How to Publish Your First Photo Book

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Photo books are becoming the next big thing for photographers to do with their images. Photo books became the photo album of the digital world. They first gained popularity with Wedding Photographers, Scrap Bookers and later moms wanting to document the growth of their children. The market has gotten so big, there are now over 100 companies producing photo books, such as Blurb, Snapfish, Picaboo, Adorama and even Costco. At one time self-publishing a photo book was an expensive process with a commitment to producing a large number of books, which prevented many amateur picture takers from their dream. Today one can produce a quality book one at a time at a reasonable cost.

Creating your first photo book can seem like a daunting task and many feel intimidated with the many choices that have to be made. If you have ever put together a slide show or digital program, the thought process is very similar. The first task is to decide on a subject or story you want to tell. The beginning book maker should pick a subject they know and have passion for. Are you going to photograph for a book or make a book from photographs? By picking a subject and taking the images for the project, you can make sure you have all the images you need to tell a story. If you take images you already have to assemble into a book, you may find you don't have all the images you need to complete the story. In either case,

edit your photos mercilessly. A good photo book depends on the quality of the images, but you also need supportive images to help tell the story. Don't repeat a lot of similar images just because they are good or your award-winning images; don't bore the viewer; keep it interesting. The photos you use must flow from one image to the next. You may need overviews that show a sense of place or the big picture. You will need mid-views that reveal the story and close-ups that show fine details of your subject and add interest. Pick all your images, edit and size them for your book before you start uploading to the publisher. Some publishers require all the images to be loaded at one time and it just makes the whole process go more smoothly. Exposure of the image is important; it is probably best to err on the light side rather than dark, as images tend to look darker when printed. Each book company will have printed guidelines for the type, size and resolution of the images that will produce the best picture.

The second task is to decide on a publisher. You might ask others you know that have made books which company they like and what was the quality and ease of making the book. Here are a couple of websites that have evaluated many of the publishers and tabulated their results. http://photo-book-review.toptenreviews.com/ evaluates ten publishers and rates them as to ease of use, cost, options, etc.

Looking for ideas in other books

Doing research on book websites

Checking margins and photo placement

https://thedailydigi.com/12-different-photobook-printer-reviews looks at twelve publishers in a more detailed fashion using their own experiences with each. After you decide on several that look good, go to the publisher's website and see if it feels comfortable and easy to understand. Download the photobook layout software or review their online bookmaking program to make sure you can use it and understand how to upload images, add words and move things around. Some provide templates where you just drop in your images and words. Does their template fit in with the type of book you are going to make? What size and type of image do they require? While some publishers have tools to edit photos, it is suggested you use the photo editing software you normally use and with which you are familiar.

Your third task after picking images and deciding on a publisher is to lay out your book. A few terms to know in book publishing: Spread—looking down on your book, viewing both the left and right page at the same time; Full Bleed—an image that covers the full page with no margins; Gutter—the area where the book is bound. The Gutter area is important because, if your image is full bleed, the curved area that goes into the gutter is hard to see and may hide part of your image. Some publishers make books that lay flat so this curved area is of less concern. Most publishers supply templates or predetermined layouts that allow you to drag your images and text onto the page while others allow you to do your own layout. The software shows you lines that alert you to margins. If you go past these lines, part of your image may be cut off. Here are a few things you need to decide: Do you want hard bound or soft? What type of paper do you want? Most publishers will allow glossy or matte or may only have luster. Some have an upcharge for heavy paper or special types. Do you want your images on white pages or black?

Will your book be a picture book or story telling with a lot of text? If your book is mainly a photo book you might consider having captions that tell the name of the image or briefly tell something about the image. If you feel this would distract from the viewing of the image, you might have a listing in the back of the book that lists each page number or picture number and gives the name or other information. This lets the viewer enjoy the images and if they want to know more, they can refer to the picture list page. Even with picture books, one page is usually devoted to telling something about why the book was made or sets the mood for viewing. If your book will have a lot of text and stories, do you want the text on the same page as the images? Many book makers put the images on one page of the spread with the text on the other. While many photo books have one per page similar to a gallery, consider mixing it up with a main image and several smaller images that help support the story. For your wording, select a text that is easy to read and stick to one or two font styles to keep it simple and less distracting; be consistent with size and style.

Should you put an image on the cover of your book or just text? A strong image will probably be the best choice for a photobook cover. The image you choose should be a picture that draws you into the book and wanting more. It should also be representative of what the book is about. A viewer can become disappointed if they see an image on the cover that draws them in but

Anna Dorey shows book

suggestions to make your book better. Make sure all your photo boxes are aligned and use auto align if your publisher has this option available.

Don't let all these decisions keep you from starting your book. As photographers we are our own worst critics and many are perfectionists. Choose a subject, pick your pictures, lay it out and press send. Be sure to enter the Print Division Photo Essay Book Contest—deadline August 10th. You can find an entry form and all needed information at http://www.psa-photo.org/index. php?ppd-photo-book-essay-contest. ∎

nothing else in the book is related. The cover image should have an area where the title can be printed but not cover up any important parts of the image. Choose an image that doesn't have a lot of distracting elements that would be behind the printed title.

The last task before you press the send button is to proofread. Sure, we know you are going to review your text and look for mistakes and even run spell checker. Let someone else review your book before you click send. They may see something you missed. They may also see something in the flow of images or placement of text that could be improved. Look for missing words and words spelled correctly but are the wrong word. Some programs have a preview button that will show errors and make

PPD Photo Book Essay Contest

With all the interest photographers have in producing photo books, the Print Division has started a new Photo Book Essay Contest. The entry form, judging criteria and more information on making a book can be found on the PSA website, http://www.psa-photo.org/index.php?ppd-photo-book-essay-contest. All entries should be sent to **Larry Cowles, FPSA, GMPSA, 6459 Lavender St. Corona, CA 92880. Deadline for entries is August 10, 2015.** Larry can be contacted at cowtech@earthlink.net.

This contest will be open to any subject matter. Books can be photos only or with text that tells a story. They can be hardbound or softbound with no restrictions on type of paper. Size will be limited to 5x7 to 9x12 rectangular or square formats. Pages will be limited to 60 (30 pieces of paper with each side being a page). For story telling books, 10% of the images used can be historical images, maps, charts, graphs to support the story. Entries must be a printed book, not an electronic copy. Contest will be judged by three qualified judges. Any name of the maker on the book will be covered during judging. Awards will be given for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place and Judges Choice awards. HM's will be awarded up to 10% of total entries. Each entrant may enter only one book. Contest is open to PSA members only. While there is no charge for the competition, each entrant must supply return postage if they want the book returned. Winning books will be shown in some fashion at the PSA Conference in West Yellowstone.