

Helping Amateur Radio Grow Through Written Publications

by Gordon L. Gibby KX4Z

Just like professional societies, amateur radio groups grow and develop through association with other amateurs and groups. No one knows everything, and the number of ideas, skills, technologies and opportunities is so vast, that it takes all of us to keep track of them. Knowledge percolates through communication. Just as trade organizations for doctors, engineers and other professionals have monthly journals and large meetings to allow knowledge to spread widely, amateur radio groups have newsletters (, web pages (e.g., <http://www.arrl-nfl.com/>), and an effective national group to coalesce knowledge and make it easy to spread more widely.

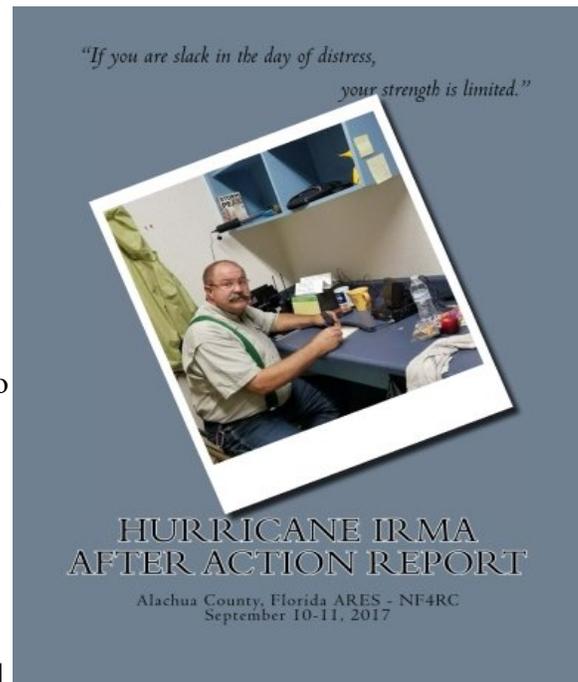
Written publications, whether web pages, printed materials, or Kindle books, are an important part of spreading knowledge that can save others hours, days and sometimes *weeks* of fruitless struggle over problems or issues that your group has already conquered.

As a volunteer for the Alachua Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) group, I've utilized some incredibly inexpensive and easy solutions for making high quality paperback bound texts and Kindle books available. These printed or Kindle texts were useful not only as local training and reference materials, but are then available nationally, and even world-wide.

Gone are the days when your only options were local spiral-binding services, or expensive tape-binding; no longer is it an expensive proposition to have a small booklet or training manual printed, requiring you to find a hard-to-reach publisher. Instead of costing \$5-\$10 per training booklet, ham-authors are now able to get high quality printing in the \$2.50-\$3.50 range for 25-100 page booklets of various sizes from paperback novel through full 8.5x11" size.

Createspace (<https://www.createspace.com/>) offers a fairly straightforward on-demand publishing system that amateur radio authors can easily utilize. They appear to have a computerized printing system that can produce books in very small quantities, only when a purchaser wants a copy. The steps to getting a report or training document turned into a paperback or Kindle book are listed below. An important point to emphasize is that there are simply NO COSTS to any of these steps – you only have to pay at the point that you actually ORDER PRINTED BOOKS and even then, as the author, you get them generally for less than \$3 each.

1. Get a free account, choosing your username and password.
2. Pick the size of booklet (e.g. 5"x8") that you prefer; it might be a good idea to measure a book that seems about the "right size" to you, and use that size. Common sizes are less expensive.
3. On CreateSpace's web page, open a new "project" for the item you wish to publish. Choose the size, etc. I always allow them get me a free ISBN number (in two different formats).



4. Download their “template” for a book of your chosen size; it will have all the important pages already created for you, and filled with “Latin gibberish”. Open it in any word processor (I use a free one, Open Office (<https://www.openoffice.org/>), but I hear there are even better ones out there).
5. Chapter by chapter, replace the “Latin gibberish” with your text, photos, charts, tables, etc. You can simply copy and paste from material you have already written, or you can type and enter fresh material.
6. When you have your book ready to go, export it to PDF format.
7. Upload your PDF version into the “interior” of your project book. Their uploading system will automatically check for big errors, but you need to look through their “viewer” to make sure pictures, pages, etc. ended up where you thought they were going to go. (I've had pictures move to the next page and similar errors.) It's helpful to have new chapters begin on the RIGHT side, for example. If you spot a goof, you can change your file and re-upload it.
8. Choose your cover --- they have a bunch of pre-created choices; usually you just upload a photo (or accept their default), insert your title, authors' names, explanatory material on the back etc.
9. When you are all done, they do an overnight review of your interior file and give you yet another chance to proof it any of three ways --- in their online viewer, as a downloadable PDF, or you can even order a single printed copy for a couple of dollars!
10. Now comes the fun. When you make your final approval, you get to choose a price – on multiple continents! Createspace will set a minimum price below which they can't produce the text (usually \$4-\$5) and by your price choice you can set your revenue at anything from \$0.00 and up....but CreateSpace will offer advice if you pick something extravagant. You also choose where your text will be offered – online, to libraries, etc. You can also order copies for yourself or your group, generally for less than \$3 each – professionally bound! Generally, within a couple of days, your text will be available on Amazon for other hams and groups to see and acquire.
11. If you wish to create a Kindle book, there are a couple of additional steps and your text will go onto their publishing platform as well, and Amazon will offer that as well.

In the past year, I've used this simple free system to publish multiple texts, including a book on emergency communications, a kit manual, and two AfterAction/Improvement Plan reports from our local ARES group. I've also published on other subjects; total sales are now into several hundred. Generally, your AfterActionReports are not going to be of much interest, but the point there is that you can get copies to present to helpful (and otherwise) local government and agency officials to help document your group's progress as well as impediments you've experienced.

A professional colleague was so amazed at how easy this is, that he directed his editorial staff to push out a scientific text into this venue rather than continue to deal with high priced scientific publishers --- and had his 300+ page textbook on the market in only weeks and selling like hotcakes.

Your ham radio public service group can make useful texts available on Kindle for pennies, and produce reports and manuals for your group and local officials, for only a few dollars each with these tools.