

Publishing Needlework Books

When we say 'needlework books' we are not talking about Novels, like the Barbara Cartland kind where you sit down and bang out 5000 words on a typewriter and then sell millions of copies and live off the royalties forever and ever..... we are talking about hard work, persistence, patience and determination resulting in limited sales to a specialist market.

If you are prepared for that and still love the idea of sharing your work then this is how to go about it. Obviously the way you compile *your* book depends upon the subject and what you are trying to communicate to the reader and also what your particular publisher requires.

I am often asked *do you do all the stitching for the book, who types the manuscript, what about the photos and pictures do you do that* - the answer to all of the above is yes – read on.

The concept

Firstly you need an idea. Quite often you will see a book or pictures that spark the creative process such as Redoute's 18th century botanical paintings for my first book, I just had to stitch them and that is a good basis to start from. You need to be in love with your subject before you start in order to go the long haul!

Synopsis

Next you need to type out a synopsis of what the book will entail. I find it useful to put together the contents in order of chapters and then work the book around this. For instance with the last book on Colour here are some of the headings I jotted down: (these can be adjusted as you go along).

Materials & Preparation

Shading Techniques

Tools for selecting colours

How colour affects our embroidery

What brings our embroidery to life

Colour Combinations

Complementary Colours

Colour Schemes

Publishing

Once you have your synopsis and some pictures of the stitching it is time to find a publisher (if you don't already have one). In this case I had already discussed the title with the publisher and gone to contract stage. It is important to go to contract before you start the book so that you know what the publisher requires and don't waste time preparing a manuscript that needs drastic adjustment.

My publishers want the full manuscript in unformatted text in Microsoft word, with indications as to where to insert pictures, diagrams and photos, so that they can create their own layout. Because I like to visualise my layout I basically do two manuscripts, one with text only and the other with text and pictures.

Files

I create folders for each chapter on my computer desktop one for diagrams and one for text. Each time I scan or draw a diagram or photo it will be saved in the relevant folder for that chapter. When I have completed the manuscript I can save these folders to disc as a cross reference for the publisher. Let me give you an example: if I am illustrating an explanation of how to stitch a rosebud I will put INSERT PIC OF ROSEBUD NO 2 HERE. In my diagrams folder there will be a saved copy of Rosebud No 2.

Content

I work on two things at once – the individual chapters and the stitching. This creates a nice balance of work so that I am not spending all my time on the computer, but breaking it up with stitching. I concentrate on the subject for that chapter so that I don't get distracted – for example "Tools For Selecting Colours" and I will jot things down in this file, decide where to include illustrations and change the text as I go along. This is the time to keep your eyes and ears open and be receptive to what other people might want to see in this category – I have often got back from having dinner, or woken up in the middle of the night and rushed up to my computer to make a note!

You have creative license to go stark raving mad and behave accordingly during this time, your family and friends will pussy foot around you and give you lots of space!

I set myself little goals – like "I will spend two hours on this chapter and then go sit down and stitch", obviously the stitching is the more pleasurable task but of course there are those inevitable 16 stairs that need to be climbed to scan the step by step photos!

Time

Depending on the substance of the book, number of pages etc this process can take anything from 6 – 18 months. When you accept a deadline from the publishers ensure you give yourself plenty of extra time as life often gets in the way.

Copyright

It is important to gain permission for the use of any pictures, diagrams, quotes etc and to acknowledge these in the book. A copy of the permissions letters need to accompany the manuscript when it goes to the publisher.

Completion

Once the manuscript is typed up and all the stitching is complete it is time to check through it and cross reference all the diagram/photo inserts to the text. You will need to do this several times. I print out two hard copies of each manuscript (the one with text only and the one with text and pics) and take it to the print shop to be spiral bound. I also print out two hard copies of the diagram folders and save everything onto DVDs. I keep a copy of each for myself so that when the edits come back I have copies to check against.

The stitching is all professionally mounted and then everything is carefully packed up into a box ready to send to the publishers.

Editing

At this stage you can take a deep breath and feel very pleased with yourself, but the journey is not quite over. Once the manuscript has reached the publishers the editor will begin work on it. This means they basically make good use of the yellow highlighting tool in Microsoft Word and put little suggestions in the margin. I should say thank goodness for editors who manage to make sense of my feeble use of the English language and correct all the grammar mistakes. They also point out things that are missing, errors in the projects and even notice when you use the wrong shade of thread!

So just when you think its time to go on holiday you receive the edits. This is another mammoth task of checking, re-checking and adjusting.

Photography

The publisher is normally responsible for photographing the stitching that you supply. I also supply scanned copies that they may or may not use, as I believe these show more detail than a photograph.

Design

Once all the edits are complete the manuscript is then sent to the designer who begins work on the book layout and cover. As far as I am concerned this is most important. I have been fortunate to have the same designer work on all my books and she has made a wonderful job of putting it all together. At this stage I will receive the final draft layout which gives me a good idea of what the book will look like and I can check to make sure that the colours are as closely represented as possible. Matching the true colours to print is not possible, but a close representation can be achieved and is a vital part of the finished product.

Print

Once the final draft has been approved the Publishers send it to print, as far as I know it is sent to Hong Kong. The editing process can take another 6 months from completion of manuscript but finally the day arrives when you receive the first copy of the book in the mail. It is a feeling like no other, I guess you could compare it to having a baby, you have been through all the pain and anguish but the end result is worth every bit of it!

Distribution

I am fortunate not to have any involvement in the distribution of my books and I highly recommend that you find a publisher that handles this for you as it could become a nightmare. The publishers have distributors in every part of the world who will place orders and in turn these wholesalers distribute to places like Amazon, Barnes & Noble online and various book outlets. Although I do have the option of purchasing books at the wholesale price by the time I land them in South Africa it is difficult to match the retail prices offered elsewhere, that is why I don't always offer them for sale. I am paid a royalty on these sales and receive a distribution every six months.