

# Self Publishing on a Shoestring

## Part II

by  
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LIKE gasoline, everything seems to increase in cost. For the most part this is understandable because most things in this world have a price directly linked to how much energy was put into making that particular item and how much it costs to move it around the country with our wasteful transportation system. But I digress. This article isn't about the cost of oil, the blood spilt for it, or to poke my finger at a certain 'Jr'. But in a way it is. There is little reason for most things to cost as much as they do. We have the technology to produce most, if not all, our energy from renewables. Our energy be cheaper and cleaner. To the environment our energy consumption would be 'free'. Our heavy handed impact on the Earth could be slowed to a crawl even as developing nations pull their economies together. Of course, we can't stop what's already been done and that is turning out to be more then anyone imagined a mere 15 years ago. We can, however, start becoming more efficient now.

Several websites offer quality, useful, information or services that I've found to be very useful to a writer on a budget. The first one is what revived my interest in writing a few years ago and set me down the path that I'm following now. Lulu.com gives anyone the tools to create and sale books, calendars, music Cds, and much more. None of which requires any kind of setup fee or subscription. In addition to Lulu being free, products are only printed as they are ordered. This ensures that unsold stockpiles of wastefully printed books don't sit around. Cafepress.com is similar to Lulu, although I find Lulu easier to navigate, in that they allow you to set up and sale your own products. Cafepress has a few more product options then Lulu, such as shirts, bumper stickers, mugs, and other items of that sort, but you do have to pay for the full options. However, their free setup is fine for doing just a few items.

For those intimidated by the cost of screenwriting software, you aren't alone. One site, Scriptbuddy.com, offers online software. Again, you have to pay for the full version, but the free version is nice for learning how screenplays are supposed to be put together and useful if you only have one or two screenplays in mind at a time. At Scrubtheweb.com you can find a free tag analyzer for your web page. They can also submit your site to several search engines for free. Babinszki.com has a useful online PDF distiller that lets those without Adobe to distill their documents that looks promising, although I have yet to fully test it by printing a book with one of their prepped PDFs. Some very useful informative sites that I'm partial to and highly recommend are Thefreedictionary.com, Wikipedia.com, Medterms.com, and

Erowid.org. The site names themselves should be self explanatory except for Erowid, which is site that archives information about various drugs. Most information, ranging from the molecular structure to toxicity level, for almost any legal and illegal drug can be looked up.

To go along with Babinszi.com's distilling powers, is Gsview. Gsview is a free .ps and .eps file viewer and converter. It can be used to convert PDFs to the needed .ps files for Babinszi.com and to save .eps and .ps files as graphics among other things. This program can be found at Ghostgum.com.au. Avery.com has a nice, but rather large to download, program called DesignPro that is good for business cards. They also have other free programs that look useful that I haven't tired out yet. The last free thing this article will mention is FirmTools: Shell Extension. This program allows you to convert almost any graphic file to almost any other type and allows you to quickly view a thumbnail of any graphic file. Very useful and quick when dealing with large numbers of conversions. Shell Extension can be found at FirmTools.com.

This second article covers the remainder of the most useful free stuff I know of on the web. As always, there is much more out there, but these programs and sites mentioned are the ones that have proven themselves to me. So conserve. If nothing else, the less you spend on one thing is that much more left over for something more important.

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