

Choosing a publisher

This fact sheet provides information to help you choose a publisher. It covers the services that publishers provide, what information you need to give them in order to get a quote, and what to consider when you choose a publisher.

It is preferable to contact a publisher in the early stages of developing a resource.

Why use a publisher?

Using a publisher to publish and distribute your resource has a number of advantages over self-publishing. Publishers are experienced in the publishing process and have established marketing and distribution channels. They may also be willing to underwrite your publication in exchange for a percentage of the profits.

What services can a publisher provide?

- editing
- proofreading
- design including the cover design
- illustrations
- indexing
- typesetting
- printing
- marketing including launch, catalogues, web and direct marketing
- distribution (The Foundation has a factsheet on distribution on the Plain Language Law section of our website).

You may decide to only use the publisher for some of these services. For example you may have your own illustrator. This needs to be negotiated with the publisher at the outset.

What financial assistance will a publisher provide?

The financial assistance provided by a publisher varies. A standard royalty arrangement that gives authors 10% of the cover price is common. For less commercial products, there may be no royalty or you may pay them to publish the resource.

You need to have a clear understanding about what financial support the publisher will provide and how this affects the terms of the agreement.

You also need to discuss copyright arrangements, whether your organisation can sell copies, if you would like to provide free copies or discounts for particular groups and, if relevant, the impact of an online version on sales of the hard copy.

What information do you need to give a publisher?

An initial approach to a publisher may begin with a phone call to find out if they are interested, in principle, in publishing your resource. The kind of information they will need to make this decision may include:

- author / organisation profile
- table of contents and sample chapter
- number of pages
- a strong marketing rationale
- the previous edition, if available, or the extent of updating required for a new edition
- edition, previous publisher and number of copies sold of previous edition.

What to think about when you are choosing a publisher

- Do they have expertise and experience in plain language legal editing and publishing?
- Have they worked with community organisations before?
- Have their previous productions been high-quality and delivered on time?
- Do they have the capacity to market and distribute to bookshops, government, the legal industry, community groups and educational institutions?

It might be useful to talk to other organisations who have used the same publisher.

Publishers

The following publishers have experience in working with community organisations to produce plain language law publications. The Law and Justice Foundation does not specifically recommend any of them, they are simply suggested starting points for your own investigations.

- Federation Press**
Ph: (02) 9552 2200
info@federationpress.com.au
www.federationpress.com.au
- Redfern Legal Centre Publishing**
Ph: (02) 9664 0900
info.press@unsw.edu.au
www.rlcp.org.au
- Seaview Press (for self publishers)**
Ph: (08) 8242 0666
seaview@seaviewpress.com.au
www.seaviewpress.com.au
- Halstead Press**
Ph: (02) 9211 3033
halstead@halsteadpress.com.au
www.halsteadpress.com.au

For more information, please contact the *Plain Language Law Unit* on 02 8227 3200 or visit www.lawfoundation.net.au/information

— 2008