



JANUARY 11, 2012

How to Make Your Book Look Good



Peggy Nehmen

Start the new year right with a meeting that reveals the “visual secrets” that can make your book stand out, whether it sits on a bookstore shelf or an Amazon sales page. No matter where you are on the book publishing journey, you’ll learn something new when **Peggy Nehmen** and **Sue Sylvia** reveal the very best tricks of the book design trade.



Sue Sylvia

People do judge a book by its cover, so make sure yours is ready for the spotlight.

You will learn:

- ▶ What separates a good book cover from a great one
- ▶ What you need to do differently for your ebook cover

Peggy and Sue will also reveal:

- ▶ The little things that make your book’s text look and feel better
- ▶ The best places to find images and how much to spend on them
- ▶ Unraveling the mystery of DPI (and why Google Images isn’t the place to find pictures)
- ▶ How to use images in an ebook
- ▶ Great ways to get a good author photo
- ▶ When DIY makes sense and when a professional is a smart choice for you
- ▶ How to fix mistakes you may have inadvertently made on your own

You’ll also learn:

- ▶ How to coordinate your “look” into your marketing materials (yes, you need materials)
- ▶ Low-cost strategies you can do yourself to make sure your book is “discoverable”
- ▶ What marketing tools you can use to breathe new life into a backlist book

We’ll also do a Lightning Round Q&A, so bring your projects in progress and your questions!

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10 Things to Know (or at least think about) Before You Contact a Designer

By Peri Poloni-Gabriel

You have been working on your book forever and you are finally to the point that you are ready for someone to “make it a book.” Having answers to the following questions will help streamline the process and give your designer the information he or she needs to make that dream a reality.

1. **What is the word count of your manuscript?** This will help your designer figure out a rough page count for your bound book.
2. **What is the size of the book?** 5.5 x 8.5 and 6 x 9 are standard trade paperback sizes, but there are others out there as well that might be better suited to your book. Take a field trip to a local bookstore and see what typical sizes are being used for your genre of book. Stick with standard sizes for the best pricing in printing.
3. **Are you printing hard cover with jacket? Paperback? Or both?**
A hard cover is a more formal and costly book presentation. Many books don’t need this and opt to just print in paperback. Even if the first edition of your book is going to be hard cover, you might also want to print advance reading copies or galleys for reviewers in a paperback format.
4. **How are you going to print your book?** Today you have many good options in book printing. Your designer needs to know the method so he or she can design and produce a book that works with that mode and any limitations.

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For quantities larger than 1,000 books, traditional offset printing is usually more cost effective than other options and is still the best quality. Plus you can have the option of special finishes such as foil, embossing, and spot varnishes. To save money on printing full-color books, consider overseas printers.

For smaller quantities, digital printing is a good way to go. The quality of digital printing has really improved over time and it can be hard to tell apart from offset. You can be limited by size and finishes in digital printing.

Don't want to store an inventory of books? Print on demand (POD) may be just the thing for you. This is a form of digital printing where the printer also acts as the distributor. The downside to this is that you may not have the quality control you might get with a full printing or the profit margin.

E-books are here to stay both as a publishing form in itself and to supplement your bound book. I always recommend in addition to printing a tangible book, offering the option of a digital book. To cover the most popular devices you should have your book converted to Mobipocket (Kindle) and e-Pub formats. Remember, you need an additional ISBN for each format of your e-book if you are also printing a tangible book.

- 5. What text will be on the front cover?** Title, subtitle, author byline, foreword byline, endorsement, bullet points? It is very important that your designer have all the elements for your front cover before starting the design—even if you have to fake one until you have the confirmed text, such as in an endorsement you have yet to receive. Adding an element after the cover has been designed can be difficult since it affects the overall balance. Make sure your title is final before starting design, as changing this down the road can be disastrous and end up costing you more than originally estimated.
- 6. Do you have ideas for the cover or do you want the designer to just “do it”?** Most designers can work anywhere on the spectrum from “I have no idea what should be on the cover” to “This is what I want” and all places in between. It is very helpful to have a list of other covers you like. It gives your designer some insight into your likes and dislikes.

Another important piece of information is whether this will be the first book in a series. There are additional design considerations when you want a series or branded look.

- 7. Who is the target audience for your book?** Age, sex, ethnicity, special interest group? Your book cover is a selling tool and needs to be designed to appeal directly to your audience. A good designer takes this into consideration with images, colors, and font selection.
- 8. What is the color and format of your book's interior?** Black-and-white or color? What elements are in your interior? Charts, images, graphs, tables, sidebars, bulleted lists, numbered lists, quotes, various heading levels, captions, etc.? Obviously it will take less time to design and lay out a novel than a book with some or all of the above elements. Providing your manuscript to your designer is the only way to get an accurate estimate for designing and typesetting your book.
- 9. How/where are you going to market and sell your book?** Are you a speaker/industry professional and most of your book sales will be at your events? Are you going to just sell on your website? Amazon? Other websites? Bookstores? Will you be working with a distributor? All of the above? These are just some avenues for book sales.
- 10. Do you need additional marketing pieces created to promote your book?** Sales flyers, postcards, bookmarks, publishing company logo, stationary, website, Amazon's “look inside” feature, author signing poster, DVD/CD cover and faceplates for audio books, galleys or advance reading copies, to name a few. Many book designers also handle other graphic design needs for their clients to create a whole package. 📖

Peri Poloni-Gabriel has been designing books for over 15 years with numerous awards and happy clients to show for it. With a portfolio from cookbooks to novels, children's books to finance and everything in between, the art of book cover and interior design is unique for each and every book. Peri gives this one on one attention to concept, production and every detail. Specializing in first time self-publishing authors, she can help guide you along the path to avoid common pitfalls. Knockout Design lives up to it's name! You can contact Peri for a free consultation and estimate at peri@knockoutbooks.com or visit the website with over 200 portfolio samples at www.knockoutbooks.com.

How to make your book look good ... *continued*

Your Presenters:

Peggy Nehmen, a veteran graphic designer, and her husband and partner, Gary Kodner, own Nehmen-Kodner, a St. Louis-based design studio. Peggy has a love of typography, book design, and all things creative. Nehmen-Kodner provides branding and marketing for indie authors, start-ups, and established companies. Peggy is a longtime SLPA member and former newsletter designer of SLPA News and Views (inherited from Sue Sylvia). Her objective is to help authors through the design process to produce customized book covers and interiors. You'll find Peggy's portfolio at www.n-kcreative.com/bookdesign.html.

Sue Sylvia of Staircase Press Design is a publisher/book designer who works with authors and small publishers to produce good-looking books that stand out at retail. She is passionate about mentoring her design clients on marketing strategy and development. She is an award-winning art director and a 30-year marketing industry veteran. You can see her work online at www.staircasepressdesign.com.

The Healthy Writer

For many writers, the New Year brings refreshed opportunities and first-time pursuits; creativity blossoms, day planners fill, and new fictional characters are born. Serious writers know that perhaps this will be the year they achieve the goals they have been working toward. The SLPA Board works diligently to help members reach those goals. Our mission is to help writers produce quality products and market them effectively. We want you to succeed!

Feeling great, energetic, vibrant, and alert is key to living well, writing well, and reaching goals in life. And for this reason we have decided to add a column geared to your healthy life; the healthy writer's life.

"It is health that is real wealth and not pieces of gold or silver." — Mohandas Gandhi

New Year's Eating Plan — A First Draft Required!

By Jennifer Tobias

Eating healthy is not expensive. Eating healthy is not a fad. Eating healthy is not illegal. It is not a requirement for college entrance, employment, or getting married. I can say, though, that according to many of the clients I have worked with in my healthy eating programs, eating healthy is hard, challenging, and seemingly next to impossible!

I understand, and that is why I want to share this plan that I am calling a First Draft Eating Plan. First drafts, as most of you writers know, begin with a good idea that morphs into another form or draft with changing thoughts, actions, and time. Your healthy eating plan will be no different. As you try some of the tips listed below, you will find yourself changing things to fit your likes, dislikes, and lifestyle preferences. You'll take my first draft and come up with your first draft, a second draft, third, and within a few weeks' time, you will find you have come up with a semi-final draft that works for you.

1. **KIS—Keep it simple.** I find that it is much easier to stick to a healthy eating plan when you are not battling the enemy called Multiple Choice. As you begin to create a new eating plan for yourself, avoid thinking of casseroles, mixed food dishes (a recipe consisting of many foods), food balancing, carbohydrates, good fats, bad fats, cholesterol, and the like. Instead think of four simple things: vegetables, proteins, fruits, water. Yep, just these four for starters! It is a great way to launch a simple, easy-to-follow plan.
2. **Keep it clean.** Think clean foods, those not smothered in sauces, gravies, broth, butter, margarine, cheese, or any other fat- and calorie-laden food substance. Steamed broccoli means broccoli with perhaps a touch of seasoning. It is not broccoli and cheese or cheesy broccoli soup. No, I am afraid it means broccoli. Try eating this plain for a while. Your taste buds will love you! Yes, you can do it!

3. **Eat less food.** Your stomach is very small actually. Yes, I know it stretches, but that stretching is what leads to weight gain and GERD. Eating smaller portions at each meal will allow you the luxury of feeling great all day long and perhaps getting off the medications you now take for symptoms caused by an over-full stomach. Eating less food at one sitting, and clean simple food at that, will give you energy and sustainable concentration; something I believe all writers desire.

4. **Eat more frequently.** Because you are now eating much smaller amounts of food you will want to eat about every three hours. This will help keep your energy level stable and your mental focus clear. Our brain is the biggest user of food turned to fuel (also known as glucose). When we eat small frequent, clean foods, we give our brains the best food for thought on the planet! (Could not help that play on words!) Food for thought is definitely a way to think clearer and be more productive.

5. **Drink enough water.** Please know that water is water. It is not tea, soda, juice, wine, coffee, or any other beverage. Water is water. Your body is more than 70% water. To keep all systems functioning well you absolutely must drink at least 64 ounces of water a day. (This amount of water is recommended for anyone weighing 100 pounds or more, regardless of age.) Water is a key element to energy, health, and longevity. Use a container that allows you to easily and unconsciously track your water intake a day.

Of course, there are many other ways I could mention to begin living a healthier lifestyle. I have mentioned the super simple and effective ones that I know work 100% of the time because I don't like wasting time or money. I do love getting super results, and I enjoy feeling well and looking healthy, don't you?

My advice: Pick at least one tip listed above and focus on it for a week. Add a new one each week in the month of January. If you can start incorporating all four ideas for the month, you will be amazed at how much better you live!

If I could recommend only one of the five ideas above to you, it would be drinking water. Water is essential to life. It is essential to health. It is a vital tool in every successful writer's toolkit! To your best health and writing! 📖

"If some 20-plus percent of the books we're selling in the U.S. are e-books, that still leaves 80% sold the old-fashioned way."

— Stuart Applebaum,
Random House

Manuscript Assessments: What to Expect

When you want feedback on your work but aren't sure you're ready for editing, you might be in the market for a manuscript assessment. You'll find this term used in various ways, but the most basic description is this: an editor (a *professional* editor) reads through your entire manuscript and gives you his or her expert opinion.

What does a manuscript assessment consist of? Here is a breakdown of the four main categories your editor will be evaluating.

General comments. In this section you will find a summary of your subject matter or plot, comments on your target audience, and an evaluation of the marketing potential for the book. This gives background to the rest of the assessment and usually runs three or four paragraphs.

Writing style. Your editor will offer specific feedback on strengths and weaknesses. Do you have the appropriate tone for your topic and audience? Is your word choice appropriate and interesting? Is the complexity or simplicity of the writing in line with what your topic warrants?

Editing needs. Here your editor will highlight recurring errors, note the depth of editing he or she believes is required to get the manuscript publication-ready, and offer direction for where to take your project next. Combined with writing style, this section often runs seven or eight paragraphs and is the meat of the assessment.

Questions and concerns. Under this final category, your editor will note potential problems outside of editing and writing style. These are issues your editor cannot fix and that will need to be addressed by you.

For all of this you can expect to pay between \$200 and \$300 with no expectation of hiring the editor, or you may find someone who will do it for free with the understanding that you will hire him or her when the project is ready. Manuscript assessments aren't for everyone, but when you are looking for more direction or simply an honest opinion, they can provide much-needed insight into the potential of your work. 📖

Freebies for the Writer

It is our intent at SLPA to gather great pieces for your writer's journey and it is a pleasure when we get to do so without a cost to you! This month the team has the following three programs to share; all three have a free version and a paid version. Take a look below to find out if any of these bargains will be your next can't-live-without tool.

- 1. Tinyspell.com** Have you ever worked in a program that did not come equipped with a built-in spell-checker? It is not fun and certainly not advisable. Fret no more! Tinyspell is here. Yes, this free downloadable program is great for letting you check and correct spelling in any Windows application. A paid version with add-on features is available, but we recommend that you try out the free version first before spending a dime. Let us know how you like it.
- 2. Evernote.com** If you have trouble remembering things and hate sticky notes, we have a solution, Evernote! Evernote is a free downloadable program that helps you get organized by keeping your files, documents, photos, images, and other valuable information pieces on every device and computer you have. It allows you to organize, store, and share data—a super organizing/memory system and it is free. There is also a paid version that offers more features. Check out the free trial version today.
- 3. Dropbox.com** Are you looking for a great way to share documents, slides, and other important files with family and friends? Does your professional work require that you and your clients share data? If you answered yes to either question then you might find the free version of Dropbox a real bargain. Dropbox is versatile in allowing you to use it on both a Mac and a PC. Get the trial version today. It's free! 📖

Word Power

Increasing your vocabulary will improve the processes of your mind, give you confidence, and increase your popularity, your salary, and your writing speed and success. Quality writing begins with a well-rounded vocabulary. Start building a more powerful vocabulary now with these five winning words!

- 1. Ostracize (oss'-tra-size)** To exclude from public or private favor; to ban
Use: "They ostracize members of religious, political, or racial minorities."
- 2. Impute (im-pyoot')** To ascribe, attribute, charge an act or thought to someone, usually in a bad or accusatory sense.
Use: "They impute unworthy motives to their enemies."
- 3. Deprecate (dep'-re-kate)** To express disapproval; to play down or make little of
Use: "They deprecate the sins of this age."
- 4. Procrastinate (pro-krass'-ti-nate)** To put off until a future time; delay
Use: "They procrastinate and then promise to be punctual in the future."
- 5. Dominate (dom'-i-nate)** To have control over; to exert supreme determining or guiding influence on
Use: "He will dominate the competition with his physical strength alone." 📖

Five Simple Ways to Improve Your Ranking on Google

By Penny C. Sansevieri

Getting top ranking on Google may seem like a lofty goal, but many authors we work with do achieve this. And while they may not come up on the #1 spot on Google, they can get pretty high. The secret, though, isn't in "gaming" the system as many people like to think. In fact, Google is too smart for most black hat marketers. On average, Google changes their algorithm over 500 times a year. Why do they do this? Well, mostly to make sure that websites that are focused on content farming and other black hat SEO tactics don't climb up the search engine ranking.

Last year, Google implemented changes that are now being referred to as the "panda" update. What this did is go after content farms and the like, lowering their ranking by up to 90%. What are content farms? Sites that are focused on high-volume, low-quality content. These sites often try to sell AdWords on their pages to game the system and make money that way. Google is always on the lookout for these types of sites and unfortunately during this update, bigger and respectable sites like Suite101 and EzineArticles got hit hard, too. If this story concerns you—and it should—keep in mind that you likely won't become a site like Suite101 unless you are singularly focused on content aggregation.

If you're ready to boost your site up in the search ranking, here are a few tips to help you do that:

- 1. It's not about you:** Your website is not about you, it's about your consumer or end user. Google's singular focus is to make sure websites are focused on the end user. Make sure that your site is focused on your consumer/reader. What does that mean? It means that you need to take yourself out of the equation and really, really make sure your site is all about the people you are targeting.
- 2. Links, links, links:** You want to get links, but not just any links. You want links from high-traffic, high-quality sites.
- 3. What's on your SERP? What does SERP stand for?** It means Search Engine Results Page, and if you've never looked at yours, you probably should. This is the page that shows content from your home page, generally the first three lines or so. If the first paragraph on your home page is just about you, and not about your reader, it will not only affect your ranking but your clickability as well—so again, keep this focused on the reader.
- 4. Keywords and title tags:** While many of us are focused on keywords, most of us ignore title tags. What are title tags? They are what your page name says at the very top of your search bar. You should be using keywords in this area, which will help with your search engine ranking.
- 5. Site updates and ad space:** I love our AME blog, and it's really helped with our search engine ranking. Why? Because search engines love fresh content and every time you update your website, it tells the search engines that you've added new content. But one

thing you won't see on our blog are ads. Why? I don't care for them, particularly on our site, and I don't think they monetize enough for me to consider adding them. Also, too much ad content can lower your ranking in Google.

Getting a higher ranking in Google isn't that hard, but it does take time. There is no such thing as overnight results or ranking, and for sites who subscribe to this, they often find that their site was disappeared or "sandboxed" by Google. The secret really isn't a big secret, but basically it's this: keep your site current and relevant. If you have a website that's focused on your consumer, you update the site via your blog, and you spend time doing some helpful link-building, I can almost guarantee you'll see your website go from page 54 to page 1—and wouldn't that be great? 📖

Penny C. Sansevieri, CEO and founder of Author Marketing Experts, Inc. (AME), is a best-selling author and internationally recognized book social media marketing, book marketing, and media relations expert. Her company is one of the leaders in the publishing industry and has developed some of the most leading-edge book marketing campaigns. You can visit her website at www.amarketingexpert.com.

What Authors Want Help With

- 22.2% Marketing
- 9.3% Step-by-step checklist
- 8.0% Formatting, layout, fonts
- 6.4% POD Selection
- 5.1% E-book publishing
- 4.8% Professional quality books
- 4.5% Finding, hiring support
- 4.2% Distribution, sales channels
- 3.2% Social Media
- 3.2% Costs, budgeting

(JULY 2011, www.JoelFriedlander.com)

"75% of 300 booksellers surveyed (half from independent bookstores and half from chains) identified the look and design of the book cover as the most important component."

— SelfPublishingResources.com

USA TODAY, September 8, 2011

- Random House, the USA's largest publisher, says more than 20% of U.S. revenue in the first half of this year was from digital sales.
- Amazon announces that two more authors, Kathryn Stockett and Janet Evanovich, have reached the million-dollar mark in Kindle e-book sales.
- Eight of the top 20 titles on *USA Today's* Best-Selling Books list this week are e-books.
- Barnes & Noble credits the Nook, its e-book reader, with strengthening its bottom line.
- Failure to jump more quickly into the digital frontier is blamed in part for the demise of Borders.


"It's still about visibility, but . . . now it's the author, not a publicist, who inspires readers to buy the book. The New Author Platform (self-publishing) allows not only well-established authors, but unknown, first-time beginners to . . . reach readers directly."

— Alan Rinzler, Consulting Editor
John Wiley & Sons, NY and SF
www.AlanRinzler.com
7/25/11 Blog


"One of the big differences between e-books and print is the sales cycle. It's almost inverted. A chain store buyer makes a decision as much as six months before the book is published, and then it has no more than six months on the shelf. At that point your sales cycle is over. But with e-books, it's completely the opposite. It's often six to nine months before your book takes off, and you never take it down."

— Wall Street Journal
10/31/11

What's ahead? February 8, 2012

Writing is just the start of a professionally published book. Experienced editors, designers, printers, and marketers will help you move your "great idea" for a book to its finished product. Join us for an informative panel discussion on the publishing process and finding the right people for your project team. 

The SLPA Mission

The St. Louis Publishers Association empowers authors and publishers to create and market quality products and books. A nationally recognized organization, the SLPA provides educational, informational resources on publishing. Through its monthly meetings, the organization provides networking opportunities for people involved in all aspects of the publishing industry. 

SLPA Meetings

SLPA meets on the second Wednesday of the month:
Brentwood Community Center
2505 S. Brentwood Boulevard, Brentwood, MO 63144

Doors open for networking at 6:30pm and meeting begins at 7pm. The formal meeting concludes at about 8:30pm with networking continuing after the meeting.

Our regular meetings are free to members.
Guests – \$10 at the door, cash or check only.



Questions about SLPA?

Contact Membership Chairman:
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