Review

The Librarian's Guide to Micropublishing:
Helping Patrons and Communities Use Free and
Low-Cost Publishing Tools To Tell Their Stories

Walt Crawford. Medford, N.J.: Information Today, Inc., 2012. 176 pp. ISBN: 978-1-57387-430-4. $49.50.

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As libraries work to adapt to the ever-changing needs and desires of the communities they serve, many have begun to provide not just materials to check out but also the space, technology, and support for patrons' creative activity in a variety of media. Walt Crawford's *The Librarian's Guide to Micropublishing* capitalizes on this trend toward creative activity in libraries and describes a way to help users publish their writing in an innovative and economical way.

In the first two chapters, *The Librarian's Guide to Micropublishing* offers a clear explanation of micropublishing, the basic terminology of layout and publishing, differences between micropublishing and traditional self-publishing, and the print-on-demand (POD) model of publication and distribution. It also addresses several reasons why this could be a valuable service for libraries to offer to their community.

In the third chapter, the author explains the no-cost/low-cost approach to micropublishing, which takes advantage of common software like Microsoft Word and uses service agencies to sell, print, and ship the book to readers. Unlike the vanity presses often associated with self-publishing, service agencies require almost no upfront costs beyond

the purchase of one proof copy for the author. *The Librarian's Guide to Micropublishing* identifies Lulu and Amazon's CreateSpace as the primary service agencies for micropublications. A later chapter deals entirely with using Lulu, which could limit the book's utility should Lulu go out of business or change its model.

The bulk of the book is really for authors rather than librarians. It focuses on the typography, layout, and formatting of the manuscript necessary to make the micropublished book look as professional as possible. Although really written for authors, this section would also be useful to librarians who are seriously considering offering this service to their communities. A bonus is that any library that purchases at least one new copy of the print edition of this book can provide free print photocopies to patrons of chapters 4-6, which deal in detail with the techniques for formatting a manuscript for micropublishing. Additionally, a free companion website offers downloads of the Word templates discussed in the book. *The Librarian's Guide to Micropublishing* also instructs readers in the structure of a book – from the front cover to the index – that will be helpful for authors or librarians assisting authors. Authors who are daunted by the prospect of designing a cover or creating an index will also find information about outsourcing these tasks.

In conjunction with this specific, technical information, the book mentions several issues that libraries considering offering this service will want to explore more thoroughly. For example, should the library just provide the software and assistance, or should the library act as a publisher, establishing an imprint for micropublishing patrons? There are also issues surrounding copyright, libel, and taxes (self-publishing is self-employment) about which libraries will want to be prepared to provide patrons more information than is offered in this book.

Micropublishing is fundamentally an innovative concept, based on a different model than both traditional publishing and traditional self-publishing. Libraries interested in encouraging patron creativity will find micropublishing a novel way to add creative services in the library.

This book is useful for authors who want to micropublish, and any type of library could provide it in their collection for patron use. Librarians in public libraries are likely to get the most use out of this book. Although the book mentions micropublishing as an academic publishing strategy for small, open access journals, it would serve only as an early starting point for an academic library wishing to pursue such an endeavor.