

BSD Needs Books

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SWAG

Contents

- Intro
- Before
- Publishers
- Writing the Book
- Review the Book
- Publishing Workflow
- Promotions
- Raising Standards

The Problem

- Books Give Credibility to Open-Source Projects
- Lucas Can't Write Them All
- Someone Should Write Them
- Someone is You

The Bad News

- Publishers don't want crap books
- It's not hard, but it's a lot of work
- You have to use the tools the publisher wants you to use

The Good News

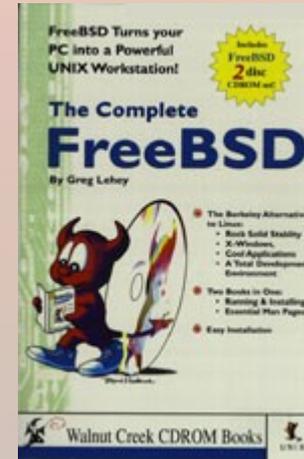
- Writing is not hard, or writers wouldn't do it.
- Publishers want decent books on new topics
- Standards are low
- “new topics” can be defined any way you want

Get the Idea

- Don't have to understand it, just need to think you can learn it. Be curious!
- Publish small stuff first, preferably in other people's venues or a dedicated blog

Competing Titles

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Sample Author

- Call him George
- Writing a book about FreeBSD internals

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- “Curious George and the Design and Implementation of the FreeBSD 10 Operating System.”

Preparation

- Read good books like yours
- Read bad books like yours
- What Works?
- What Doesn't?

Why do I need a publisher, anyway?

- You have better things to do than:
 - Layout
 - Artwork
 - Grammar & readability fixes
 - Publicist
- Techies give people interface poisoning, your book skills are no better
- Real publishers mean real sales

Target a Publisher

- Go look at books
- Who publishes this kind of books?
- Talk to authors who used this publisher
- Go to publisher's Web site, find editorial/submission guidelines

Book Proposal

- Outline
- Sample Text
- Description
- **Who would buy this book?**
- What communities would be interested in this book?
- Make your outline resemble books from the target publisher

Approach the Publisher

- Have entire package
- Follow the instructions in the submission guidelines
- If no response in time specified in guidelines, or 90 days if not specified, query

Agents and Agencies

- Agents approach publishers for you
- Not necessary in tech publishing
- Agents take 15%-20% of income

- Agencies never require non-expense money
- Money flows towards the author

Contract

- Rights: worldwide, national, etc
- Revision rights
- Rights reversion
- Electronic rights
- Advances vs Royalties
- Returns and the Rolling Reserve

Writing the Book

- Divide the outline into chunks
- Write one chunk per X days
- Repeat

The Vomit Draft

- Somewhere between the outline and an actual book
- Throw stuff out of your brain
- Include code snippets & script(1) output
- See what goes where
- What does the reader need to know before he gets to this point? Make certain that stuff comes before this!
- Here is where you catch & resolve deadlocks

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 - 1) Don't revise
 - 2) (for advanced writers) Don't revise yet
- Write everything, then rewrite
- Revising is easier than writing
- Beware of written “tics”

Reviewers

- Find a “wise reader” to read your manuscript before you submit to the publisher.
- The Wise Reader:
 - Could also write this book, if he could be bothered
 - Doesn't mind hurting your feelings
 - Can provide useful, sensible, on-target critique
 - Is willing to spend the time to review your work

Lucas' Review of CG&TD&IoT F10OS

- Don't begin sentences with prepositions. It's almost always unnecessary wordage.
- Way too much passive voice, marked in text.
- Sentences require both a noun *and* a verb.
- Colors are all inside lines.
- How do you run GDB again?

jhb's Review of CG&TD&IotF10OS

- You can't use spinlocks that way. See locking(9)
- There's a simpler way to do this: grab the fubar with a gerbil mutex, then frob the fubar with `vm_page_insert`, then release the mutex
- Don't forget about signaling the threads

rwatson's Review of CG&TD&IotF10OS

Crowdsourcing Reviews

- Get lots of subject matter experts
- SMEs will make your book correct, but you have to corral them
- Distribute all review copies in one format!

Publisher Workflow

- Every publisher works in a different way
- When should chapters be submitted?
- Do you get changes back from the editor before they go to press?
- How many editing cycles do they do?

NSP workflow

- Vomit draft
- Write chapters, proofread, send to my reviewers
- Get reviewer comments, revise
- Submit chapters to NSP
- Get rough edit from NSP, revise, resubmit
- Get tech edit from NSP, revise, resubmit
- Get copy edit from NSP, revise, resubmit
- Get page layout from NSP, revise, resubmit
- Go to Print

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- Get page layout from NSP, revise, resubmit
- Go to Print
- Find Errors

Anonymous Publisher Workflow

- Vomit draft
- Submit to publisher as final draft
- Publisher fixes grammar and introduces tech errors
- Printing
- Find Errors

Getting your Book

- Book goes to printer
- Book printed
- Book caravanned to distributor as Sludge Class Shipping via arthritic camel
- Distributor lets books age
- Book gets sent to stores in cities you don't live in
- If you're lucky, the printer ships a small number of books directly to you

Pimping your Book

- Surrender, Dignity!
- Podcasts
- Blogs/Website
- Social networking
- In-person appearances

Dealing with Fame, Glory, and Wealth



Reviews

- Good reviews are the best advertising you can't buy
- Bad reviews are publicity
- How to respond to bad reviews?

Piracy

- Your book will be stolen. Live with it.
- Tip jars?
- You need permission to use clips from other people's work

Writing Well

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- O'Reilly Saying: “It's easier to teach a techie to be an author than an author to be a techie.”
- Lucas saying: “It's easier to teach a techie to be a **lousy** author than an author to be a **lousy** techie.”

Required Reading

- Elements of Style, by Strunk & White, 4th Edition
- “Politics and the English Language,” George Orwell

Orwell's Rules of Writing

- Never use a metaphor, simile, or other figure of speech which you are used to seeing in print.
- Never use a long word where a short one will do.
- If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.
- Never use the passive where you can use the active.
- Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
- Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Personality

- A book is an interaction between the author and the reader.
- Many books are interactions you'd rather not have
- Show the reader why this boring background stuff is important
- Interact!

Making the Book Useful

- “Michael W Lucas ... has an uncanny ability to know what the reader needs to accomplish a technical task” – Richard Bejtlich
- What's the secret?

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- “Michael W Lucas ... has an uncanny ability to know what the reader needs to accomplish a technical task” – Richard Bejtlich
- What's the secret?
- Write it down as I'm doing it
 - Physical paper notebook
 - Script(1)
 - blog

The End

