

Wild Ginger Press

Book Report #1

Play By The Numbers

ISBNs and LCCNs:
Two key calling
cards for your book

This short “Book Report” will give you information about International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs): what they are, why they matter to authors and how they differ from Library of Congress Control Numbers (LCCNs). You’ll also learn about your options for securing ISBNs and LCCNs – and the potentially long-lasting implications these decisions can have for the future of your book.





What Is An ISBN?

ISBN is shorthand for “International Standard Book Number.” An ISBN is a 10- or 13-digit code assigned to a commercial book or book-like product, such as an audio book or e-book. (Note that titles published before 2007 were issued 10-digit ISBNs; today, they are 13 digits.) Think of it as your book’s calling card – a unique identifier that will allow potential purchasers to easily locate your title from among the millions of books currently in print.

A book’s ISBN is usually found on its back cover, just above the barcode, and also on its copyright page.

What does an ISBN do?

The ISBN system was created to standardize tracking of book titles by assigning each published book its own ID number. This number appears in book catalogs, the book detail pages of online sellers and in various industry databases.

The ISBN system allows book retailers, libraries, universities, wholesalers and distributors to find books and to track down their publishers.

Can I publish without an ISBN?

Although you aren’t required to have an ISBN in order to publish and market your book, the ISBN system is accepted as industry standard for both publishing houses and self-publishers. This means you’re likely to have a much harder time circulating your book without one.



Important Detail

Note that a unique ISBN is required for each format you choose to publish your book in, from paperback, hardcover and e-book editions to later revised editions or different language translations.



Who gives out ISBNs?

Countries designate a single agency to assign ISBNs for books published in that country. Here in the United States, the system is administered through R.R. Bowker, LLC. Although intermediary companies sometimes sell or give away ISBNs, Bowker is the agency of record when it comes to securing one, and all ISBN purchases are eventually routed through them.

How do I get an ISBN?

There are several ways to purchase an ISBN for your title.

- *Go straight to the source.* Your best option is to purchase your ISBN directly through Bowker's official site, www.myidentifiers.com. A single ISBN currently costs \$125 (plus \$25 for a bar code which is also needed). Opting for this route will allow you to retain indefinite rights to the ISBN.
- *Buy in bulk, if needed.* ISBNs are also available in blocks of 10 (\$250), 100 (\$575) or 1000 (\$1,000). If you plan to publish extensively, you can also apply for your own ISBN publisher prefix, which will help you to circulate titles in the industry.



You Really Want To Know This

How much control do I want to retain over my book?

Be aware that if you accept a free ISBN from an intermediary source, they'll be listed as the imprint of record, and they'll retain the rights to the ISBN as a result. If you go through an intermediary and later decide you'd like to market your book differently or elsewhere, you'll have to get a new ISBN for your book. This means that every time the new edition of your book pops up in a database, it will appear alongside the old edition and its concurrent ISBN. At best, you'll confuse purchasers. At worst, you could miss out on important industry connections and potential profits. Simply put, retaining the rights to your book's ISBN affords you important practical, legal and copyright protections.

- *Buy a number through Wild Ginger Press.* We offer a slight discount to our clients. It does two things: simplifies the process and creates a strong preception within the general public that you are a published author.



• *Use an intermediary.* You can also choose to go through an online publisher such as CreateSpace, which offers free ISBNs (www.createspace.com). If you go this route, however, you'll want to make sure the end result is compatible with your marketing and business strategy.

Breaking down the ISBN

The ISBN can be broken down into five parts. Let's consider a contemporary example: the ISBN for the hardback edition of Paula McLain's "The Paris Wife," published in 2011:

Another Important Detail

What Is An Imprint?

If you decide to be your own publisher, you'll need to create a company name. This will also be known as your "Imprint Name." *We strongly suggest* that you not use your personal name, but develop a company name instead. Even though self-publishing is becoming more and more mainstream, using your own name as your publishing company's name diminishes the credibility of your book by pointing to the fact that it has been self-published.

978-0-345-52130-9

978 - GS1 Prefix

Some GS1s are available for use by any publisher. Others refer to a specific organization or industry. In this case, "978" refers generally to the book publishing industry.

0 - Group Identifier

Identifies the language a book is published in. It's often one digit, but can be up to five depending on how rare the language is. The digits used for books published in English-speaking countries are "0" and "1."

345 - Publisher Code

(varies in length)
Identifies a particular publisher within the group. Here, the number tells us that this book was published by Ballantine Books of New York.

52130 - Item Number

(Varies in length)
Identifies a particular title or edition of a title. If the publisher decides to release another edition at a later date, this number will change.

9 - Check Digit

(1 digit)
This stand-alone digit validates the legitimacy of the ISBN. It's determined by a complex calculation based on the other digits in the ISBN.



ISBNs vs. LCCNs

ISBNs are sometimes confused with LCCNs, or “Library of Congress Control Numbers,” but they do very different things.

An LCCN is an identification number issued by the Library of Congress to keep track of each title in its collection. The number assigned to the book is actually a bibliographic record for a book, created by the Library of Congress for use if the book is selected for inclusion in their collection. Librarians use the LCCN system to catalog books, which means that securing one gives your book a much better shot of landing in libraries if that is part of your distribution strategy.

The LCCN appears on the copyright page of a book. It's also in a book's marketing and promotional materials.

The LCCN consists of two parts: a year and the serial number. (Before 2001, the date was indicated with two digits; today, it's indicated with four.) The LCCN for “The Paris Wife” looks like this:

LCCN: 2010037878



Year Book was Published:

2010 tells us that the book was cataloged in 2010.

Serial Number:

This number functions as the book's identifying serial code.

If you look up “The Paris Wife” in your library's card catalog, this is the number you'll find.

LCCNs are issued free of charge by the Library of Congress, although the process can take some time and you'll need to send a complimentary copy of your book to the Library of Congress upon publication. But there is a caveat about the cost. Instead of waiting on a librarian at the Library of Congress to write your Cataloging-in-Publication Data record (called a "CIP block"), you'll need to hire a cataloging librarian to create this for you. This block of copy goes on your copyright page.

For more information, visit <http://www.loc.gov/publish/pcn/>.

The Process:

Getting an LCCN is a two-step process. You'll need to consider your particular book and marketing strategy as you decide whether these steps, and their associated costs, are worth taking on.

As you decide whether you need an LCCN, you should also consider these two points:

Point 1

- It will be very difficult to get libraries to buy your book if it does not have an LCCN. However, keep in mind, too, that it isn't easy



Important Detail

Something important to consider straight off is that getting an LCCN does not guarantee that your book will be accepted to the Library of Congress catalog; it only places your book in the running for consideration. The Library of Congress does not provide acceptance or rejection notification. To find out if your book has been cataloged or not, you'll have to occasionally check the Library of Congress Online Catalog.



to get a self-published book accepted into the Library of Congress, even if it does have an LCCN. Is getting your book into libraries even a part of your marketing strategy? If not, it may not be worth the hassle.



**Point
2**

- Many authors think an LCCN makes their book appear more professional, even if they don't care about selling to libraries. An LCCN does add a little prestige to the copyright page, but only for those in the industry (publishers, librarians, etc.). To the general reading public, that little string of numbers won't mean much. It's mostly a matter of perception.



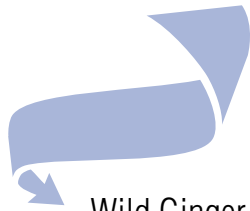
We recommend you spend some time pondering these two pieces of information as you decide whether pursuing an LCCN is really worth your time and energy.



What Wild Ginger Press Can Do For You . . .

Wild Ginger Press can assist you in the process of securing an ISBN or LCCN for your title, and we'll ensure that you retain those all-too-important publishing rights. We can:

- **Set up your accounts and keep track of your ISBNs.** Each time you are ready to publish a new book, we'll input the information into Bowker's website and input the correct metadata. This is a surprisingly time-consuming task.
- **Help you acquire an LCCN.** This process can be tricky to maneuver your way through. There are several rules and regulations – as well as costs – that will determine the process for your particular book. If you decide to go after an LCCN, we can shepherd you through that process.
- **Guide you through the entire publication process.** We will help you from start to finish – from the editing and proofing stages to design and production, all the way up till the moment you are holding your published book in hand.
- **Help you navigate a fast-evolving industry.** As the publishing industry changes and more opportunities emerge for authors to publish their own books, the corresponding processes can also change. Wild Ginger Press works hard to keep abreast of these changes, and we regularly share relevant information with our authors.



About Wild Ginger Press

Wild Ginger Press is an innovative self-publishing house at the forefront of this changing industry during a time of great innovation. Simply put, we help people publish books, manage the process and establish the foundation for future development. We develop collaborative partnerships with entrepreneurial authors by creating platforms to sell books, and build brands through wise strategies and nimble responses to the changing world. The principal, Bobbi Benson has more than 25 years of experience in creative services and market strategy. By using her substantial network of experts in various aspects of publishing, we combine all of our strengths, extensive knowledge and expertise to customize the strategy.

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