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# THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO SELF- PUBLISHING

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW  
to write, publish, promote, and sell  
your own book

Marilyn Ross & Sue Collier

FIFTH EDITION

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**WRITER'S DIGEST  
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## Dedication

Dedicated to my late husband, Tom, coauthor of the previous four editions and my steadfast, loving partner in all things. — *Marilyn*

Dedicated to those who have inspired me, those who have challenged me, and those who have mentored me. And to my son, Lucas, who shines a light on all things. — *Sue*

Most of all, it's dedicated to our readers — the self-publishing superstars of tomorrow.

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## About the Authors



Photo by Sarah Clymer

**Marilyn Ross** is a self-publishing pioneer. Over the last three decades, she has helped thousands of authors sell millions of books through About Books, Inc., the company she and former husband Tom founded in 1977 and have since sold. Then Marilyn turned her energies toward championing authors, professionals, and small presses by founding Self-Publishing Resources (SPR).

Marilyn, an internationally acclaimed self-publishing authority, has been noted and quoted in *U.S. News & World Report*, *Publishers Weekly*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *Writer's Digest*, *Bottom Line/Personal*, *John Naisbitt's Trend Letter*, *Investor's Business Daily*, *Rocky Mountain News*, the *Denver Post*, *San Diego Union*, *Chicago Daily Herald*, *Phoenix Gazette*, *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*, among others. *Entrepreneur* magazine dubbed Marilyn a "trend tracker." Additionally, she has appeared on scores of radio and TV shows, including NPR's *All Things Considered*.

In 1996, Marilyn and Tom Ross launched the Small Publishers Association of North America (SPAN), although they are no longer involved. Under their leadership SPAN became the second largest such organization in the world.

Marilyn brings her invigorating style to her best-selling books *The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing*, *Jump Start Your Book Sales*, and *Shameless Marketing for Brazen Hussies*. This energetic woman not only helps authors successfully write, publish, and market their own

books and information products — she has written and self-published fifteen books of her own. Following the “success formula” she espouses, five of the books have been sold to major trade publishers. Singled out for the Guerrilla Marketing Hall of Fame, she is also listed in numerous *Who's Who* directories. Marilyn has intimate knowledge of the joys and frustrations of being an author. Writing and publishing conference planners often call upon her as a speaker.

She now divides her time between volunteer activities, geocaching, dancing, enjoying nature, gardening, spiritual study, travel, being playful, and nurturing her many friends.



Photo by Cathy Fraser

**Sue Collier** brings together a multitude of talents in the publishing industry. She began her career in the business as communications editor for the College of American Pathologists in Chicago during the late 1980s. After cutting her editorial teeth on medical publications, she moved on to a position as production editor for the American Society for Quality in Milwaukee. She handled all facets of production for approximately forty Quality Press titles annually.

The mountains of Colorado beckoned, however, and in 1991, she relocated to the Denver area and accepted a position as managing editor for Fulcrum Publishing, a trade publisher specializing in travel, gardening, natural history, education, self-help, and children's books, among other genres. Sue spent more than four years there, working with dozens of authors, freelancers, vendors, and staffers on a myriad of projects.

In 1995, she took the entrepreneurial plunge, starting an editorial, writing, and graphic design business called Lead Dog Communications. Sue ghostwrote a number of books and presented seminars for self-publishing authors. Soon she began collaborating with Marilyn Ross, former owner of About Books, Inc., and Self-



Publishing Resources (SPR).

Marilyn, whom she considers her mentor, recently sold SPR to Sue. As president and CEO of SPR, Sue oversees all book project work, coordinating a team of experts and holding true to the result-getting principles she learned from her mentor. Marilyn continues to serve as the “consultant to the consultant.”

SPR provides turnkey service to individuals and organizations seeking to publish and promote their own books, handling all aspects of book editing, design, production, and marketing and promotions. Sue also offers personalized publishing and writing coaching services for authors and small presses, providing them with the benefits of her extensive publishing background. Over the past two decades, she has worked with hundreds of clients, guiding them through the self-publishing process and helping them produce professional, attractive books.

Sue has degrees in English and education from the University of Wisconsin and is listed in the national registry of *Who's Who*. In her spare time, she is an avid runner who has completed four marathons. Sue also enjoys biking, hiking, reading, and spending time with her two dogs. She has one son and lives in the suburbs south of Denver.

## ***How to Contact the Authors***

The company founded by Marilyn Ross and headed by Sue Collier provides full consulting services for selected authors, professionals, businesses, associations, corporations and nonprofit organizations worldwide. Requests for further information, as well as inquiries about the authors' availability for speeches and seminars, should be directed to them at the address below. Readers of this book are also encouraged to contact the authors with comments and ideas for future editions.

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Find Sue on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/Sue.Collier](http://www.facebook.com/Sue.Collier)), Twitter (@SueCollier), and LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com/in/SueCollier](http://www.linkedin.com/in/SueCollier)).

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[www.Facebook.com/TheCompleteGuidetoSelfPublishing](http://www.Facebook.com/TheCompleteGuidetoSelfPublishing)

### ***BOOKS BY MARILYN AND TOM ROSS***

*Jump Start Your Book Sales*

*Country Bound!*

*The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing*

*Marketing Your Books*

*Howto Make Big Profits Publishing City and Regional Books*

*The Encyclopedia of Self-Publishing*

*Big Ideas for Small Service Businesses*

## **BOOKS BY MARILYN ROSS**

*Shameless Marketing for Brazen Hussies*

*Be Tough or Be Gone*

*National Directory of Newspaper Op-Ed Pages*

*Discover Your Roots*

*Creative Loafing*

## HERE'S WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT *THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO SELF-PUBLISHING*:

"... Still the most readable guide to self-publishing, and now it's loaded with up-to-date examples and current resources for e-publishing, on-demand publishing, and other forms of self-publishing. What a great resource!" — John Kremer, author, *1,001 Ways to Market Your Books*

"Besides telling how to write, publish, promote, and sell one's own book, the authors provide key names and addresses, book production guidance, sample sales letters, tips on business procedures, and suggestions on organizing and implementing a publicity campaign." — *Publishers Weekly*

"... A sound overview of self-publishing." — *Los Angeles Times*

"A good source of sound, detailed advice." — Judith Appelbaum, author, *Howto Get Happily Published*

"I have worn out two copies myself from constant use. This is THE most useful, authoritative guide for self-publishers, period." — Dan Kennedy, *No B.S. Marketing Letter*

"There's really nothing to self-publishing, except for about six thousand little details, most of them covered in Tom and Marilyn's book." — Bernard "Bear" Kamoroff, author, *Small Time Business Operator*

"Right after the book [*The Green Book — RVs Rated*] was published, I found your book at the local library. I was stunned. I read it from cover to cover twice in one week. I couldn't believe it. I had done almost everything wrong! I'm embarrassed to tell you about it. All was not lost, however. Your section on direct mailing triggered some ideas and I ran with it. It worked like a charm. I can't thank you enough for your knowledge, wisdom, and business savvy." — Connie Bernardo, publisher, Quill Publishing

"A handbook stuffed with essential information on how to get into print, and beyond ... The authors are fully prepared; they have self-published and successfully marketed several books. With realism and

extraordinary thoroughness, every practical topic is covered: how to organize for research and writing; mastering the ISBN, ABI, and CIP formalities; developing necessary business procedures; finding the right printer and format; advertising and promoting (including some very inventive approaches); and pushing distribution. Under the rubric Other Alternatives there are chapters on agents, conventional trade publishers, and vanity presses. Current lists of helpful organizations, reviewing media and syndicated columnists, bookstore chains, selected wholesalers, buyers of subsidiary rights, a bibliography, glossary, and index pack riches right up to the last page.” — *Booklist*

“For those who are considering self-publishing their books, this newly revised and updated, comprehensive guide to the publishing process may be all they need.” — *The Bloomsbury Review*

“We've seen excellent guides devoted to various stages of self-publishing — writing and product development, or production, or promotion, or distribution — but this book contains all you need to know about every aspect in one volume.” — *The Newsletter on Newsletters*

“If you've ever had the urge to write, publish, promote, and sell your own work, here's a fabulous book to guide you successfully through every step of the way ... It can save you thousands of dollars and be the difference between having a successful book or a flop.” — *Sid Asher's World*

“*The Complete Guide to Self-Publishing* is one of the, if not *the*, most valuable books in my library. I wish I had bought this book a long time ago. I would have understood much more about what I was trying to do.” — Jennifer Rose, Recollections Publishing

“Here's a practical work by a couple who have gone the standard route and have prepared a book full of hints on how to go about publishing your own book. The text offers sound advice on all the basic aspects of publishing.” — *John Barkham Review*

“The Rosses are providing a primer, in a way, of how to get into the publishing business.” — *Canadian Author and Bookman*

“... loaded with excellent practical advice, plus forms to fill out and models to follow. The authors are energetic yet irreverent, and their

attitude is refreshing." — *San Francisco Chronicle*

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