

Children's Picture Books, How to Self-Publish Your Way to Success

By Shari Faden Donahue

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www.justselfpublish.com

Review by Patricia Fry

Shari Donahue is an author, illustrator and publisher. She has produced five books, including three children's picture books, *The Zebra-Striped Whale with the Polka-Dot Tail*, *Celebrate Hanukkah with Me* and *My Favorite Family Haggadah*. A professional coach for aspiring children's picture book authors and illustrators, it seems only natural that she would write and produce *Children's Picture Books, How to Self-Publish Your Way to Success*.

And quite a beautiful book it is. It's big (9" x 8"), it's bold (345 pages) and it covers every aspect of producing children's picture books that you can imagine. Donahue starts out by sharing the truth about publishing. Through charts, statistics, examples and straightforward commentary, she strives to educate hopeful authors about the industry. And this is the style she follows throughout the book—using bullets, boxes and brief, well-labeled sections to inform and to teach.

One might wonder, "How much can someone write about publishing a children's picture book?" As it appears, plenty; at least when the author is as well-versed, well-organized and experienced as Donahue. She explains how publishing works and how to break into the world of traditional publishing. But, as most new authors discover, this is not an easy path, so Donahue offers alternatives. If you didn't know anything about self-publishing before reading this book, you'll understand the process now. Chapter 4, "The Birth of a Children's Picture Book," even includes samples of completed printer price quotes, tips for deciding on your print run and a lesson in various binding and paper options.

So what else do you need to know about publishing a children's picture book? The answer is, the same things any other author needs to know—what are some of the most reliable distribution channels and how does an author promote a children's book? Donahue provides the answers. She also offers lessons in preparing a media kit, getting your picture book reviewed, how to target educators, how to work with bookstores, how

to get library sales and more.

Children's picture books are popular, but, as in every other genre, competition is fierce. According to Donahue, there were 9,000 picture books produced in 2007. Obviously, this isn't a reason to give up on your wonderful book idea. It just means that you must approach your project with the knowledge you need in order to succeed. *Children's Picture Books, How to Self-Publish Your Way to Success*, provides that knowledge and so much more.

I particularly enjoyed Donahue's lessons in creativity—activities you can include to enhance your book and make it more appealing than the rest. Have you ever wondered how to get awards for your children's book? This author has the answers. Yes, this book seems to have it all—an attractive format with lots of headings and boxes for easy reference, loads of illustrations, a glossary, a resource list (which includes SPAWN), a bibliography and a detailed and complete index.

While SPAWN doesn't have any official criteria for rating books, I would give this one a strong 5-stars.

- Review by Patricia Fry,
- President of SPAWN (Small Publishers, Artists, Writers Network).
- Her Web site is <http://www.matilijapress.com/>.

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