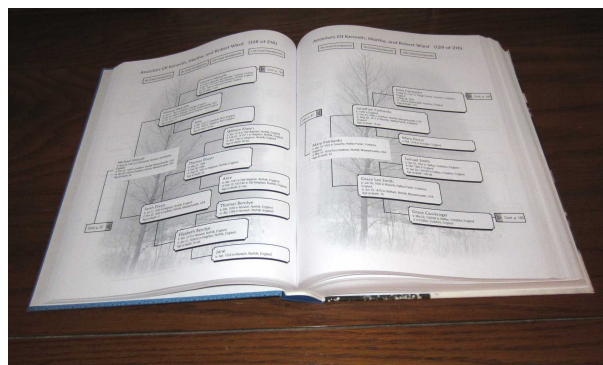


Figure 2 - Sample 594 page Lulu book

Publishing Books Using LULU

(www.lulu.com)

Readying the book for Publishing

Getting Started with Lulu Publishing – It costs NOTHING to establish a Lulu login account. You can upload the manuscript, create the cover, and totally get the book ready for publishing and the first order. You can do all of this without making any commitment.

Manuscript - The author uploads the manuscript to the publisher (Lulu) via the internet and the publisher stores it. Just about any format is accepted but PDF is the most desirable. Lulu will turn the manuscript into a PDF if another format is provided.

Book Type and Size – Just about all book formats and sizes are available. The trick is to be able to provide a PDF manuscript of the proper size for the book. Lulu will generally try to re-size the manuscript if necessary, but the results can be undesirable. It's best to match the manuscript PDF with the size required for the selected book format. I prefer a book with dimensions 8.25" wide by 10.75" high. A standard 8.5" x 11" PDF manuscript seems to work well with this book type. Smaller books, such as 6" x 9" size can be difficult to create if the PDF manuscript isn't the proper size. I always publish a single copy of a new book and check it over for proper margins, gutter margins, and any errors. When you provide a PDF manuscript, Lulu will indicate if it had to reformat it. If it uploads without reformatting, you probably only need to worry about the margins.

Fonts and Type Size – It is nice to be able to select a pleasing font that isn't too common. My favorite is "Maiandra GD" which is readable and it looks nice. Lulu requires that the manuscript PDF have the font embedded in the document. Important - when creating the manuscript PDF, be sure all the fonts used are embedded or Lulu will error out and the manuscript won't be accepted. The Type Size must be carefully selected, examine some books and see the type size that is commonly used. Remember, changing the Font and Type Size affects the length of the entire document.

Margins and Gutter Margins – The key to producing a good book is having proper margins so it looks like a normal book. Book manuscripts also require an "extra" margin, called the Gutter Margin on the side of the page that faces the spine. So, all right-hand pages have gutter margins on the left, and all left-hand pages have gutter margins on the right. Word processing programs have options for Left, Right, Top, and Bottom margins, and most also have an option for Gutter Margins. I generally choose a gutter margin of (0.3) inches.

Publishing Books Using LULU (www.lulu.com)

Readying the book for Publishing (cont'd)

Cover Design - The author must design and edit a full-color cover for the book. Lulu provides several “cover-maker” options where the author can choose standard cover designs, upload photos for the cover, add text, etc. Generally the cover-maker programs are unfriendly if you are particular and are trying to get the cover just so. A 3rd cover option is where Lulu will tell you the exact size of the cover (front, spine, back) in pixels. Using this method you can create any cover you want; any color, any design. Some Lulu book styles are available with a dust jacket option, where the book’s hard cover (front, back, spine) are plain with limited text, and the dust jacket is full cover and looks nice. I prefer no dust jacket and the standard full-color cover (front, rear, spine) is glossy and looks very good.

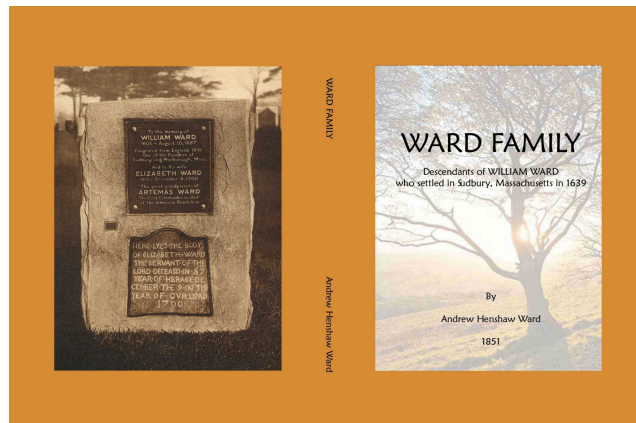


Figure 3 - Custom Cover JPG Image

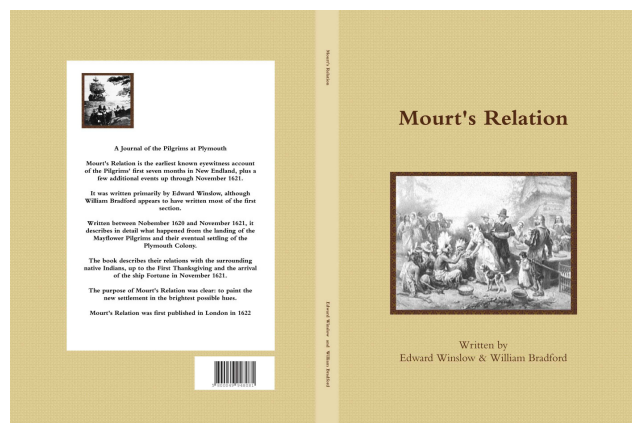


Figure 4 - Cover From Lulu's Cover Maker

Publishing Books Using LULU

(www.lulu.com)

Marketing and selling your published books

Your Lulu Storefront - The author can have a Lulu “storefront” where your books are included in Lulu’s search engine by name, category, and content. Or, the author can keep the book’s selling page “private”. A private storefront for a book requires giving out the “private” web address (URL) of the page selling the book. I use private URL address for all my books since most of them are family books containing personal information that I don’t want the whole world to see. It’s then easy to provide family members with the web address of the book for sale.

The author decides how to “market” the book. You determine any profit markup and decide on things such as book preview options, manuscript download options, etc. In addition to hardcover and paperback books, e-book format options are available.

When given the web address for the book, the customer can preview the book, submit an order, select the method of shipping, and Lulu does the rest. Lulu allows the author to be very fair with the customer. I choose no profit markup, and on some books allow my customers to download the PDF manuscript for FREE.

When an order arrives for that book, the publisher creates a copy (or copies) of the book, “on demand”. In about 4-5 days the hardcover books are printed and assembled. The order is then mailed to the customer using the mailing method selected.

Lulu has frequent “sales” where they provide a coupon code for either a discount (15-25%) or for free shipping (U.S.Post). It seems like Lulu offers a coupon every 2-3 weeks, especially around holidays of every kind.

Good things about Lulu:

- The books are professionally manufactured, the materials and construction seem as good as normal library books
- The price even for a single copy is very reasonable, and Lulu frequently has coupon code discounts. A 594 page hardcover book with full color cover is \$29.85 but with a 25% off coupon it’s only \$22.39 plus shipping
- Books from Lulu come shipped well in sturdy boxes, shrink-wrapped on a cardboard plate, with foam sheets between the books
- Lulu sends the customer an email when the book(s) ships
- Lulu has non-existent customer support but there is a customer blog called Connect where users can be very helpful. Users give out hints and workarounds and complain a lot about things like Lulu having no phone support.

Publishing Books Using LULU (www.lulu.com)

Things I dislike about Lulu:

- The www.lulu.com web site has no easily found mailing address and NO telephone number you can call, even for help. For me, this was initially a showstopper. I refuse to give out my credit card if the business doesn't disclose their address or their telephone number. What are they hiding? Where are they located? When I researched Lulu, they appeared legitimate and people liked the product.
- Lulu has a Chat Window where supposedly you get live support. Most responses are canned responses that aren't very helpful. The chat window puts out messages such as "we will be with you shortly, we know your time is valuable" until an agent is available. Lulu has a customer blog where users ask for help from others, and where users give out hints and workarounds.
- Lulu's has two cover maker programs that can be unfriendly, especially to someone who is a perfectionist or who wants a feature not supported. A great workaround is to use a third option where the author is given the exact pixel dimensions of the cover, including the size and location of the spine. Here the author creates a JPG with the exact pixel dimensions for the book and Lulu will use this JPG for the cover.
- My initial Lulu books had undesirable margins. If the manuscript isn't exactly the right format size, Lulu will attempt to reformat it and the margins can then be too wide.

Final comments about Lulu:

- It is helpful to be skilled in creating PDF documents, specifying correct formats, embedding fonts as necessary, etc. I usually select the case wrap hardcover size 8.25 by 10.75 and manuscripts that are 8.5 by 11 seem to format correctly. I found a free program to edit PDF files called "PDFfill PDF Tools 9.0". It requires a free program called GhostScript to be installed along with it. Go to <http://www.pdfill.com> and get the upgraded version 9.0 version.
- I have published about 15 different books on Lulu and learned about some workarounds the hard way. Lulu at first comes across as unfriendly and difficult.
- Remember that there is no commitment and NO cost to establish a Lulu account and create a book. There are many areas to be creative; book type & size, cover design, etc. A book starts in "draft" mode and when finished editing it goes to "published" mode where it is available for sale. It's easy to go from "published" mode back to "draft" and create a new revision. The author decides when the book is ready for sale, there is no pressure to complete it.

Robert S. Ward
Fort Wayne, Indiana
Email: bobward@hotmail.com