

Getting Started with Self-Publishing

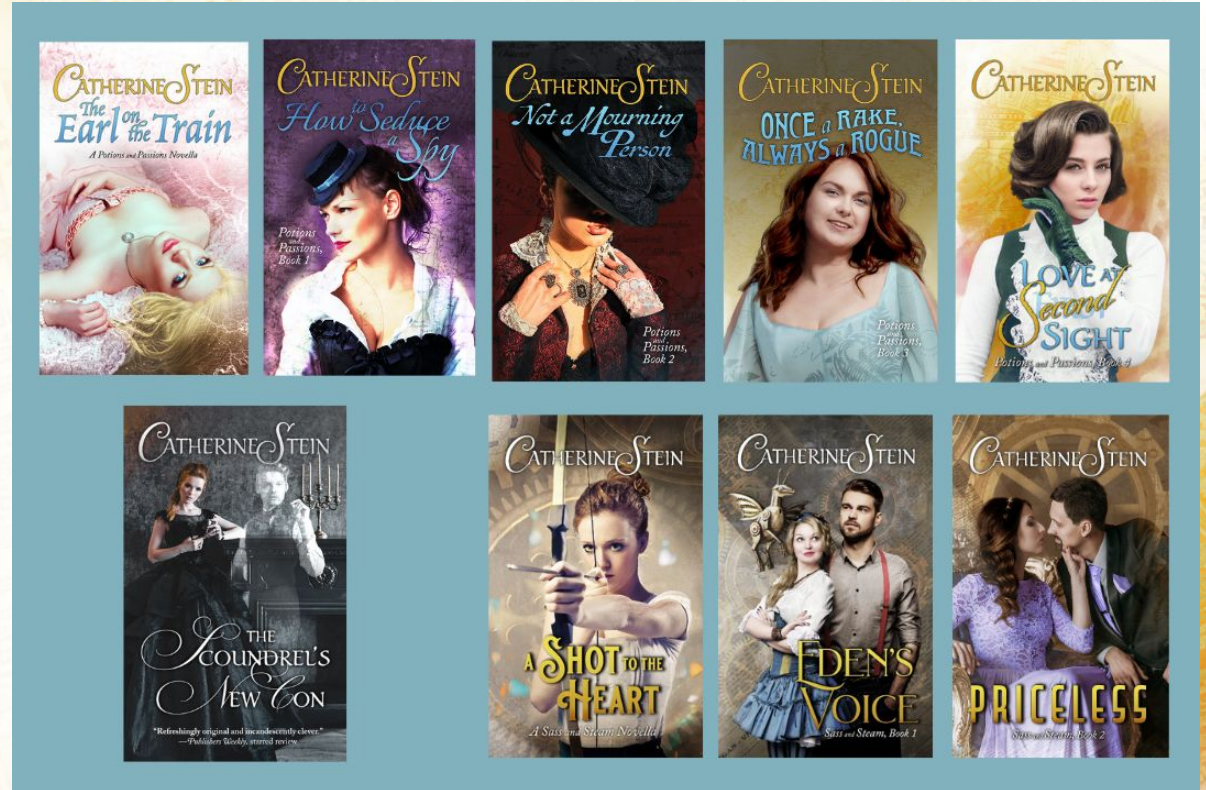
CATHERINE STEIN

The Michigan Daily



Meet Catherine

- Ann Arbor native
- published since 2018
- I write steampunk & historical romance
- my books have won awards and received critical acclaim





Self Publishing vs. Traditional Publishing

Traditional Publishing

- publisher buys rights to sell your book
- they produce the book (editing, cover, formatting)
- they distribute the book

Self Publishing

- YOU are the publisher
- you handle all the steps from beginning to end



Traditional Publishing Pros and Cons

Pros:

- work with experienced industry professionals
- no upfront costs
- wide exposure
- much of the process is done for you

Cons:

- each step takes a long time
- hard deadlines, schedule set for you
- less control over both content and presentation



Self-Publishing Pros and Cons

Pros:

- don't need an agent
- you maintain all control
- you set your schedule
- can tell stories that trad pubs won't

Cons:

- you have to do all the jobs
- harder to get exposure
- attitude of “not real publishing”



Pre-publication

Your book should be *indistinguishable* from a traditionally published book

- editing
- cover design
- formatting
- author brand (website, social media presence)



Editing

- **developmental edits** - the “Big Picture”
- **copy edits/line edits** - word usage, sentence structure, consistency
- **proofreading** - typos, small errors

What to look for in an editor

- understands your style/voice
- doesn't rewrite your work
- shows you ways to improve



Covers

Your cover should reflect the book's genre/tone, fit with the market

- make your own, **IF** you have the skills
- pre-made covers (inexpensive, widely available)
- custom cover design

Cover tips:

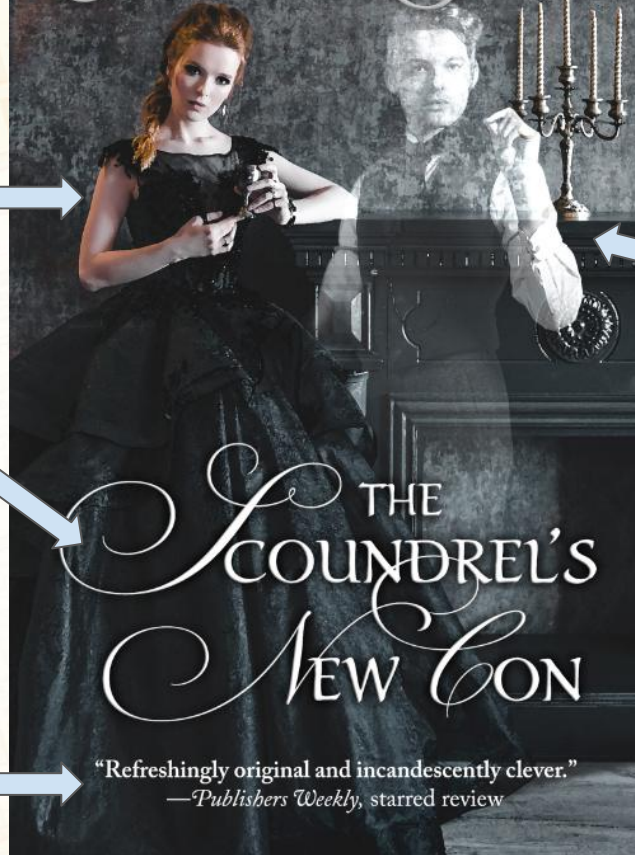
- look at other covers in your genre
- be consistent across books
- if making a paperback, don't neglect the spine



Author name is the same on every book

CATHERINE STEIN

Stock photo and font are typical of the historical romance genre



Unique element specific to this book

Add a great quote or recommendation if you have one

"Refreshingly original and incandescently clever."
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review



Formatting

Can hire a formatter or do it on your own depending on your needs

- Vellum (Apple software, popular with professionals)
- Reedsy - <https://reedsy.com/>
- many publishing sites accept formatted Word document

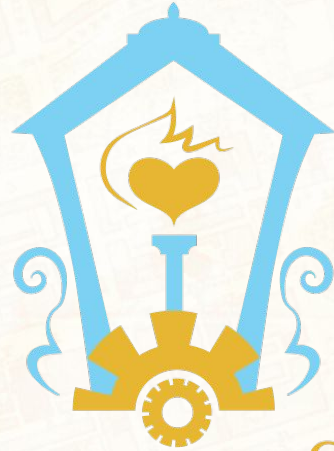
Do not forget to include:

table of contents, title page, copyright, design credits, back matter



Author Brand

- pen name (Google the name you choose before committing)
- website - easy to remember/find
- social media - under your author name
- logo



CATHERINE STEIN



Publication

Distribution Options

- Exclusive vs. Wide
 - an Amazon exclusive can join the Kindle Unlimited program
 - wide distribution = selling at multiple retailers
 - can upload your books yourself or use a distributor
- ebook only vs. ebook and print
 - print books can also be exclusive vs. wide



Publishing on Amazon

KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing) - <https://kdp.amazon.com/>

- list of books, sales reports, “creation tools”, Amazon advertising
- you will need bank account and tax information to get paid
- Creating your book:
 - title, series, blurb, author bio, keywords, categories, finished content
 - Kindle Unlimited (KDP Select) - earn money for page reads
 - pricing: 70% royalties starting at \$2.99
 - pre-orders



Metadata: Tips on Titles and Blurbs

Titles:

- reflect your genre and your brand
- theme/style across a series

Blurbs:

- do not summarize your book
- who is your protagonist, what is the conflict/what are the stakes?
- use key words and phrases
- try to hook the reader in the first line or two



Publishing Wide

- Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Apple iBooks, Google Play
- direct: you upload to each site, you get all the royalties
- distributor: you upload in one place, they take a cut
- Smashwords, Draft2Digital, PublishDrive, IngramSpark
- Publishing tips:
 - be consistent w/ metadata and price
 - some options will vary by retailer



Publishing Paperbacks

- Amazon - done through KDP
- IngramSpark - <https://www.ingramspark.com/>
 - gets your book listed in Ingram database
 - you set the wholesale discount
- print proofs
 - **always** check a proof before putting book on sale
- author copies: you pay printing and shipping only
- pre-orders: no on Amazon, yes on IS



About ISBNs

- ebooks do not need an ISBN, but you can use one
 - one number to find your book anywhere
- paperbacks need one
 - Amazon and IS offer free ISBNs, BUT they will be listed as publisher
 - should be the same in all locations
- buy your own: Bowker - <https://www.myidentifiers.com/>
 - very pricey, best bought in bulk



Marketing

- Before you publish: set up social media and website
 - create your author brand
 - interact as your author self
- network with other authors
 - online writing groups and hashtags
 - conferences when possible
- paid advertisements

Make sure you produce the best possible product



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