

# The Photographer's Guide to



# PUBLISHING PHOTO BOOKS



an educational guide by



PHOTOSHELTER

blurb

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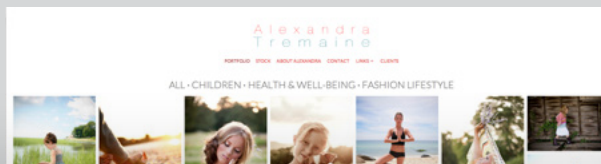
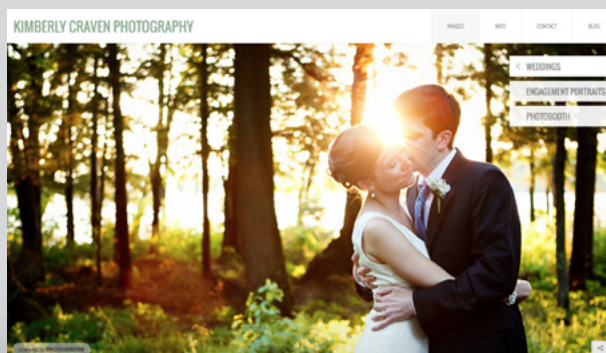
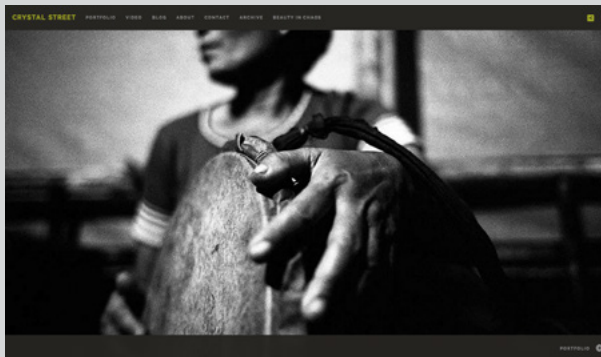
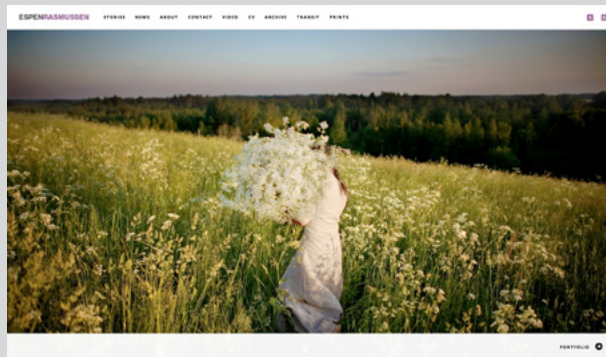
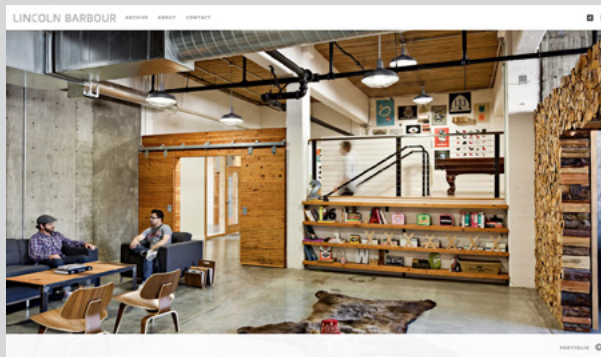
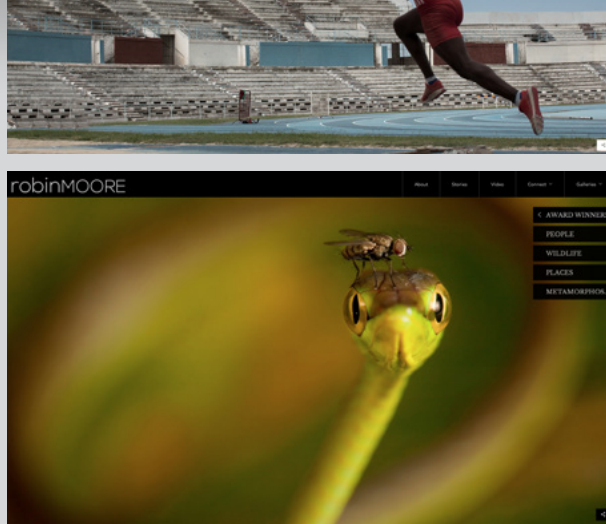
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PART I

*Intro*

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## PART I

# Intro

**E**ven in the digital age—or maybe in spite of it books continue to captivate us. Photos on screens may look better every year as technology evolves, but they have yet to duplicate the experience of paging through and absorbing the message on paper. A book has weight, texture and even a smell. Engaging the senses makes the experience difficult to swipe or click away into the digital ether.

Books are also a wonderful format for publishing photography, so it's no surprise that many photographers aspire to publish a book of their work to showcase their work.

“It is certainly an accomplishment to have a physical representation of your work in this digital age,” says [Evan Joseph](#), a New York-based architectural photographer whose most recent book is [New York From Above](#). “To have something tangible and see how the work really prints and exists in the real world is very gratifying.”

Today, experiencing the thrill and pride of seeing their work in book format is within reach for more photographers than ever. While the traditional photo book publishing market may be accessible to a select few, new self-publishing platforms like [Blurb](#) have lowered the barriers to entry and opened up new channels for bringing photo book projects to life.

“To have something tangible and see how the work really prints and exists in the real world is very gratifying.”

## PART I

# What Are the Goals of Publishing a Photo Book?

**A**ny book project can be a tremendous endeavor, whether you're working with an established publisher or publishing it yourself. Convincing a publisher to take on your book project requires crafting a stellar proposal, shopping it around and, if it's accepted, a string of deadlines to meet. A self-publisher must not only drive the creative concept of the book, but also act as funder, production manager, marketer and distributor. Despite these challenges—and certainly not for big profits—many, many photographers take the leap into book publishing. Here are some reasons why:

**YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY HAS BROAD APPEAL AND A BUILT-IN AUDIENCE.** When a book publisher considers book proposals, one of the major factors is the size of the potential market. Photographers with name recognition or with a large, dedicated social media following have already demonstrated they can attract fans to their work, so a book may be a natural extension. It helps if the subject matter has a broad appeal. Photographer Elias Weiss Friedman, for instance, built a loyal following for his street photos of dogs online as [The Dogist](#), which led to a [2015 book of the same name](#).

**YOU'D LIKE A BOOK TO USE AS A MARKETING TOOL.** A self-published book of your work, whether it's presented as a portfolio or as a project with a standalone theme, can be a valuable marketing tool. Books can be given as holiday gifts to valued clients or as “leave behinds” for new contacts. They have a permanence that postcards or PDFs can't come close to matching, and they can do more to showcase your style and point of view.

**YOU HAVE A PASSION PROJECT OR AN IMPORTANT STORY TO TELL.** Whether you're a photojournalist working on a pet project or a commercial photographer who shoots personal work on the side, most photographers have passion projects that they would like to present to the world. Self-publishing a book is a way to fulfill this goal and gives photographers the creative control to do it exactly how they envision it. “A book is something you can do without gallery representation or a show,” says [Emily Shur](#), who self-published *Playground*, a book of 10 years worth of photos from travels in Japan.

## PART I

# Different Paths to Publishing

**O**nce you've decided you'd like to publish a book of your work, you have two routes: doing it yourself or partnering with a publishing company. Either way, it's essential to start by defining the concept and potential market and assessing your own abilities. Here are some questions to consider:

What is the book about? Who is the audience, and how big is that market? What are the similar competing books and how is yours truly different? The bigger the potential market, the more likely a publisher might be interested. But do your homework and honestly assess what is out there. The editor looking at the proposal will do the same. A niche project could be appealing to a traditional publisher, but might be better as a self-published project particularly if you want full control.

Do you want complete creative and business control, or would you need help with editing, design, marketing and distribution? While many photographers may think they want total control, there are advantages to working with experienced book publishing professionals or hiring a professional freelance team to supplement your skills if you choose to publish yourself.

Are you willing to take a financial risk by funding the book upfront, or will you need financial backing? If you can't afford to finance the printing yourself, it's still possible to self-publish by printing on demand as your buyers purchase books, taking preorders or running a crowdfunding campaign.

### **Self-Publishing: Taking control of the process**

With self-publishing, you take on all the risk, but you also make all the decisions and keep a larger share of the profits than with traditional publishers. You'll also do all of the work, unless you outsource certain tasks, like design or publicity. Here are some factors to consider for a self-published book project:

#### **PRINTING**

The way you print the book is an important decision that will affect costs and even how you market and sell the book.

**OFFSET:** Offset printing is a method in which images on metal plates are transferred to rubber blankets or rollers and then to the print media. The quality can be better than print-on-demand printing, and while more expensive to set up initially, offset printing allows you to keep your per-unit cost lower based on the volume ordered (think several thousand, not several hundred). You'll also have a number of options for paper choices, trim sizes, and cover choices. Most printers will have a minimum order quantity, typically 750 copies for photo books, and you'll have to pay for the entire print run upfront.

**SHORT-RUN DIGITAL PRINTING:** Short-run digital printing is a method where the book is printed directly from digital images through a high-volume laser or inkjet printer. Like offset printing, you'll be ordering and paying for a specific quantity upfront, but this option allows you to order in smaller batches, and since it's digital, you can make updates if you go back for another print run. The price per book will be higher than for offset printing, but lower than printing on



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demand. The quality however is not high and this option might be better for shorter promotion pieces rather than portfolios or monographs.

**PRINT ON DEMAND:** Printing on demand (POD) allows you to print only what you need when you need it. This means you avoid upfront printing costs and aren't faced with inventory to store, but the price per book is higher. There are many POD trim size options, paper types and binding styles similar to offset, with the added bonus of running a first copy as a proof to check your work before selling your book by changing and uploading a new file is a plus.

Aside from the printing method, other factors like trim size, paper stock, binding and cover will affect the price of the finished product, so it's in your best interest to consider the goals for your project and have clear parameters like page count and budget before diving in.

#### OTHER PARTS OF THE PROCESS

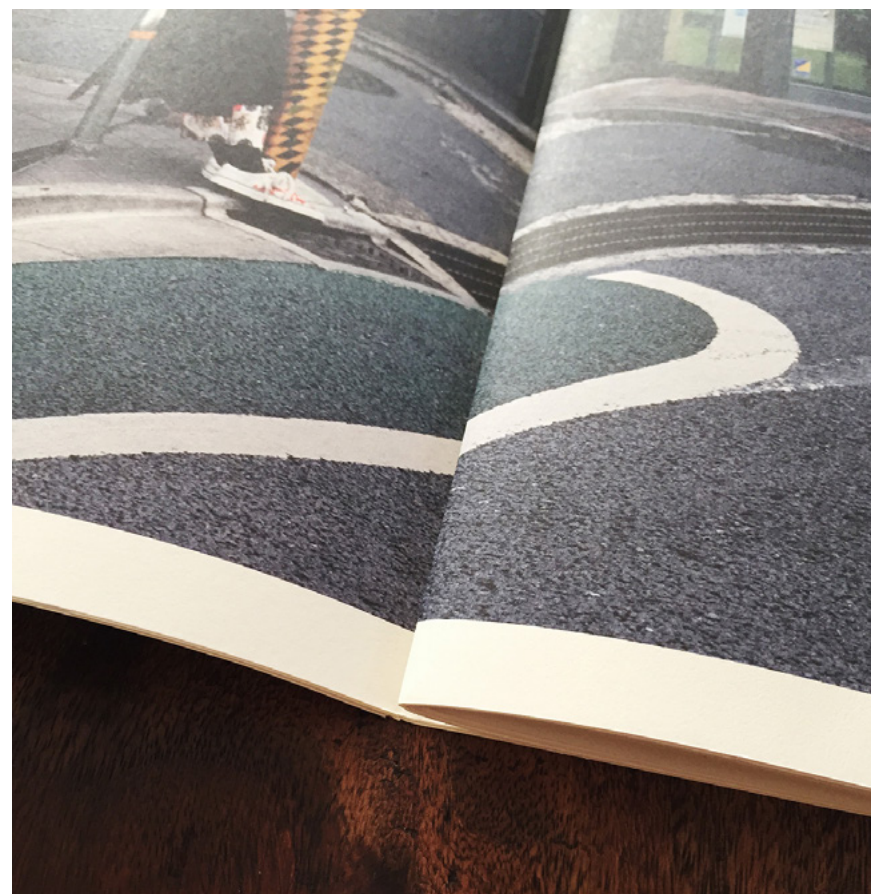
A self-publisher will need to be prepared to wear many hats. Here are some of the tasks you'll need to address throughout the process:

**EDITING:** It feels great to have full creative control over a project, but if you're attached to your photos, it may be challenging to decide which to keep and which to cut. When Shur was making *Playground*, she had been shooting the work for over 10 years, so it was a lot of pictures to go through. "I invited a friend of mine over who I think is a great editor, and she and I did it in one night," she said.

**DESIGNING:** Depending on your skills, you may want to hire a designer to design your book. Especially helpful if you'll be working directly with a printer, an experienced designer will know how to prepare the files for print so there are no surprises at press time.

**FUNDRAISING:** You can always finance the cost of publishing a book yourself, or you can try to raise some of the money upfront through crowdfunding, preorders or partnerships with galleries or other organizations.

**MARKETING AND PROMOTION:** Promotion is the single most important task for your project, and will likely take the most of your time, but some of it can be outsourced to a PR person or publicist, if you have the means. Many photographers make the mistake of thinking through marketing at the very end, and often miss out on opportunities. Knowing how you plan to sell or promote your book and who your audience is crucial to map out upfront.



© Emily Shur

**DISTRIBUTION:** If you do a print run of any size, prepare to find a place to store many, many boxes of books and to spend time packing and shipping your orders. If you would like to get the books out of your garage and have someone else handle fulfillment, consider POD printing direct to your customers and/or a service for warehousing and shipping your books. Blurb will process and ship orders taken through their bookstore directed from your website or help you set up distribution through Amazon or Ingram, sending you the profits.

## PART I

# Traditional Publishers: How to Find a Publisher

**E**ven though it may seem as though there are more photography books on the shelves than ever, the traditional book publishing industry is difficult to break into. And even if you do, today's slim profit margins mean you might not make much, if any, money on a book. Most industry experts blame Amazon for driving book prices so low that publishers are unable to take chances on a book that might not be a "sure thing."

Even so, there are still excellent publishers looking for new books, and it may be worth it to consider finding a home for your project with one of them. Here are some tips:

**RESEARCH THE MARKET AND PUBLISHERS:** Just like you'd do for a self-published book, you'll want to clearly define your project, the target audience and potential size of the market, as well as research any competing titles. You'll also want to research photo book publishers to see which ones might be a good fit for your work. Most larger, traditional trade publishers will first and foremost have profit in mind when reviewing your book idea. Smaller, independent and nonprofit publishers may have more leeway to take on a range of projects.

**CRAFT A PROPOSAL:** Use your research and analysis to craft a proposal. Look for submission guidelines on publishers' websites or inquire about how they like to receive submissions. Follow their instructions exactly and you'll likely score a few points for thoroughness. Joseph suggests going through the exercise of making a sample book, printed on demand, to show potential publishers, "My understanding is that publishers are not really a source of funding for creating the imagery. They are a financial partner in terms of having the book printed,

distributed and promoted," he says. "You can't say, 'I'd like to go photograph rare birds in Africa,' and have them shoot you an advance to go do that. But if you came to them and said, 'I've spent five years photographing rare birds in Africa and here's the book that I've made,' they would find that much more compelling."

## PART I

# Selling and Marketing Your Photo Book



© Evan Joseph

**T**he rise of online bookselling has changed the way books are sold. There are fewer independent bookstores, and the big chain stores are hard for a self-published author to break into. “Many retailers and book wholesalers won’t even buy directly from a small publisher, instead requiring that the publisher sell to them through a distributor,” says [Don Leeper](#), founder and CEO of Bookmobile.

So if you have a book to sell, it’s time to get creative. Even if it was published by a traditional publishing company, they may not have a big marketing budget, so some of the legwork will fall to you. Here are some ways to get your photo book into the hands of readers:

**DECIDE WHERE AND HOW YOUR BOOK WILL BE SOLD:** If you’re self-publishing your book, you’ll need a way for people to buy it. Your own website is a natural fit, or you can build a stand alone site just for the book.



If you sell it through Amazon, Leeper [suggests](#) selling as an Amazon merchant rather than a regular book supplier. This allows you to set your own price and avoid Amazon undercutting the price you're selling it elsewhere. Local independent bookstores or museum shops are often interested in carrying the work of area artists, and there are many art bookstores to target worldwide. If you participate in conferences, they often set up shops where authors can sell books. Does your book appeal to a niche audience, like nature enthusiasts? Look for retail and Web outlets that cater to that niche.

**TAP INTO YOUR NETWORK:** If you're an established photographer, you're probably no stranger to self-promotion and already have a mailing list or network of contacts and supporters. Start promoting to these folks early. Make sure your cover is done first so you have a visual to promote. Use your established channels (website, newsletter, social media) to let them know you're working on a book and start taking preorders. Share excerpts or updates on your process to build excitement. Then, when it's time to launch, your core supporters will already be invested in your success and may help spread the word. You may be surprised at the opportunities your network will bring you if you make them a part of the process.

**CONSIDER CROWDFUNDING:** Speaking of tapping into your network, crowdfunding through websites like [Kickstarter](#) or [IndieGoGo](#) is a way to engage your network and raise money to publish the book at the same time. "Running a Kickstarter project is all about telling an engaging story...and making potential backers excited about what you're doing, and conveying your passion to them," says [Maris Kreizman](#), Kickstarter's Publishing Outreach Leader. She says about 60% of projects on Kickstarter raise between \$1,000 and \$10,000.

**MAKE A PUBLICITY PLAN:** Before or as the book launches, you'll want to get the word out to media outlets that might be interested in covering it. If you aren't working with a publishing company, this is an area where hiring a professional may be helpful. You can certainly do it yourself, but publicists can help you craft a media-friendly press release package and will have lists of contacts to target at their disposal. They will also know when to target different types of media. Magazines, for instance, need at least a three-month lead time. In addition to press, think about events you could do around the launch, like an exhibition of prints from the book, book signings or lectures to organizations.

**KEEP IT GOING:** Once you make an initial push for your book, you'll want to set yourself up for ongoing sales. Integrate your book into future marketing pieces, solicit testimonials, remind your audience about the book from time to time. Look for new venues to sell through.



© Will Steacy



## PART I

# 10 Steps to Professional Book Success

By Amy Bailey, Blurb

**G**etting started on a book project can be daunting. You want to create a beautiful book and end up with a professional-looking result.

Here are 10 tips from Blurb's Creative Evangelist, professional photographer and accomplished book-maker, Dan Milnor, that, if followed, will make all the difference.

### 1. WHAT IS IT?

What is the purpose of the book? Is it a photo book, will there be text—is it a catalog or portfolio? A catalog typically represents a specific body of work for a specific purpose, like an exhibition. A portfolio is about your best work but might not tell a story, and a book has theme, story, etc.

### 2. SIZE MATTERS

What trim size will best suit the project? Reference other books and consider the various price points. Bigger is not always better; the world has changed and so has our ability to ingest visual information. Sometimes, depending on the circumstance, a smaller book, or a set of smaller books, can be equally as impactful as a larger more traditional book.

### 3. TELL A STORY

Books have story, a narrative, or an arc. This means that you need to choose your imagery accordingly. Does the viewer have everything they need to not only understand, but to keep reading or viewing? How are you arranging your content? Consider how the order affects the message—tell a story.

### 4. EDIT. EDIT. EDIT.

One of the biggest mistakes we see, and most common, are books with far too many images. A good exercise for

book-making is to take any story you have completed: a trip abroad, a documentary project, for example, and reduce it to the ten best. What are the ten best images? Editing for a book should follow this idea. Only print what you need to get the story across, nothing more. Think a single image per page as opposed to pages with numerous images.

### 5. SEQUENCING

Sequencing a book sometimes gets lost in the shuffle of choosing a cover and editing the work, but sequencing which images come first and which images go last can make all the difference. When people talk about literature or film they refer to “narrative arc”—how audiences are taking on a roller coaster ride with the plot and action. The same applies to your book. Start strong, end strong and give the viewer an arc in between. Just because you love a certain image doesn't mean it should come at the very start of the book.

### 6. COVER DESIGN

Don't judge. They will. Look at other books, gather inspiration, and play with various options before making your decision. Good covers are typically simple, easy reads. Sometimes the cover works as a trick to get someone to slow down and crack the book open.

### 7. TYPOGRAPHY

With most books, think about two fonts, three at the most—title, body copy, and captions. Don't use a default font found in your font folder, use something that fits with the story you're telling. Typography is critical and is an art form in itself, so you have to respect it.



## 8. PAGE LAYOUT

Think about consistency and flow. Less is more. Whatever you chose, try to be consistent. Experiment with image size—just because you have a 10×8 book doesn't mean you have to make the images 10×8, often a smaller image has more energy. Busy pages make for busy readers, slow it down and keep simplicity in mind. Let your photographs speak for themselves, and give them room to breathe.

## 9. PROOF IT

New technologies, such as Blurb, offer us opportunities we've never had before, including the option, ease, and affordability to create sample or proof books. I highly recommend doing so. If you are new to book-making the odds of creating the perfect book on your first attempt is not great, so take the pressure off and have some fun by printing a sample of what you think your perfect book is. Even after hundreds of books, I still print samples when I feel a bit unsure, since catching errors at this point will save time and money later.

## 10. ASK FOR FEEDBACK

As photographers, we fall in love with our own images. We were there and knew what it sounded like when we made the photographs, we knew what it smelled like and we had the experience of making the work. The problem is that the reader wasn't there. So just because you love an image doesn't mean it works in the book. Get a second opinion. Make prints and give them to someone else to edit and sequence. You will be surprised at what comes back.



© Evan Joseph

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PART II  
*Profiles*

Next up, we've interviewed working photographers who have found success with book publishing—either through self-publishing or working through a third party. Regardless of the path they took, they shared firsthand their tips on marketing, process, lessons learned the hard way, and why maintaining strong relationships is so important.

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## PART II

# Ron Haviv: Bringing The Lost Rolls to Life

By Dan Milnor, Creative Evangelist, Blurb



🏠 [ronhaviv.com](http://ronhaviv.com)

📷 [@ronhaviv\\_vii](https://www.instagram.com/ronhaviv_vii)

**R**on Haviv is one of the most important conflict photographers of the modern era. I began following his career in 1989 while I was a photojournalism student at The University of Texas.

Haviv went to Panama to cover the escalating drama and emerged with a photograph that would catapult him to the forefront of the photojournalism world. I followed Ron's work through the Balkans where he spent many years covering the conflict and emerged to publish *Blood and Honey*, one of the best books on conflict I've ever seen. I continued my career as a photographer, then in 2010 accepted the position of "Photographer at Large" of Blurb where I remain today as Creative Evangelist.

Here's a look at how Ron and I worked together to transform over 200 rolls of lost film—including never-before-seen images of Al Gore, Bill Clinton, gangs in El Salvador and a memorial from Sarajevo—into a powerful photo book called [The Lost Rolls](#).

### *How did this project first come about?*

Ron and I had talked about doing a project together for some time. Ron has several monographs to his name, but he was interested in exploring new publishing angles. We had come close a few times but hadn't quite found the right project until the day I got a call from Ron saying, "Dan, I found some old film." I agreed to pay for the processing and scanning, which was a bit of a risk because it could have all been blank, but thanks to the wonderful medium that is film, and the wonderful properties of chemistry, the film was not only usable it was also beautiful. Initially we

processed a small number of rolls, but over the next few months Ron found more film. We ended up with about two hundred rolls total, and what emerged from those rolls was a one-of-a-kind, atmospheric set of negatives.

### *Why did you decide to turn The Lost Rolls into a book? (vs. another medium)*

Even though we live in the digital age, the book is still as important as ever. The book is considered the ultimate sign of respect and acceptance as an artist. Ron already had several successful monographs to his name, so this wasn't his first experience with publishing, but we both wanted this project to not only live in print form but to live in multiple forms, which is why we decided to publish both a book and a magazine. In addition we created several short films and a website to share the project broadly.

### *Why did Blurb want to take this project on?*

Blurb allows artists to publish the books they want to make. Ron is one of the most important reportage photographers of the modern era. He has an incredible track record and was interested in partnering with Blurb rather than a traditional publisher so it was a great opportunity from every angle. And when we saw what was on the negatives it was an easy decision.





© Ron Haviv

*What were some major challenges/successes in the process of putting the book together?*

Publishing can be a complicated endeavor, and one of the misconceptions of self-publishing is that the artist has to do everything by themselves. Publishing *The Lost Rolls* was a group effort. When you consider that you have editing, design, production, essays, testing, promotion, distribution and launch events, you begin to realize it's a marathon not a sprint. Publishing with Blurb doesn't require the same timeline as a traditional publisher—schedules can be much shorter—so if you are organized and have a good team you can do wonders, but it takes real focus, a timeline, and a plan.

We published both a book and a magazine, so even within those confines there were many decisions to be made, but the wonderful part for me was the feedback during the production process. The entire team has their fingerprints on this project. When it came to the launch we really went for it. Digital projections, talks and, of course, launch parties. Blurb always throws great events. In a relatively short amount of time we published two different publications, including translating the magazine to French, and created several short films, launching this project in both the US and Europe.



*New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Location and date unknown. © Ron Haviv*

We were fortunate to have the expertise of W.M. Hunt and Dr. Lauren Walsh in their essays for the book. This was a great team effort and the book has been treated by most of the media no different than a traditional book in the market. TLR has received great reviews from ABC News, *Washington Post* and *The New Republic* amongst many others.

*How did you decide what paper to use and how to format the book itself?*

One of the first things Ron did was bring on Robert Peacock for editing and Roger Gorman for book design. This was such a great move because both of these men bring refined skills to the project. Ultimately, both Robert and Roger are visual translators, taking what Ron captured and translating it into something the greater world can understand and appreciate. The materials were chosen by viewing and feeling paper swatch kits, existing books and also matching the content of the imagery with materials that would most accentuate the power of the design and the photographs. Ultimately, Ron chose Mohawk Proline Uncoated for the book paper, which added depth and dimension to the aged photographs as the ink sunk into the matte paper rather than sitting on top as it does with coated.

*Were there any lessons you learned the hard way?*

I don't think there was anything that was totally unexpected or disappointing. Creating and selling books is a challenge, so you have to truly want it. We were fortunate because everyone involved brought an area of expertise, so if we came dangerously close to a deadline someone was able to step in and keep the process going. I don't think a perfect publishing scenario exists. If a perfectly smooth method existed the world would have

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far more books, but we tried to move thoughtfully and give ourselves enough time to handle what needed to be handled. But remember the team consisted of people that had printing, publishing, or promotion backgrounds and Ron brought a wealth of knowledge as well.

*When you set out to do the project, did you have a goal in mind? Did you reach it?*

We had many goals. Enjoy the process, which might sound trivial, but it was very much part of the plan from the beginning. The world is filled with serious issues and situations, and although everyone involved took the project very seriously, we also wanted to keep things in perspective. We also wanted to do justice to Ron's work. Making the images in *The Lost Rolls* wasn't easy, and in some cases was downright dangerous, so we wanted to make sure his work was respected and looked as good as humanly possible. We also wanted to shine a light on Blurb's ability to act as a fluid publishing platform for all types of creatives. And we also wanted to get the work out into the greater community. Even though the backbone of the project is photography the story is one of memory, history, the analog era and one man's life as a correspondent. There were many stories to tell, so we wanted to make sure the work transcended the photography community and was exposed to a much larger market. I think we were successful.



© Ron Haviv



© Ron Haviv



## PART II

# Will Steacy: How to Fund Your Photo Book



willsteacy.com

@willsteacy

**W**ill Steacy is a New York-based photographer and writer whose work has been featured in a number of solo and group exhibitions, as well as in *The New Yorker*, *Esquire*, *Harper's*, *Mother Jones*, *The Paris Review* and other publications.

A product of five generations of newspapermen, Steacy's personal connection to the newspaper industry drove him to spend five years photographing The Philadelphia Inquirer's operations to tell the story of the shrinking newspaper industry. In 2015, he launched a Kickstarter campaign to finance "[DEADLINE](#)," a project that included producing a newspaper and book of the work. The campaign, which ran for three weeks, surpassed his \$15,000 goal to raise just over \$26,000.

*Why did you decide to use Kickstarter to raise money for your book?*

Over the five years it took to shoot this project, I had applied to every single grant, fellowship and opportunity there was for financial support to make it work, but to no avail. I ended up self-financing all of the work myself and maxing out four credit cards in the process. When it came time to make a publication of this work I had exhausted all of the opportunities and resources available to me.

Kickstarter was the last do-or-die effort to find the financial resources to make this project. I didn't have the option for it to not be successful.

*What were some of the things you were trying to fund with this campaign?*

I had a wealth of ideas and intentions and plans for the publications of this work. I had a wealth of written material and images that I had both photographed and scanned from archives. What I had a poverty of was money; and time is money. The money I raised provided the support to create the time that I needed to do these publications.

*How do you recommend getting started on a Kickstarter campaign?*

I did a lot of research on figuring out what other people did who were trying to raise funding to make a book. Like anything, you need to know your market and your audience. Get an idea of the tools and techniques other successful campaigns have used.

A simple, easy way to get the lowdown on what's involved is to reach out to people who have done successful Kickstarter campaigns. Don't be shy to reach out to people who you may not know. Introduce yourself. Chances are, they probably did the same thing. They don't necessarily have to be friends or people you know, but people in your category. Since my campaign ran, I've had numerous





© Will Steacy

people contact me about basically the same questions I asked—what’s it like, what’s involved—and I’ve been happy to talk to people about that.

Then I suggest going into Kickstarter’s photo book category and look at the most successful campaigns and take note of all of the details, from what their time period was, what their funding goal was, to the rewards. Look at the rewards specifically in terms of the numbers. It’s always important to look at which reward sold the most or had the most backers.

*How did you determine the rewards you offered to your backers?*

In my research, I noted that the lower, cheaper rewards were the ones people supported the most so it was important to have attractive and interesting rewards that were under \$25, under \$50.

A lot of people will offer a \$1,000 or \$2,000 reward. The notion of somebody buying that is kind of like winning the lottery. I don’t think it truly matters if you have a reward over \$500. Focus on the \$100, \$50 and lower rewards. The cheaper it is the easier it is for people to say, “Oh, cool. The \$5, \$10 and \$20 rewards are important.

In a lot of other photo book campaigns, I noticed people were offering the same kind of rewards. I wanted to make rewards that weren’t just the same old thing. The rewards should ultimately be a reflection of you, your work and your project. They should be memorable and promote your project at the same time. You want to stand out from what the other campaigns in your selected category have done.

My rewards were all thematically related to the history of *The Inquirer*, or to journalism and newspapers itself.



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One of the rewards I offered was a pencil with the phrase “If it bleeds, it leads,” which is an old journalism motto. I replicated a pin that says, “No boss shall rule this town,” which is based on an original from 1929, to the book itself, the newspaper itself, a t-shirt and a poster. Some of the higher-end rewards were offering up newspapers from my massive archive of historical newspapers.

It’s important to also look at the costs of the rewards themselves and figure out all the expenses, from shipping to having the item produced, to make sure that you don’t just break even but are able to take that money and put it towards the project.

#### *What are some other keys to Kickstarter success?*

One of the most important things in doing a Kickstarter campaign is to have a good video explaining the project and why you’re seeking financial support. Also, explaining and communicating to your backers about what’s going on is important throughout the process.

The other big thing is planning of time. I think this is my greatest fault. Making the newspaper took way more time than I expected. There were a lot of hiccups that I certainly did not intend or plan for.

#### *Once you’ve set up a Kickstarter campaign, how do you recommend promoting it?*

Once you’ve launched the campaign, you have to get the word out to as many people as possible. This was like a full-time job for almost the whole time the campaign lasted. I asked every single person I knew to share it on social media, sent out my own email campaigns and posted about it on my social media channels.

In my research many people told me that you get the majority of your pledges in the first two or three days and the last two or three days of the campaign, so you should be prepared to focus heavily on those days.

You should also try to get people who have a much larger audience to interview and support you, like your contacts at magazines and blogs. They’ll be able to reach or thousands more people than you will. Then of course be prepared to spend the time to do interviews.

Sometimes it can feel as though you’re just being relentless and annoying, but you’ve got to suck it up. In my case, it was a do-or-die situation so I didn’t necessarily have the option to allow myself to feel that. It’s your work and it’s your campaign. You’ve got to put the work in and be relentless about it.

Before and after your campaign, you must also support other campaigns. I do my best to share information about other people’s campaigns when they ask. It’s a two-way street. I think the photo community is unlike any other industry. I’ve found so much love, generosity, kindness and support amongst my peers.

“It’s your work and it’s your campaign. You’ve got to put the work in and be relentless about it.”



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## PART II

# Emily Shur: Self-Publishing Your Passion Project



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**L**os Angeles photographer [Emily Shur](#) makes her living doing celebrity and entertainment portraiture for editorial clients like *The New Yorker*, *The New York Times Magazine* and *Entertainment Weekly*. She also shoots global advertising campaigns for companies like Dell, HTC and Head & Shoulders, and her work has been featured in numerous photography publications and exhibitions.

But like many accomplished photographers, Shur shoots other work that is more personal. One such project is a collection of photos she's been taking for more than a decade of travels to Japan. Once she had amassed 10 years worth of photos, she decided to present a selection of them in a self-published book called *Playground*.

*What inspired you to turn your images from Japan into a book?*

My husband and I love it in Japan, and we go once or twice a year. I'd been working on that body of work for about 10 years at the time, and I thought that it would be a nice round number and reason to put together a collection of images.

I've always taken pictures like the ones in *Playground*, but that's never been my focus or how I make money. It's always been really important to me to make time for that work and to do something with it. It doesn't have to be anything lucrative or business-minded. I, of course, would love to see the pictures printed beautifully and big on a wall, but the book is something you can do without gallery representation or without a show.

Making *Playground* was a way to show the work to people in a way that felt right with the pictures and not just as a PDF or printed in a portfolio.

*How did you determine the book format, photo selection and design?*

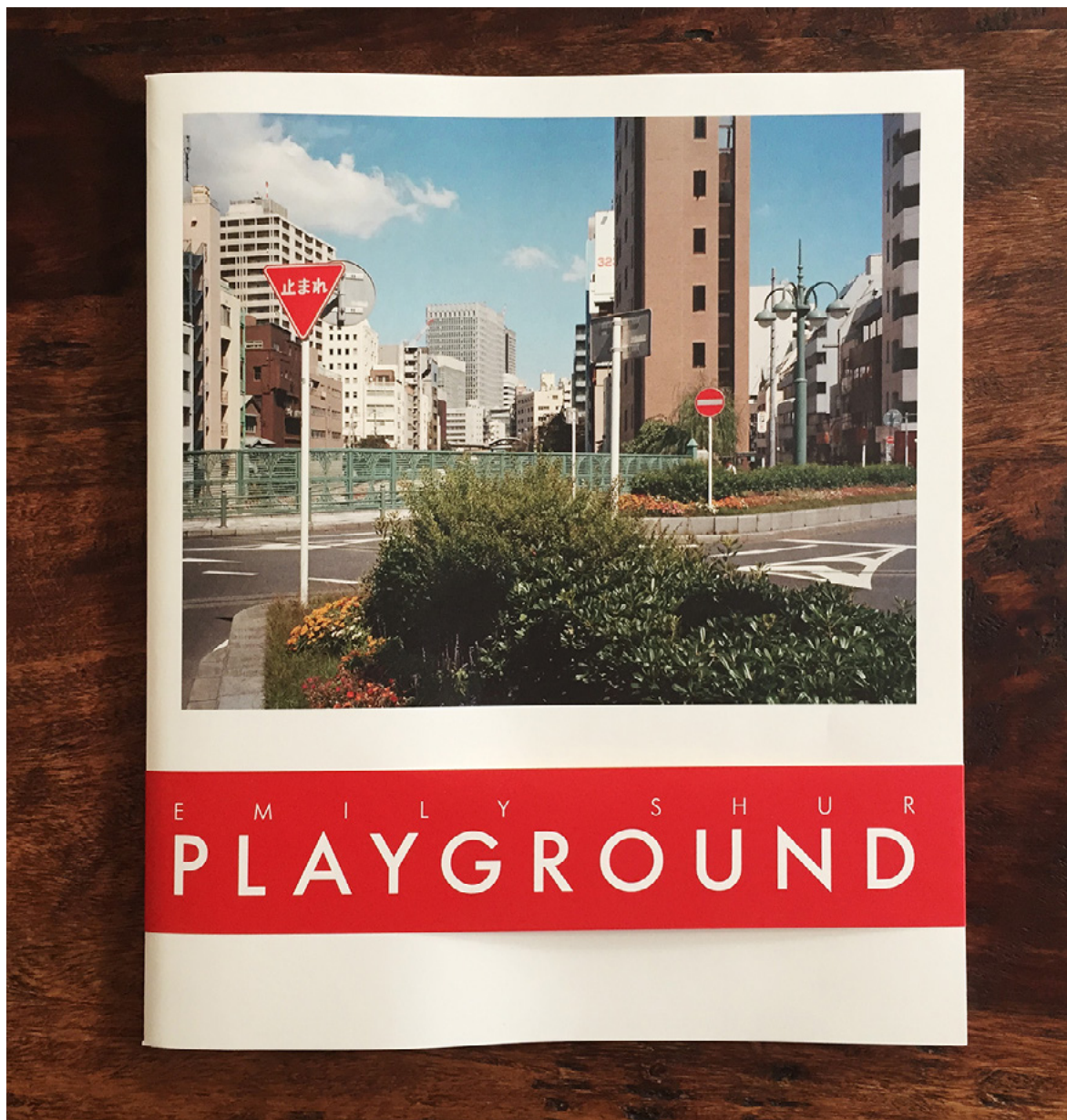
I had bought a book in Japan that was a similar style. It was a lot bigger format, but it was unbound and printed on this thin paper. I absolutely love the book and didn't want to just outright copy it, but I definitely pulled from some of the elements of the design of that book. That was my starting point.

My husband designed it. He's not a designer, but he knows his way around InDesign and he knows the work really well. I definitely had a lot of say, though.

*What about the paper section and printing? How did you research your options?*

I worked with a printer here in LA that I've worked with on more conventional promotional items. I asked





© Emily Shur

my contact there if he could meet with me so I could show him what I wanted to do and see if it was doable. I brought him the book that I was inspired by. We eventually decided to cut the size down and then the number of pages got cut down also.

I went for paper quality and print quality over size and number of pages. He showed me a bunch of different papers, and I went with what I thought was going to look the best. We did offset printing instead of digital printing. I just was kind of like, if I'm going to do this, I want it to be done the way I want it. If you're going to spend a little bit of money, you might as well spend a little bit more and do it the way you want to do it.

*What kinds of things should photographers consider if they want to a project like this?*

Well, the cost can be significant. I think you've got to think about how important it is that you do or don't make money off of this, or if you're thinking more of it as a promotional item and you're okay to spend a little bit of money on it. I don't think anybody makes photo books to get rich or anything. I think it's more of a life goal that people want to fulfill.

The printing process can make a big difference in the cost—digital printing versus offset, the paper, the size of the book, the page count—there are a lot of options. I think it's a matter of the priorities of the photographer and how important it is that it's printed a certain way or is a certain size.

If a photographer is going to go the self-publishing route, there are a lot of options in terms of levels of quality, printing options, and customization that they should make themselves aware of before just going in.



© Emily Shur

***How would you suggest photographer research their printing options?***

I think researching those places that would make an on-demand book is helpful. Then if you have something that you can show to a printer that has at least some qualities of what you're hoping to do, you could get an idea about how much it is going to cost to do it yourself from the ground up.

I have a book that I made on Blurb that I use as a portfolio, but I made two of them and not 300. They look really nice, with premium paper and cover, but it would not be cost-effective for me to make a large quantity of them.

***Now that it's published, how are you using the book? Are you selling it?***

I made 300 books; they're all numbered and signed. I've given away 75 to 100 as gifts or as promotional



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gifts to people that I'd like to work with. I am selling the rest of them on a Big Cartel site. I also sell them at a bookstore here in LA called Arcana. I still have some that I give as gifts if it seems appropriate and I think the person would enjoy it.

***Are you making a profit from it?***

I sell them basically at cost on my big cartel site, so I'm definitely not making any money off of it. I probably won't even break even from it because of how many I've given away, but I didn't do it to try to make money. I just hope to recoup some of the cost.

***Were there any things you would do differently if you did this again?***

I would probably have designed some sort of case that has a spine with the name of the book and my name

on it. We had a custom-printed envelope made for the books, but they don't have a spine. If it's ever in a bookstore, it would be hard to know that it's there.

***Would you self-publish a book again?***

I definitely would do it again assuming I had the money to spend. I'm really happy with how things have turned out. I'm glad I didn't cheap out on the things that were important to me. I'm glad I just did it the way I wanted to do it.

I feel like if you can make something yourself and you don't have people standing over your shoulder telling you what they want you to do with it, you then have free range to make it how you want it, assuming it's affordable. That, to me, is important. If I'm going to do this myself, I have to really make the choices that I want to make.



## PART II

# Brad Mangin: You Are Your Book's Strongest Advocate



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**W**e caught up with [Brad Mangin](#), accomplished sports photographer and longtime friend of PhotoShelter. Brad has now published four wonderful photography books—one titled [Instant Baseball](#) featuring his unique style of up-close and personal, [all access Instagrams with professional ballplayers](#), plus three commemorative books covering championship seasons for the San Francisco Giants [Worth The Wait](#) (2010), [Never Say Die](#) (2012), and [Championship Blood](#) (2014) as a freelancer for Major League Baseball, Sports Illustrated, and other leading editorial publications.

We asked Brad to share his book publishing experiences with the community. Having experienced the process of compiling, editing, producing, and marketing photography books (now four times) affords Brad some amazing insights. Here, Brad digs into everything from choosing a publisher to contract terms and design intentions.

### *What prompted you to first start publishing books?*

First and foremost I got lucky when the baseball team I have followed since childhood, the San Francisco Giants, won the World Series in 2010. It was the first time they had won the title since they moved to San Francisco from New York in 1958 so it was a huge deal in the Bay Area. Once I got home from shooting the clinching game in Arlington, Texas I knew I had the pictures that would make a great book. I had photographed close to 50 games including spring training, regular season, and post-season.

I called my good friend and terrific writer Brian Murphy and told him we had to do a book. I told him, “You have the words, I have the pictures.” Murph is a Bay Area kid like myself who has followed the team since childhood and had moved from sportswriting to becoming the host of the morning radio show from 5-9am on the Giants 50,000 watt flagship radio station in San Francisco KNBR 680.

I called a literary agent I knew, Amy Rennert, and pitched my idea. Since Amy is a Giants fan and understands the local market, she loved the idea and knew that having Murph be a part of the book would be a huge plus. Not only is he a fabulous writer, but his ability to promote the book daily on his morning radio show to Giants fans all over was a huge bonus. I quickly learned that publishing a book about a team that wins a title in a local market is a million times easier than publishing a general interest book that does not have a concentrated fan base. A publisher needs to know that

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they will be able to sell books if they are going to invest in publishing your idea. Printing big and expensive photo books is not cheap. When a local team wins a World Series you instantly have a huge market of enthusiastic fans who are excited to buy many collectibles to help them remember the special season.

When we started doing book signings we quickly realized all of this. Our book events were like Giants pep rallies with fans lined up outside waiting for us, dressed in Giants colors. They couldn't wait to get in and have us sign their books. They all wanted to tell us who their favorite players were (in 2010 it was Buster Posey and Tim Lincecum) and what games they went to during the postseason.

*Can you describe the basic financial arrangements for the Giants books?*

My co-author, Brian Murphy, and I are equal partners on all three of the Giants books we have done. This means that the contract our agent negotiates for us calls for the traditional authors' royalties to be cut in half into equal 50/50 shares between the two of us. Our agent also gets a share for all of the hard work she does for us. Like many contracts, we get a typical advance divided into three equal parts: upon signing the contract, upon accepting the manuscript, and upon publication. This advance goes against royalties that are paid to us based upon total retail sales. We get a percentage of sales up until we hit a certain number. Once we sell more, our percentage goes up. We also have a bonus coming to us if we hit a certain number.

This contract is pretty typical for someone like me having a book published the old school way where the publisher pays for everything and I assume none of the risk. My publisher makes all of the initial investment of putting the book together and having it printed in China, then having it shipped back over here to the US on an incredibly tight deadline to hit bookstores in time for opening day. Shipping is expensive! I am not paying anything out of my pocket for this, and since self-publishing would not be possible—at least with high quality—on a tight deadline like this for a book about a team that wins a World Series on October 29, 2014. (Our deadline was making sure the book was out and ready for sale by baseball's Opening Day, April 5, 2015—only 5 months to get everything done!)

*How would you describe a "success"? Strictly by the number of books sold?*

I think there are many ways to describe a "success". For me each book has been a huge success, but in different ways. My first Giants book on the 2010 team (*Worth the Wait*)



was my first so it will always be special. Yet I really didn't know what I was doing so there were so many things I would have done differently. We sold a bunch of books. The entire print run was 17,000 in total mostly because it was the Giants official book and it was the club's first title. The fans were just crazy for anything related to the team. My new book on the 2014 team (*Championship Blood*) is my favorite book to date because after doing several earlier I learned so many things. This time I was going to do what I wanted and my awesome publisher Cameron + Company agreed with everything I wanted. I asked for a large, oversized art book. I wanted nice paper, an expensive cover price and a small print run. I told my publisher Chris Gruener that I didn't really care how many we sold—I just wanted to finally have my dream book. We printed 5,000, and thanks to Chris and our incredible creative director Iain Morris, I have my dream book.

*When the Giants won the 2014 World Series, their third in the current dynasty, was there any question that another book would be produced?*

There was no question we would do a book after they won. The funny thing is the team barely made it into the playoffs, so when my publisher started texting Murph and me in early October about doing a book, I didn't want to jinx their chances so I refused to



discuss it! From there, the Giants run was pretty miraculous. They won Game 7 of the World Series in Kansas City on October 29, 2014. The parade was on Halloween in San Francisco. We met with the publisher at the Marin Brewing Company on Monday, November 3, 2014. That is the date we agreed to do a book. We had to work fast. In order to have a book by Opening Day 2015 we would have to have the files of the finished book delivered to China by December 19. This meant we had six weeks to edit pictures, lay out the book, do all the pre-press, etc. Murph had to write player profiles on a dozen guys and we had to get a foreword and afterward and a million other details taken care of. Six weeks is not much time!

Each book has taken on a new format and the latest is distinctly a “coffee table book.”

#### *Can you describe the considerations that went into these decisions?*

The first book we really didn't have a choice as the Giants chose the publisher and they had a format in mind. It was totally fine for our first book and the price point was good to move books at \$25. By the time this third book came around I did not want to do anything like we had in the past. What would be the point? I brought a big beautiful book *Athlete* by Walter Iooss to our meeting on November 3 with me. The book had many huge, full bleed images. It was clean and simple and it was BIG. I told everyone I was not messing around and I wanted big and bold. I wanted heavy and expensive. Our creative director Iain Morris was on the same page with me and was ready. One great change he made was to take my original idea of doing a book in portrait form (vertical) and doing it landscape (horizontal) instead. He said this would give him more creative design options and man, was he right. It also allowed us to run some of my pictures 28 inches across a two page spread (the book is 14 x 11 inches).

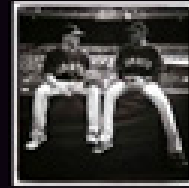
Iain pulled out all the stops on this one. The dust jacket on our cover has french folds, which is very classy and rarely seen these days. The hard cover surface of our book also has a completely different cover on it, so if you were to take off the dust jacket you would see another cover!

#### *Can you explain how you've promoted the book?*

I set up a website ([www.championshipbloodbook.com](http://www.championshipbloodbook.com)) that talks about the book and listed all of our bookstore events. This works great for twitter and radio—if people ask when and where we will be next we just tell them to go to the website. We had 100



“No one cares as much about the book as you do. No one will want to promote the book as much as you do... Don't be bashful and know your market.”



© Brad Mangin

review copies of the book air freighted in to get out early to various people to help create a buzz. Murph I hand delivered many copies to many writers at spring training in Arizona. We gave copies to everyone on the Giants broadcast crew.

We also made an appearance on [the local nightly sports talkshow in San Francisco, Yahoo Sports Talk Live, produced by Comcast](#). We were live in-studio promoting the book and it went really well. Once the season started, I did a number of radio appearances on some of the shows on the Giants station KNBR, and lots of book signings.

#### *Have the books led to additional work opportunities?*

That is a great question and really hard to say directly. I would like to think so!

#### *Any bumps in the road you can share as watchouts for other photographers?*

No one cares as much about the book as you do. No one will want to promote the book as much as you do. It is up to you to get off your butt and do all you can to promote the book via social media, friends in the print and electronic media, etc. Don't be bashful and know your market. My market is very targeted—San Francisco Giants fans—and I know how to reach them.

Don't try and design your own book; it will look awful. Working with a world-class designer like I have in Iain Morris has really opened my eyes. Taking my traditional sports pictures shot with 35mm cameras and my Instagrams shot with my iPhone and combining them into my newest book the way Iain did is just incredible. People pay me to take pictures—they don't pay me to design books.

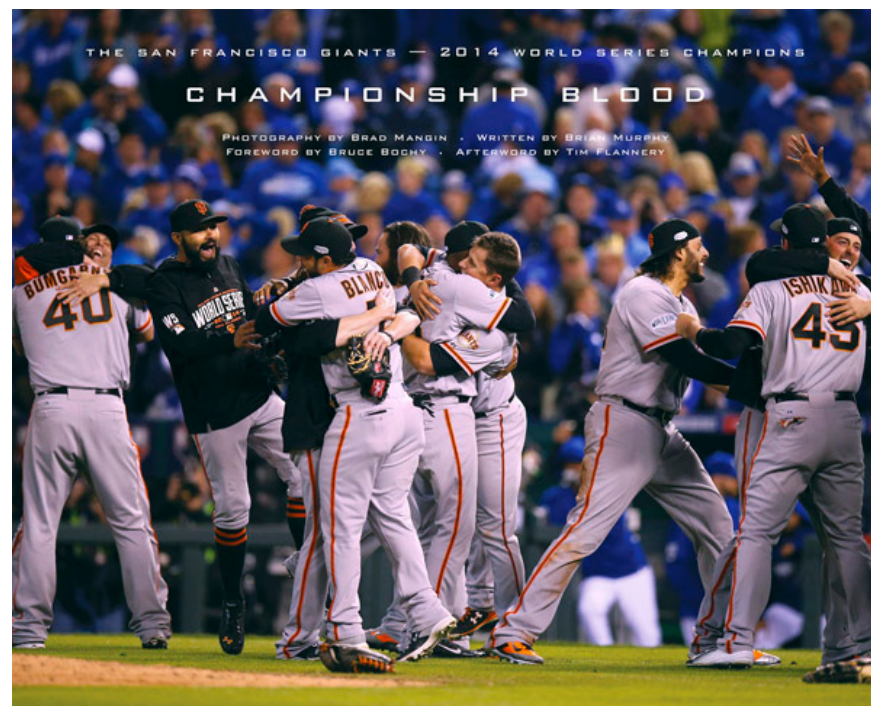
### *Any other lessons learned?*

It really helps to have some good friends who are great writers. I am incredibly lucky to have a partner like Murph. I have known him for over 20 years, and I could not have had a better co-author. Never settle for someone who you are not comfortable with. Make sure your partner is as enthusiastic about the subject as you are. Murph and I are nuts for Giants baseball and could talk to you for hours about Mike Ivie and the 1978 team. We are not frauds. We are legit—and the fans can tell. It helps us sell books.

### *Where do you go from here?*

The book publishing experience was incredible and I would certainly look to do more if the right situation came up.

Now, I am focused on broadening my career opportunities. The industry continues to change for freelance sports photographers. At the moment, I'm exploring some opportunities with sports related brands who like my [Instagram approach](#) and want to bring that authenticity to the way they present their brand in social media with my photography. Even at this stage in my career, I'm learning that everything I do is a new foundation. Constant reinvention is so important based on how the market is changing and where great photography is in high demand. I'm always looking for ways to do things differently. This has been very exciting for me, given my career has always been about editorial photography, so it's a whole new experience to bridge the gap to work both on the brand side and for exciting new media outlets.



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## PART II

# Evan Joseph: Tapping into a Niche



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**E**van Joseph spends much of his time jumping into helicopters and climbing New York City rooftops as a lifestyle photographer specializing in interiors, architecture, aerials and street scenes. His work has been featured in *Architectural Digest*, *Elle Decor*, *US Weekly*, *Stern*, *New York Magazine* and *HOME Magazine*. Leading developers and hoteliers and the managers of famous buildings like One World Observatory at One World Trade Center, Top of the Rock at Rockefeller Center and The Woolworth Building regularly tap him to create brand-defining images.

His career photographing building and scenes in New York City opened the door to book publishing. So far, four books of his work have been published, the latest of which is [New York From Above](#).

### *How did you get your break in book publishing?*

I was contacted about five years ago by a publisher who was doing a book on Central Park. They had found one of my images online and offered me an absurdly low amount of money to license it. I decided it was worth it to make a friend, and I licensed the image. A few months later they told me they were working on another book of New York City and asked if I wanted to photograph it.

That book was [New York City at Night](#) and the publisher was Thunder Bay Press, which is owned by Baker & Taylor,



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*Evan Joseph*

© Evan Joseph



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a large distributor of books. That was a good break because the book was distributed to every bookstore everywhere.

They also have a series of books called *Then and Now*, where they pair historic photos with modern photos taken from the same spot. They wanted to refresh *New York City Then and Now*, and they asked me to do it. That was my second book.

Getting these projects didn't require a lot of agency on my part. I was in the right place at the right time, but I did keep the relationships active and well fed, and my hard work paid off.

#### *How did you nurture those relationships?*

I made sure to go out of my way to give them the best possible thing that I could. Instead of just sending them that first JPEG that they saw online, I went back to the original RAW file and gave it new thought to make sure that it was really the best possible image, and then I optimized it for their print environment. I gave them a file that was, in my opinion, the absolute most press-ready professional version of that image, which I continue to do to this day with everything that I publish.

I think it's good to show people in the publishing industry that you can be an attractive partner to them and speak their language in regards to print reproduction. My master's degree is in digital media so I'm very fluent in digital prep and pre-production technologies so I feel like I have something to add in that regard. I've found that everyone's been happy to not do the work themselves.

#### *How did your other books come to be? Did you pitch the ideas?*

I was approached by Rizzoli for *400 Fifth Avenue*. They were doing a book on a new skyscraper and wanted to license the photos I had done for the marketing of the residences. When I asked where they were going to get the rest of the pictures, they said they had some from the hotel portion of the building and some photos from another source.

It was a mish-mash of photography styles, and I told them I'd make it worth their while if I photographed the whole thing. They were swayed by my proposal, and I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to really express myself throughout the entire



© Evan Joseph

“The publishing industry can be a really good friend, and the value of working with the publishing industry can go far beyond the money.”



© Evan Joseph

book in all the photography so that it became a unified artistic statement rather than a cobbled together portfolio of various things shot by various photographers.

And working with Rizzoli, a legendary art book publisher, was a thrilling opportunity. I didn't want to pass that up.

#### *What about your latest book, *New York From Above*?*

I do a lot of aerial photography and get the opportunity to shoot lots of beautiful homes and penthouses high on top of buildings. I'd been collecting a lot of this material that was a little too artistic to use in the advertising context and was thinking about building a book out of it. I mentioned it to the company, a book packager, that I had worked with on the Rizzoli book, and they decided to publish it.

It was the first time that I had the opportunity to really drive the book creatively. The publisher had a lot to do with the concept, but it was the first time that I was not the hired help. It was a great experience, and I'm glad that I stuck it out. It was a great team and there is absolutely no way on this Earth that I could have done it without them.

#### *What was the process of working with a publisher like?*

I was surprised at what a collaborative process it really is. It may be a book entirely of my photography, but I learned that I am a very bad judge of what images are best for the book.

In every book, I gave up on pictures that I thought were important and worth fighting for at the time. Eventually I trusted the experts I was working with and came to recognize later that they were right. That is the purpose of an editor, and I've been very lucky to have some amazing ones.

#### *What are some outcomes from doing these books?*

They have been good marketing tools. The money is negligible and, like many photographers, I'm fairly sure that I spent more money creating these books than I earn from them. If anything, it probably breaks even, but the marketing and PR value





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has been tremendous. I enjoy having books to show and give to clients and take with me on pitches. It lends gravitas to my work.

Because I did not publish any of these books, I don't have a ton of them. I've got to be very careful about handing them out, but when I do, I think it's a nice gift that people seem to appreciate. It adds another layer to my professional resume.

#### *Have you done anything to market the books?*

I certainly make myself available to the PR effort. It's fun and good marketing for me to be interviewed on TV, on radio and in the newspaper. But there's no financial incentive for me to do any of my own marketing.

When the books come out I do make my own effort to tell the people that I communicate with. I keep a mailing list of the people that I've done business with over the years, and a lot of good things have come from my making those announcements.

#### *Are there any dos and don'ts or tips that you could give other photographers who might be interested in doing a photography book with a publisher?*

What I generally tell my students when I've taught in years past is to say yes to everything. You don't want to get taken advantage of, but also try to recognize an opportunity and seize it. The publishing industry can be a really good friend, and the value of working with the publishing industry can go far beyond the money.

#### *Would you ever consider self-publishing?*

I think there is credibility that comes from a third party having believed in your idea and sanctioned the effort. A publisher, in my experience, has been valuable in shaping the concept so that it is not self-indulgent. I guess I'm a believer in publishers and in the role they play in creating a final product. But then, self-publishing is a revolution. If I thought that I could create an equally great product and make more money from it, I would definitely try.



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PART III

*Conclusion*

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## PART III

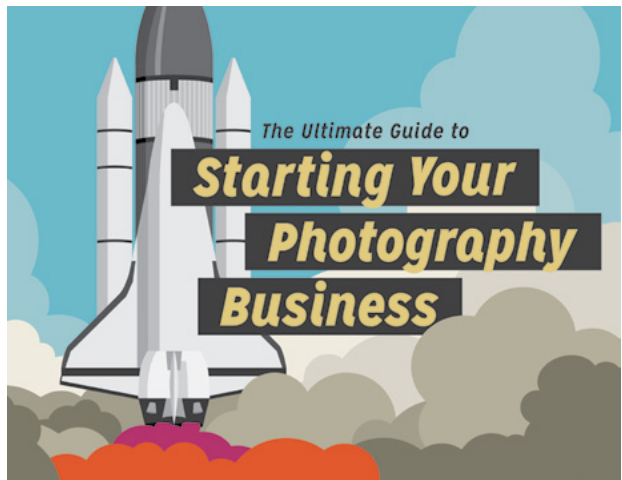
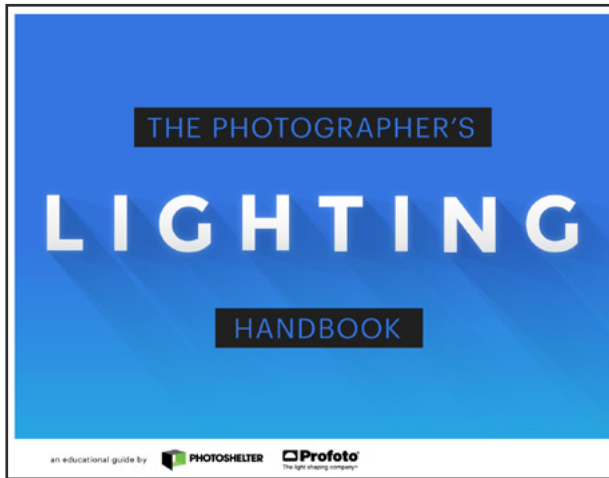
# Conclusion

**E**ven though publishing a photography book may not be the most lucrative project to take on, it can be an exciting and rewarding journey. Whether it's published through traditional channels or through new DIY technology, the feeling of holding a finished book of work in your hands can be a career highlight.

As this guide demonstrates, successful book projects take a clear vision, thorough research, smart decisions, and a lot of work. But thanks to new technology and a community of photographers who have blazed a path to success, it's possible for anyone to contribute their work to the shelves.

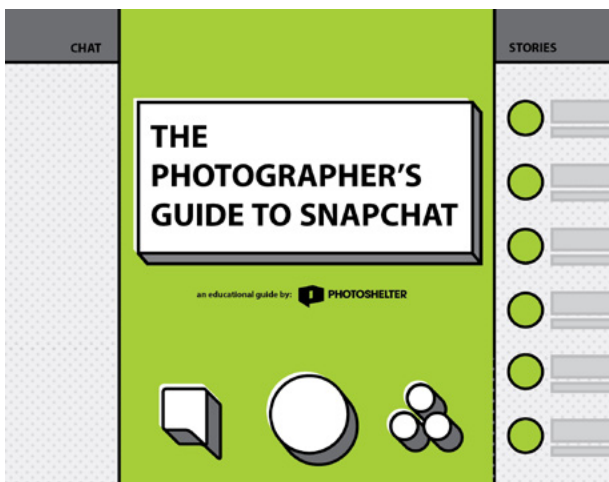
### Resources

- Platform: [Blurb](#)
- Tool: [Sell and Distribute](#) (Blurb)
- Tool: [Volume Printing](#) (Blurb)
- Book: [Publish Your Photography Book](#)
- Foundation: [Aperture](#)
- Article: [A Manifesto to Self-Publishing Your Own Photobooks](#) (TIME)
- Competition: [The Anamorphosis Prize](#)
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