

How to Publish Your Disk-Based (Virtual) Book

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How to Publish Your Disk-Based (Virtual) Book (25 Cents a Copy)

With the high printing and distribution costs involved in the self-publishing of books, there is another alternative that is beginning to emerge and is worthy of investigation. That alternative is virtual books. They are sometimes referred to as electronic books or diskbased books.

Because of the ever-increasing use of computers in the home for business and personal use, and because of the costs mentioned above, the writing and publishing of electronic books is becoming more practical for many applications.

So, what is an electronic, or virtual book? A simple explanation would be to say that an electronic book is a computer floppy disk on which is contained a disk-reading program and a text file (The actual contents of the book). Depending on the type of disk-reader used, the person reading the "book" can start at the beginning, the middle, the end, or any other place, page, chapter, section, etc.

Disk-reading programs are also called text organizers or file viewers.

Depending, again, on the type and complexity of the disk-reading program used, the author can present to the reader a table of contents or a list of topics from which the reader can select, with just a few keystrokes; and instantly access the desired material

The slow alternative to reading a long text file without a good file viewer is to scroll through the text from start to finish. At best you can jump ahead or back one page of text at a time, but you will have no capability to preselect a certain page, word, line, topic, or any other unique location.

So how is it done? Easily! The book or other work is composed on a text editor rather than a "full-blown" word processor. As the book is being written, the author includes special short commands that are "read" by the file viewer. These hidden commands enable the person reading the book to move around the book just as if he were reading a printed book.

Other commands allow the reader to pull up menus, access help windows, answer questions, mark certain selections and accomplish other tasks.

A variety of text organizers or file viewers, and text editors for composing the work, are available from computer software dealers who distribute "share ware". Share ware is a

form of software marketing whereby the user is allowed to try a program before buying it. These shareware programs are copyrighted material and the user is obligated to pay for it if he used it beyond a reasonable evaluation period. The cost of "registering" or paying for these text viewing and text editing programs ranges from \$8 to \$100.

This author used the \$8 version of the IRIS hypertext file viewer and the MS-DOS text editor already included with DOS 5.0. That's a total cost of \$8.00 to get started because IRIS can be distributed with your electronic book "royalty free". That means you may write an electronic book using IRIS as the viewer; sell the book at any price with IRIS included so that it can be read, and not have to pay any royalty to the author of IRIS. The "SEE" file viewer, while not having as many features as IRIS, can also be used royalty free.

Here's a few reasons why publishing electronic books makes sense:

1. Less expensive than conventional publishing. To get the price of any printed book below \$1.00 you would have to have five to ten thousand printed. The price of your test electronic book can be less than \$10.00, counting the cost of purchasing a file viewer. After that, your only expense per copy is the cost of the floppy disks. Mail order supply houses sell them for as little as 19 cents apiece for 5.25" DSDD disks in lots of 500 or 1000. If you only buy 100, the cost may be 25 cents apiece.
2. You can edit or change the contents of your unsold books at any time! New information can be added or obsolete data can be removed using the text editor. You would, of course, have to copy the edited version of your work to the other disks.
3. Produce only the books you need: Assemble each book only when an order comes in for that book! It only takes 2 or 3 minutes. This also solves the editing problem mentioned above. By having only a "master" book, you only have to make additions or deletions of text to one book.
4. If large quantities are needed for any reason, commercial disk duplication companies can turn out large numbers of your book at a very reasonable cost Still far less than conventional printing.
5. There are several disk-book libraries and publishers to help you find a market for your book. Dealers of share ware and retail programs are now including sections in their catalogs for disk-based books.
6. Mailing costs are greatly reduced. Your book on a 5.25

inch disk can be mailed alone in a 6 x 9 inch envelope for one test class stamp. It is usually more practical, however, to use a protective disk mailer, and to include associated documents with your disk. The disk mailer provides much more protection for your disk-book, but raises the weight to the next postage unit.

A short list of text editors, file viewers, and sources is included below:

Text Organizers:

Black Magic

HyperPAD

IRIS

Cookbook

Text Editors:

Boxer

Petit Plus

Micro EMACS

Edit

SEE

Two sources for file viewing and text editing programs are:

Infopreneur Services
3755 Avocado Blvd #110
La Mesa, CA 91941

Public Brand Software,
PRO. Box 51315
Indianapolis, IN 46251

This list of programs and sources is by no means all-inclusive and are used as examples only. The author's use of particular program is not a recommendation of one program over another.