

“In *Register Your Book*, David Wogahn makes a convincing case for something that those of us who have worked in publishing for a while already know: that registering your book—and doing it properly—is vital to your success as an author. Then he proceeds to break down this often-confusing process in bite-size pieces that even the least publishing-savvy reader will have no difficulty following along with. Straightforward and easy to digest, this is one how-to that every new author or publisher should have in their arsenal!”

—*Brooke Warner, Publisher of She Writes Press and author of Green-Light Your Book: How Writers Can Succeed in the New Era of Publishing*

“In a highly competitive marketplace discoverability is key. David Wogahn has written a thorough and deceptively simple guide for independent authors and publishers to ensure they maximize the ability for their book to be discovered in the fire hose of new books published every year. I’ve no doubt it will become a required resource for every aspiring author and publisher.”

—*Kim Anderson, Founder and CEO, The Reading Room*

“Where was David Wogahn when I was starting out in book publishing? The learning curve is so steep in this business. Not only do you need to know how to design, produce, promote and distribute a book; you must also be an expert at what I’ll call the “minutia” of publishing. Sure, you could spend—and waste—dozens of hours figuring out how all this works. But why wouldn’t you just read Wogahn’s book?”

—*Wendy Thomas Russell, Publisher and Co-Founder, Brown Paper Press*

“David Wogahn’s book offers newly published authors and independent publishers a concise and clear guide to the prepublication process. Anyone looking for

information on ISBNs, copyright, and a host of other details for independent publishing needs this book.”

—*Rachelle Yousuf, President, Women’s National Book Association-Los Angeles Chapter; Event Coordinator, National Reading Group Month*

“It is true that almost anybody today can publish a book in whatever slap-dash fashion they wish. To my mind the test is in the quality of the details, language and production. A book’s public life begins with an ISBN. Wogahn’s *Register Your Book*, starts you off on the right road.”

—*Mike Sager, Editor & Publisher, The Sager Group LLC*

“Does your head hurt from hunting for answers for all of those pesky little questions you have about ISBNs, bar codes, copyright and library registration? David Wogahn has been my go-to guy for answers on this topic for years now, and I’m thrilled that he’s provided this information in one concise guide. Keep it close and proceed with confidence in spending your time and dollars to get it done right, the first time.”

—*Carla King, Self-Pub Boot Camp*

“Do you know how important metadata is to your book’s success? Writers, in 21st century publishing, *Register Your Book*, penned by an industry pro, is a must read.”

—*Marla Miller, author/editor/social media strategist teaches writing workshops @ west coast conferences including SBWC and SCWC*

“This book is a must-have for any author who is considering the self-publishing route. *Register Your Book* demystifies the confusing labyrinth of copyright registration, ISBN selection, and marketing your book to libraries. Highly recommended.”

—*Christine Pinheiro, President of Defiant Press*

# REGISTER YOUR BOOK

The Essential Guide to ISBNs,  
Barcodes, Copyright, and LCCNs



**DAVID WOGAHN**

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“It’s the little details that are vital.  
Little things make big things happen.”

— John Wooden,  
Legendary UCLA basketball coach

## Preface

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**F**or the first time in modern history, authors have a choice. Freed from the domination of traditional publishers, independent publishing is now a viable option. The greatest stumbling block that remains for most indie publishers is making sense of the registration process that enables the sale and protection of books.

That's where I can help you.

This guide will save you from sorting through blogs and message boards that contain contradictory statements and misinformed opinions. It will save you the heartache of launching a book without fully understanding the ramifications of your choices for assigning an ISBN or the proper elements of a copyright page and its filing. Finally, you can avoid wading through arcane government website pages to learn the requirements, process and timing for obtaining a Library of Congress Control Number.

My goal is to help simplify the publication process. Registration is one of the few steps in book publishing in which mistakes and oversights are difficult and costly to correct. These pages explain your options, advise possible courses of action, and help you avoid the consequences of actions not taken.

*Register Your Book* presents the essential information any United States-based publisher needs to succeed. Think of it as your personal publishing consultant.

To your publishing success,  
David Wogahn  
Carlsbad, California

## Acknowledgments

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The beloved children's classic *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* describes the origin of this book; the initial source of encouragement to undertake this effort.

It began with a Sellbox.com blog post nearly four years ago on the topic of ISBNs for eBooks. At the time there was significant confusion among indie publishers (and book industry companies) about the topic and I decided to boil it down to a simple five point FAQ. This led to a blog post on the mythical *eISBN*—a post which garnered a link from Wikipedia for its authenticity—and a post to clarify the four ISBN choices offered by Amazon's CreateSpace.

Collectively, these posts have attracted more than 200 comments and countless readers. So it is only appropriate that I begin here with a note of appreciation to those commenters and readers. Without their keen interest, I would

never have thought there was a market for such a book.

There is no single entity that governs all aspects of what I call *book registration*. So once I had the book's audience and key topics defined, it was a matter of vetting the information with subject matter experts. Judith Appelbaum, Laura Dawson, Karla Olson, Terry Tegnazian and Valerie Nemeth all made meaningful contributions that helped fine-tune the clarity and accuracy of the information found in the book.

I imagine many authors experience some form of indecision, or have a need for trusted advice. Julia and Jared Drake, Leslie Lehr, Peter Lichtgarn and Teri Rider: thank you for finding the time to share your wise counsel, and for your encouragement.

And finally, all this would not be possible if it wasn't for my wife's support. Melissa: you help me carve out the necessary time to research and write, and you are always there to provide the unvarnished feedback that I need to hear. I am forever grateful to you.

# 1

## What Book Registration Is, and Why It Matters

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**B**ook registration in the United States is not a formal requirement, nor a defined procedure for every book. Anyone can print a book or produce an eBook and distribute it. You do not need to complete any paperwork or online forms or spend any money. However, if you wish to distribute, sell, and protect your book, there are three separate registrations that all books have in common:

1. ISBN (International Standard Book Number) Registration
2. U.S. Copyright Registration
3. U.S. Library of Congress Registration

Who might be able to ignore these registrations? Perhaps the fiction writer publishing

exclusively in eBook format who doesn't care about copyright. But for the vast majority of us who don't fit that description, one or more of these registrations is important, if not mandatory, to publish a book.

Following the advice in this book, no one will be able to tell the difference between your book and a book produced by one of the "big New York" publishers. Besides simply *appearing* professional, your book can be:

- Listed in the same industry databases
- Sold in any store that wishes to sell your book
- More easily (and less expensively) be defended in the event of a copyright violation

Your book will also be more *discoverable* by those looking for books like yours: stores, libraries and most importantly, readers. No matter how you describe it, in Internet marketing-speak, no book or author stands a chance at success without being visible and discoverable to readers searching online. And let's face it, with more and more brick-and-mortar stores closing, book shoppers are making more and more of their purchases online.

Never before has there been a more compelling reason for making sure a book and its author are properly represented in as many online databases as possible. A thorough book registration process ensures that. Proper book registration will greatly reduce the chance of problems for many years to come.

### **Who this book is for**

The ease of publishing and the potential for income from it have brought literally thousands of new books to the virtual shelves of online bookstores. According to R.R. Bowker, the exclusive seller of ISBNs in the United States, ISBNs for self-published print and eBook titles have grown from 85,468 in 2008 to 458,564 in 2013, the most recent year reported.<sup>1</sup> That's a 537% increase! And the actual numbers are even greater because Bowker doesn't count eBooks published without an ISBN.

As you may know, the big eBook retailers like Amazon do not require publishers to use an ISBN. And because none of the large online self-publishing portals report the number of new eBooks published, no one knows just how many new eBooks are published each year

without an ISBN. Suffice to say, it has to be thousands.

Numbers and growth aside, what's obvious is that we have a highly competitive marketplace. This makes it especially important for new publishers to utilize every industry program and procedure available.

*RegisterYour Book* aims to assist the range of people seeking to navigate the complicated world of self-publishing:

- **Self-publishers** who want to avoid having their book look “self-published” and get it into the same catalogs and databases as the large publishers use.
- **Authors** who want to understand their options even if they are not the one designing and producing their book.
- **Publishing services firms** who want to help their clients look even more professional and guide them through these important steps.
- **New publishers** who need to establish best practices that will serve their publishing firm for years to come.

## **It doesn't matter, until it matters**

We publish with the goal of being successful, whether that means selling books, touching lives, recording family histories, or enhancing our reputations. But all of that is put at risk when we take shortcuts or miss important details.

Publishing a book is a journey culminating in an event. Once released into the world, your book is on its own. Do-overs and corrections are expensive, if not impossible.

Consider ISBNs. Numbers cannot be transferred, so if you got a free one and later want to show your name as the publisher, you will have to re-publish your book using a new ISBN. And that usually means starting over to accumulate reader reviews.

You might discover a book very similar to yours selling in the U.S. or another country, but now the cost to protect your copyright has ballooned from \$35 to thousands of dollars.

Or—surprise—a chance media mention generates interest in your book, but libraries and schools can't easily find it. Because it is already published, your book is ineligible to receive a Library of Congress Control Number.

My point is that as publishers, we need to plan for success. Publishing a book is like baking a loaf of bread. Once out of the oven, the ingredients are baked in, and it's off to the shelf for sale. Your book's registration information never changes.

## How to use this book

*Register Your Book* seeks to address both the why, as well as the how questions that new or occasional publishers have. If you are new to publishing, I recommend that you read the book but skim the how-to sections on your first time through. Don't get bogged down trying to complete each step of the process as you read it. Registering your book requires a good deal of thinking and decision-making, so it's best to understand the big picture before you get started.

After your initial read, turn to **Appendix A, Timing and Timelines**, where I summarize how long a process takes as well as the general order of each registration step. Each step references the appropriate chapter, which you can reread as you complete that step in the process.

## Website links

Each step of the registration process is completed online, and that is where you will find all of the additional website resources referenced in this book. To make accessing these resources easier for both printed book and eBook readers, I replaced each of the specific links with an easy-to-read short link that takes you to the same place.

Each link begins with the domain name **breve.link** (*breve* meaning *short* in Italian). For example, when you type or click <http://breve.link/ryb1>, you will be taken to the Bowker website page for title submissions: <http://www.bowker.com/tools-resources/Title-Submissions.html>.

Not only does this make a long website address easier to read and type (especially helpful for print book readers), but, in the event an address changes, we can easily update the link which keeps your book accurate and up-to-date. Please email the publisher if a link is broken or goes to what you think is the wrong location. That way it can be quickly fixed for all readers.

## Book or eBook?

As you read on, keep in mind that I use the term *book* to describe all forms of a book—paper, digital, audio—unless referring specifically to the eBooks sold by major online book retailers. And by eBooks, I mean Kindle and EPUB formats, not PDF or any of the other dozen or so eBook formats.<sup>2</sup>

My personal opinion is that we as publishers are doing our readers and profession a disservice if we treat eBooks as a second-class format. An eBook can and should be as professionally produced a work as any other type of book. We need to be careful that we don't create a lesser product in the minds of today's readers.

To this last point, if you are publishing books—whether the “p,” the “e” or the “a” (audio) variety—and assigning them an ISBN, do it right. An ISBN is inherently helpful for sales, but only if you take advantage of everything it offers.

Let's begin with the most important registration step, the International Standard Book Number, or ISBN.

## About the Author

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**D**avid Wogahn is president of Sellbox, an award-winning independent publishing services company that helps authors, independent publishers and other businesses publish books and metadata. Sellbox has launched over a hundred professional imprints, enabling the successful publication of 250 books...and counting. Prior to founding Sellbox in 2002, Wogahn was vice president of multimedia publishing at Times Mirror, a media holding company that included the *Los Angeles Times*. He also worked for the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee and co-founded the first online publisher of sports team branded websites, known today as the CBS College Sports Network. He is the author of two books and two video courses, including *Distributing and Marketing eBooks* for Lynda.com, a LinkedIn Company.