

Bookmaking with Blurb

Making your own book is both enjoyable and satisfying. It is now possible to make your own high quality colour book with a print run as low as one copy - all at a reasonable price.

There are many companies offering online bookmaking services, all with differing quality and price. At the moment I believe Blurb provides good quality for the money. Here's the general method I use

Visit <http://www.blurb.com>. Register and download the latest version of their free Booksmart software. Run and install the program on your computer.

Prepare a file of jpegs for inclusion in the book - all corrected for levels, curves, saturation, level horizons, etc - but it is easiest not to do any cropping. Cropping can be done very conveniently in the Blurb software - and it gives you more options to do it this way.

Blurb say they print their best quality at 300 ppi. The software will reduce to this for printing if the image has more, or make do with less if necessary. There are limits, however. Generally it is best to leave the jpegs as large as possible and import them into Booksmart as they are..

Start a new book project in Booksmart, select the size of the book you want to make and give it a name. Select the starter layout you want and proceed by clicking on " Start Book Now ". (you can use the " Guide Me " option if you want when starting out, but you will quickly find you do not need it again after the first use).

I like to set up my own templates for left and right hand pages where the image window is set at the maximum height and width I want on the page - that is, the limits I will not exceed. It is important to give the images room to " breathe " and not cramp them up too near the edges of the page. set up your personal templates by clicking on " Edit Layout ". You can also use any of the supplied templates available under " choose page layout " in the menu on the left hand side of the page. You can create your own templates using text boxes and image boxes (including overlapping ones) and save them to " My Layouts ". You can easily change the template for any page at any time by simply clicking on it.

I like to populate the book with a few more pages than I have photos using my left and right hand side templates for each double page of the layout. I can then drag photos out of the way while I am compiling the book, and retrieve them back easily if needed.

Now click on " get photos " and import all your jpegs from your file containing them.

Then click on " autoflow " and all the jpegs will be put into the layout - this is much easier than dragging and dropping each one. You can move the pages around to change their order by clicking and dragging.

Increase/decrease the image size, shift the image right, left, up or down (use the arrows on your keyboard or click and drag) to get the image to look as you want on the page. You can alter the window in the template at any time or add further image boxes or text boxes. This gives pretty much total control over the layout of each page - there is huge scope for variation here - to get exactly what you want and be as creative as you want.

Consider whether you want to do any full bleed double page spreads of single images - this can look very good indeed with the right photograph.

Add text if desired. You can change the font, size, colour, etc of any text. Add border if desired, many types and any colour. Background can also be various types and any colour.

Set up the dust cover as you wish and perhaps an introduction page, copyright page, index, etc.

Continue fiddling with the book until it " comes together " and you are happy with every page and the overall layout and " feel " of the book. This may take some time and is best not rushed - compiling a book is a creative process in itself. Quiet contemplation and an artists eye are needed to achieve the best.

Carefully check through the book in " Preview Book " mode and when you are happy with it, you can upload and order a copy. I strongly suggest that for every book you make - you order only one copy as a proof at first - and more if needed once you have seen and checked the proof copy.

When ordering - Blurb gives the choice of paying in various currencies. Invariably, one is the cheapest once converted back to Australian dollars after currency conversion costs are included. For quite a while now it has been cheaper to pay in British pounds. You can pay with PayPal or credit card.

The Blurb website is a mine of information and their blog and FAQ sections will likely answer any questions you might have.

If you can see it, you can photograph it, and the photograph could go in a book. If you can think of it, you can write about it, and the words could go in a book. The possibilities are truly endless.

Happy Bookmaking Greg

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