

Self Publishing a (D) Book

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November 11, 2015, Silicon Valley ACCU

Introduction

- "Programming in D" is a self-published book
- Experiences in self-publishing a book
- Q & A
- Introduction to D
- Q & A

Paper or Electronic

Which one do you prefer?

- Paper
- Ebook
- Both

History

- **Summer 2009:** Discovered D after reading "The Case for D" by Andrei Alexandrescu, became fascinated by it, and created a Turkish web site (ddili.org), so that for once, Turkish documents will not be behind English resources
- **Fall 2009:** Started writing a programming tutorial in D in Turkish and published it as HTML chapters on the web site
- Over time, published the book as PDF as well
- **May 2011:** Andrei Alexandrescu presented D at Riverbed; after the talk he suggested that the book should be translated to English (similar earlier suggestions from the Turkish community)
- Over time, published the book as .EPUB and other ebook formats as well
- **End of 2014:** Completed the translation to English
- Added more material (Fibers, etc.)
- Proof-read by Luís Marques and others
- **August 17, 2015:** The book is self-published
- **October 28, 2015:** Made ebooks available for purchase
- **October 31, 2015:** Second printing

Traditional Publishing

- Well respected: Makes one a "published author"
- Good publishers: Addison Wesley, O'Reilly, Packt, etc.
- They have experts for editing, formatting text and pictures, generating index entries, etc.
- You need an *agent of an agent* just to contact them (probably less so for technical books)
- On average, published authors sell 200 books per title (this figure is for non-technical books)
- Publishers work hard only for their few super-star authors (quoted for non-technical books)
- The rights of the book may be owned by the publisher

Addison Wesley's Response

Through an Addison Wesley author:

"the field of general programming introduction is very crowded"

O'Reilly's Response

On their web site, "Become an O'Reilly Author" links to

<http://www.oreilly.com/work-with-us.html>

"Work with Us You have something important to say, to teach, to champion. We can help you reach the people who need to hear it."

Actual experience: No response

- Two requests through that web form
- Two direct emails

Self-Publishing

- Used to be less respected; not anymore
- (Too) Many companies to choose from: CreateSpace (Amazon), IngramSpark, Lightning Source (IngramSpark's back end), Lulu, Blurb, etc.
- Too many articles to read
- You must either become an expert or hire experts
- Only requirement is to want to be an author
- On average, self-published authors sell 200 books per title (quoted for non-technical books)
- Many self-published super stars out there
- The author is the publisher and the book belongs to the author. The book can be printed by more than one platform; it can be given out for free; etc.

Choice: CreateSpace, a Subsidiary of Amazon

- Gives most royalty to the author
- Zero fees
- Virtually zero cost
- The author buys at cost as many as they want for any purpose (\$10.42 + shipping in this case)

Later discovery: Bookstores do not stock CreateSpace books. (See below.)

Varying Amount of Support and Service

- Some platforms give complete freedom to the author
- Some sell services
 - Proofreading
 - Cover design
 - Interior formatting
 - Ebook conversion
 - etc.

Format of the book

Many little things to spoil one's many days

- Page size
- Margins and gutter
- Line spacing
- Fonts
- Left-hand pages different from right-hand pages (CSS helps)
- Code and console output formatting
- Code line width (62 in this case)

Content

- Copyright page
- Frontispiece
- Table of contents
- Foreword
- Actual text
- Index section
- Blurbs for the back cover

See "Book design" on Wikipedia:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_design

Interior File Format

- Some platforms require Microsoft Word (they provide templates)
- Some platforms require PDF
- Others accept multiple, including RTF

Cover

- Very important!!!! (yep, four) (Cannot be overstated)
- Either spend many hours to move from one horrible design to another horrible design...
- Or pay a cover designer commonly between \$90-\$200 (can go higher) to get a professional look
- Usually, dozens of designers compete for your business
- Cover format must fit the platform's cover template

Cover designer was İzgi Yapıcı in this case: <http://izgiyapici.com>



Generating "Programming in D"

- Built by GNU make, prince, sed, D programs, git, etc.
- From Ddoc to HTML (Ddoc is D's markup language, which is normally used for source code documentation)

```
$(P
normal $(B bold)
)

---
    writeln("hi");
---
```

- From HTML to PDF (using the free-for-personal-use 'Prince XML', with professional license for \$499. (Ouch!))
- Lots of post-processing for index links, etc.
- Lots of CSS magic
- Professional cover
- The same process builds the web book and the *base HTML* for ebooks

The book project is at <https://bitbucket.org/acehrel/dddili/>

Ebook generation

- The build process generates a modified and concatenated version of the HTML pages
- The ebook HTML is given to Calibre, an amazing and free tool that converts to and from a very large number of electronic document formats (there are alternatives to Calibre)
- Fonts are a big problem
 - Limited font choices on ebook readers (especially fixed-width fonts)
 - Limited font styles and weights (had to remove bold, italic, etc.)
 - Limited graphemes (had to replace ↯ with ASCII "==>")
 - Embedded fonts to the rescue
 - Not supported on some readers
 - Difficult to get right
(see **com.apple.ibooks.display-options.xml**
WAT!)
- Lack of color is another problem

The Process of Self-Publishing

- Pick a platform; all have generally nice stream-lined processes
- Do your homework using their royalty calculator
- Enter details: Title; sub-title; description; names and bios of the author, foreword author, editor, cover artist, cover illustrator; book category (software, general programming), price, etc.
- Upload content
- Upload cover
- Automatic validation (amazing) (one case of corrupt PDF on CreateSpace)
- Wait up-to a couple of days for human validation
- Order proof copy (or review the virtual PDF book (amazing))
- Approve for printing
- The book is live immediately

CreateSpace Project Page

3-1515074601


[board](#)

Setup	Review	Distribute	Sale: Mark
What's This? <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Title Information✓ ISBN✓ Interior✓ Cover✓ Complete Setup Setup Instructions	What's This? <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ File Review✓ Proof Your Book Proofed Digitally	What's This? <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Channels (6 selected)✓ Pricing✓ Cover Finish✓ Description✗ Publish on Kindle Distribute Instructions	Track Marke Get id

Project Summary

Programming in D: Tutorial and Reference

Authored by Ali Cehreli, Foreword by Andrei Alexandrescu, Edited by Luis Marques, Cover design or artwork by I or artwork by Sarah Reece



List Price: **\$31.50**

7" x 10" (17.78 x 25.4 cm)
Black & White on White paper
760 pages

Cost of the Book

Factors affecting the cost:

- Page count (can add to shipping cost as well: 3.5 pounds in this case)
- Paperback versus hardcover
- Jacket if hardcover
- White versus cream paper
- Returnable or not

Distribution Channels

CreateSpace example for this \$28.50 book (\$10.42 cost):

- Direct from CreateSpace through a static book page (which can be customized), (Royalty: \$12)
- Amazon, which provides excellent user experience with *Look Inside*, etc. (\$6)
- Amazon CA (\$12)
- Amazon UK (\$2)
- Amazon EU (\$2)
- Brick-and-mortar book store (\$1)

In reality, CreateSpace books are not sold at bookstores. (See below.)

CreateSpace can be very inconvenient for the buyer: Huge shipping times, customs fees, having to create yet another account, etc.

CreateSpace Distribution Channels

Standard Distribution **FREE**



Amazon.com*

[What's this?](#)



Amazon Europe*

[What's this?](#)



CreateSpace eStore

[What's this?](#)

[→ eStore Setup](#)

[→ Discount Codes](#)

Changes to your book, including list price and description, appear immediately.

* Your Amazon site detail page should be built 3-5 business days after your title is made available for sale. Changes to your title, including list price, may take 3-5 business days to appear on Amazon sites.

Expanded Distribution **FREE**

Changes to your title, including list price, can take 6-8 weeks to appear in all Expanded Distribution channels.



Bookstores and Online Retailers

[What's this?](#)



Libraries & Academic Institutions

[What's this?](#)



CreateSpace Direct

[What's this?](#)

Promoting

- Giveaways to influential people
- Somewhat amusing: Ali donated two copies as *used books* to Book Buyers on Castro Street in Mountain View. One is gone; the other is still available on aisle 7 at \$14.50

Book Stores Against Amazon

Quotes from a West Coast book store chain:

- "**unable to carry your book** in our store because your book is published under an imprint of Amazon. CreateSpace is part of Amazon."
- "It is our **company policy not to carry** stock for titles that Amazon has published as they are our competitors and we do not agree with their business practices."
- "your book is available from Ingram as **not returnable** & with a short % for us"

Same experience at Digital Guru on Lawrence Expressway

However, they will happily order the book if the reader pays up front.

Enter IngramSpark

- Ingram Content Group is very well respected by book stores; the industry's largest active book inventory with access to 7.5 million titles
- Ingram does carry CreateSpace books; again, local bookstores do not stock them
- IngramSpark is the self-publishing platform, backed by Lightning Source
- Higher cost (~\$14.50 versus CreateSpace's \$10.42)
- Higher fees: ~\$12 yearly fee, \$85 for ISBN, \$45 setup fee, \$25 interior update, \$25 cover update

Wholesale Discount

Not visible to the author on CreateSpace, unavoidable on IngramSpark.

- Wholesaler (Ingram) gets 15%
- Brick-and-mortar bookstore *normally* gets 40% (less is acceptable in special cases)
- Therefore, sane discount is %55

However, this discount applies to online sales as well. **The author leaves %55** even for online sales where no brick-and-mortar bookstore was involved!

That's why the **one-two-punch** of *CreateSpace and IngramSpark* is a better option. (Even better: Own your ISBN so that both versions use the same number.)

Pricing

- The author sets the price
- The author sets the wholesale discount

In this particular case, "Programming in D" is competing with its free electronic versions

That was the reason for the low \$28.50 price.

Unfortunately, applying the good wholesale discount of %55 at IngramSpark put this book in the *negative royalty* territory.

There was one failed attempt at reducing paper count by squishing the content

CreateSpace Pricing

List Price	Channel	Royalty
<p>\$ 31.50 USD*</p> <p>Minimum list price for this title is \$24.93</p> <p>What's this?</p> <p>Calculate</p>	<p>Amazon.com</p>	<p>\$8.93</p>
	<p>CreateSpace eStore</p>	<p>\$15.23</p>
	<p>Expanded Distribution</p>	<p>\$2.63</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, suggest a GBP price based on U.S. price</p> <p>What's this?</p> <p>£ 20.50 GBP**</p> <p>Minimum list price for this title is £13.84</p> <p>Calculate</p>	<p>Amazon Europe</p> <p>For books printed in Great Britain</p>	<p>£4.00</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, suggest a EUR price based on U.S. price</p> <p>What's this?</p> <p>€ 28.50 EUR**</p> <p>Minimum list price for this title is €16.20</p> <p>Calculate</p>	<p>Amazon Europe</p> <p>For books printed in continental Europe</p>	<p>€7.38</p>

IngramSpark Pricing

MARKET PRICING



Market	Price	Discount	Returnable
United States	37.73 USD	55.00 %	YesDeliver
United Kingdom	28.82 GBP	50.00 %	YesDestroy
Canada	49.94 CAD	55.00 %	YesDeliver
European Union	35.53 EUR	55.00 %	YesDestroy
Australia	54.45 AUD	55.00 %	YesDestroy
Brazil Printer Network	38.83 USD	55.00 %	No
Germany Printer Network	38.83 USD	55.00 %	No
Russia Printer Network	38.83 USD	55.00 %	No
South Korea Printer Network	38.83 USD	55.00 %	No
Poland Printer Network	38.83 USD	55.00 %	No

Quality

Book

- Both CreateSpace and IngramSpark books are very good overall
- There was one badly trimmed book from CreateSpace out of more than fifty copies

Service

- CreateSpace had a very annoying issue with their flow: You can order more than one proof copy but the shipping address must be the same; you can order again if you update the content file but then you must wait a human to approve it first before ordering again; it took Ali close to a week to ship three proof copies to three addresses
- IngramSpark does not respond to support email. (The title configuration page still showed prices that would give *negative* royalty, no matter how many times they were updated)

Paper Book Sales

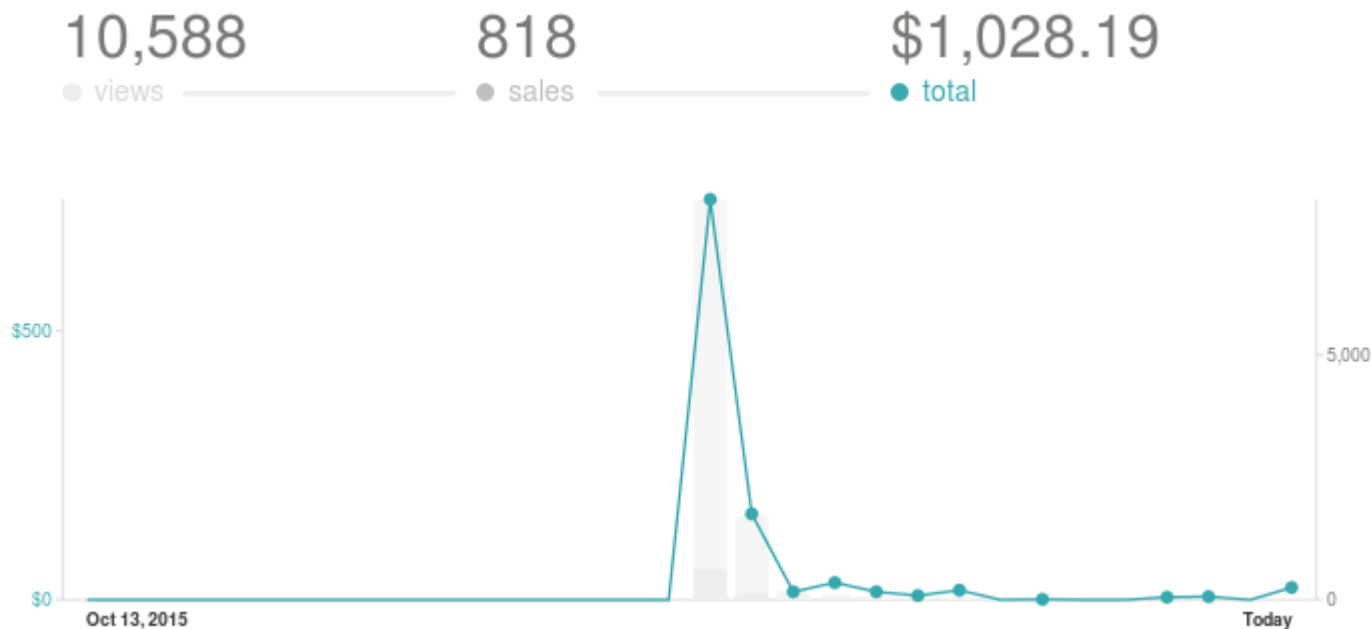
- August 17-31: 52 books (3.5 book per day)
- September: 33 books (1.1 book per day)
- October: 23 books (0.77 book per day)
- November 1-11: 11 books (0.46 per day)
- Total expense: \$1,841
- Total sales: \$844
- Payments are monthly and at \$100 denominations (or £100 or €100) at CreateSpace (Other platforms may vary)

Ebook Sales

- Put the ebooks on Gumroad at \$0+ (meaning *pay what you want*; \$0 or minimum \$0.99)

<https://gum.co/PinD>

- Announced on dlang.org newsgroups
- The news stayed on Reddit /r/programming for about 2 days; more than 10 hours on the first spot



- Actual sales: 263 people paid non-zero at the average price of \$3.91
- Result: \$44 in the black!

Links to Gumroad

Referrer

	Views	Sales	Conversion	Total ▼
Reddit	5,569	442	7.9%	\$541.91
Direct, email, IM	4,057	276	6.8%	\$379.32
forum.dlang.org	141	27	19.1%	\$36.99
ddlll.org	99	11	11.1%	\$27
Gumroad	194	26	13.4%	\$18.98
snsanalytics.com	46	5	10.9%	\$5.99
Twitter	144	5	3.5%	\$5
getpocket.com	4	2	50.0%	\$5
Facebook	28	4	14.3%	\$2
jimmyr.com	39	3	7.7%	\$2

Show more

Taxes

- You provide SSN or other tax ID to the platform; they file 1099
- An accountant recommended: "Do not create a business yet; just file 1040 Schedule C" (seems pretty easy)

Links

- The online book: <http://ddili.org/ders/d.en/>
- Project page: <https://bitbucket.org/acehrel/ddili/>
- Official D site: <http://dlang.org/>