THE PUBLIC DOMAIN REPORT

A WEEKLY INSIDER'S GUIDE TO TAPPING INTO, RE-PACKAGING AND RE-PUBLISHING THE VAST TREASURE OF HOLDINGS OF US PUBLIC DOMAIN INFORMATION AND OTHER CREATIVE WORKS FOR PROFIT

PublicDomainReport.com

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Dear Subscriber,

In the last issue we discussed the initial process of re-publishing your public domain work by selecting an appropriate subject (and book) and positioning it correctly in the market.

In this issue we'll tackle the easiest ways to 'digitize' your project so it can be manipulated by computer.

Starting With Your Original Work

By now you should have identified a book you would like to re-publish.

Before you pull the book apart and start converting it to digital form you need to ask yourself some questions:

1. Will you be converting the book to digital format yourself or will you hire – out for the service?
2. If you are going to be using a service, do you think it necessary to have a 'second' copy of the book available as a backup?
3. What is your budget for converting the book to digital format?

Converting The Book to Digital Format

In most cases it doesn't make sense to do your own converting and scanning. Your time is the most precious commodity you possess.

However, if you are just starting out and your capital is low, you may want to do the converting yourself. If you do you will need a computer, scanner and word processing software to complete the task.

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Any scanner will do… it isn't necessary to get a high-end scanner if you're only converting text to digital form. If you already have a scanner then you probably have everything you need to start immediately.

Basic scanners are very inexpensive and come with text OCR software bundled for less than $100.

There are higher-end scanners with 'sheet feeders' that can scan 25 pages (or more) at a time, but they are much more expensive. This might be a good investment if you plan to do several PD book projects, but for the average entrepreneur who is doing a single project or two it may not be worth it.

The one thing you need to be aware of is this: If you are doing your own scanning it is a time-intensive process.

You will be scanning one-page at a time, and depending on the power and RAM installed on your computer, you will probably be able to scan no more than 5-10 pages in succession. After scanning 5-10 pages your computer will slow down because the images from the scanner are stored in RAM memory and will fill it up pretty fast.

You'll have to stop every 5-10 pages and use your OCR (optical character recognition) program to convert the images to text. This takes time. Once the computer has finished converting the images using OCR you'll need to file them on your computer. Then you start the entire process over again.

Depending on what operating system you are using, you may run into a problem that happens frequently: a computer freeze. If you're using a Windows OS you'll get the dreaded "Blue Screen of Death". You may loose some work and have to start the process all over again.

Once you convert the images you scanned to text you'll see something very strange! There will be a lot of mistakes!

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OCR program state that they can convert with 99% accuracy, etc, however, they don't… that especially true with scanning older works. The pages you're scanning are older and therefore, most likely, discolored. This makes scanning them difficult.

As a result you will have a lot of 'corrections' to make… comparing the scanned text to the original and making sure it's accurate.

If you are converting a book with several hundred pages, converting them all to digital format and then proofreading them for accuracy could take a very long time!

Fortunately, there are easier and less time consuming ways to get your book scanned, proofread and in your hands.

The first 3 books I re-published from the public domain I scanned, proofread and formatted myself. I'll never do that again… it's too much work!

Since then I have found that there are dozens of individuals and small firms that are ready, willing and able to do this work for me at a very reasonable cost.

My latest PD project was a 392 page book. I simply went to Elance.com and placed the project up for bid.

Here is the description of the project for people to bid on:

InfoProductLab re-publishes classic marketing and sales books. This project may be ongoing depending on the quality of work we receive. We are looking for a provider to take a bound book (current project is 392 pp), scan the text and create an MSWord document.

No formatting is required other than any corrections to the scanned document that needs to be done for accuracy to the original. Deliverable: MSWord 2000 *.doc format. This project is confidential and if you agree to keep it confidential please bid! (con't…)

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Confidentiality is limited to:
1) title of book you scanned and
2) my name and website
If you agree with these conditions, please bid. I have many other projects and want to establish a long-term working relationship.

I received 26 bids on the project from firms all over the world… the majority, however, were from India.

The average bid was $189. The bid included scanning and proofreading. I finally awarded the project to an Indian firm for $100. This did not include my shipping costs (to send the book to India) which came to $28. I also wanted the original book returned to me so I paid an additional $26 for return postage. The entire project cost me $154.

Now I have the book in digital format and will 'paginate' or format it myself… I will add graphics, change the font, add additional text and update some of the language in the book to make it more 'modern'. I also have additional expenses such as writing the ad, creating a website and other marketing expenses before the project is ready for the market.

I will copyright the changes I've made to the original book so no one can simply copy my book (as we've discussed in a previous issue) and begin the marketing process.

Now, this was an extremely rare book and very difficult to find - but I did find a 'back-up' copy. For this project, I felt I needed this 'back-up' copy since I knew I was sending the original book overseas for scanning. If that copy was ever lost, my entire project could have been a total failure!

The lesson here is, if you're using an outside firm to scan and proofread your book… make a photo-copy of the book before handing it over to them or find a "back-up" copy in the used book market.

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The last question, "What is your budget for converting the book to digital format?" should be clear to you by now.

If your budget is $20… you are better off trading your 'time' and scan the book yourself (if you have a scanner). The advantages of doing it yourself are straightforward: You control the process and the outcome and you can do it for very little out-of-pocket.

If your budget is up to $200… you are probably better off hiring someone else to do the scanning and proofreading so you can concentrate on preparing the marketing campaign.

If your budget is large (i.e. $1,000 to $5,000) then you have many more options including purchasing your won high-speed scanning equipment and using a local temp agency to bring people in to do the scanning and proofreading for you. You'll have greater control over the entire process and have a setup that will allow you to do many more projects with little additional overhead.

As you can see, converting your original public domain 'find' into digital format involves making some decisions. It's not a simple matter.

In my case, I decided to hire an outside firm to do the work for me. The firm who I awarded the project to did an excellent job and I've since awarded two additional projects to them.

In the next issue we'll discover the best ways to monitize (generate the most income from the same content) your PD project's content and in the final issue of this series we will bring everything together and learn how to maximize your profits!

Until next time,

David Vallieres