

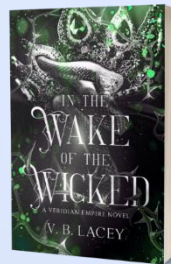
# *Indie Author Starter Pack*

~ Resources to help on your publishing journey ~

Hello!

I'm V.B. Lacey, author of the *Elementals of Iona* duology and the *Veridian Empire* series. I've put together this list of resources that I used while publishing my books, along with a few others that fellow indie authors have recommended.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, and is simply what I found works for me and my needs. I hope it helps!



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*\*All prices shown were accurate as of March 2025, but could change in the future*



## *Drafting & Publishing*

### ➤ Drafting

- Scrivener: writing software that helps draft, organize, and manage your projects. You can do a lot on here, but there's a steeper learning curve
  - <https://www.literatureandlatte.com/>
  - One-time fee of \$59.99 for the license, available for Mac or Windows operating systems
- Dabble: another writing software. More focused on drafting, really good for organizing and not as big of a learning curve. Can access on multiple devices
  - <https://www.dabblewriter.com/>
  - Tiered monthly payment plans ranging from \$14-29/month
- Google docs: **free** and can access anywhere. There have been recent concerns with privacy and data protection re: Google docs and AI, so do your research and take this with a grain of salt

### ➤ Distribution

- Amazon KDP: can set up ebooks (with the option to enroll in their KDP Select program - this is KU), paperbacks, and hardcovers (but **only** printed case laminate - this means no dust jacket)
  - <https://kdp.amazon.com>
  - Free to set up account
- Ingram Spark: can set up ebooks, paperbacks, and hardcovers (**with** dust jackets)
  - <https://www.ingramspark.com/>
  - Free to set up account
- B&N Press: I've never used this, but it's becoming a more viable option. Can set up ebooks, paperbacks, and hardcovers (**with** dust jackets)

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- <https://press.barnesandnoble.com/>
  - Free to set up account
  - What I do: Amazon for paperback and ebook, Ingram Spark for paperback and hardcover distribution to all other retailers (B&N, Waterstones, Blackwells, Books-A-Million, libraries, etc)
  - ISBNs
    - To distribute your **physical** book on multiple platforms, you need a universal ISBN for each edition of your book (paperback, hardcover, audio, etc). This is the unique identifier for that specific edition and is how your book is searchable
    - Most **ebook** platforms (KDP, Barnes & Noble, Kobo, Apple) do not require an ISBN to sell, as they can provide their own
    - Bowker: You can also assign your titles an ISBN through your Bowker account and fill in all relevant metadata
      - <https://www.myidentifiers.com/>
      - 10 ISBNs for \$295, or 100 for \$575 (the more you buy, the more you save)
  - LLC formation
    - This is a personal choice and completely up to you. I decided to form an LLC, but honestly, sometimes I wish I hadn't - it's more expensive and all the tax forms can sometimes be a headache. But I did it to keep a separation between the publishing business and my personal assets. It's definitely **not** required - do your research to decide what's best for you
    - ZenBusiness: I used them to form my LLC and be my registered agent in TX. Different states have different requirements and fees, so this is just my experience
      - <https://www.zenbusiness.com/>
      - One time fee of \$300 for state filing
      - \$199 for registered agent service

- \$149 for an EIN and business document bundle

### ➤ Copyright

- PLEASE register your copyrights. Yes, your books are *technically* copyrighted as soon as you write them, but the U.S copyright system makes it practically unenforceable without the formal copyright being registered

- <https://eservice.eco.loc.gov/siebel/app/eservice/enu?SWECmd=Start>

- \$65 per title (only need to fill out 1 for each title, not 1 for each different edition. Ex: I filled out 1 **total** for Long Live, not 1 for paperback, 1 for hardcover, 1 for ebook, etc)

### ➤ Interior and ebook formatting

- Atticus: I used this to format my duology and it got the job done. There aren't a ton of customization options and the website would crash on me a lot, but I could access it from any device which was a perk. All-in-all a solid option for a first time author

- <https://www.atticus.io/>

- One-time fee of \$147

- Vellum: I switched to this for my new series because it has more customization options, is easier to organize, and is more user-friendly.

Currently only available for Macs

- <https://vellum.pub/>

- One-time fee of \$199.99 to format ebooks only, or \$249.99 for ebook + print

- You can always hire a formatter, as well

### ➤ ARC distribution

- Bookfunnel: can easily send ARCs in bulk to a list of emails, as well as schedule follow-up emails and track downloads. You can pause the subscription so that you're only paying for it in the months you're sending

ARCs, but I pay for it year-round because I have freebies and other bonus content that people can download at any time, so I have to keep it running

- <https://bookfunnel.com/>
- \$10/month for the mid-list plan (allowed 5,000 downloads per month and can have unlimited books on your account)
- What I use it for: ARC distribution, links to download bonus content in the backs of my ebooks, links to download my free novella that's used as a newsletter magnet, sneak peeks of prologues for upcoming releases, things like that

## *Marketing*

### ➤ Business email

- To have a newsletter, many platforms now require a **custom business email address** linked to your domain (i.e. not a free one like @gmail.com. Ex: mine is [vblacey@vblaceybooks.com](mailto:vblacey@vblaceybooks.com))
- Wix: I use Wix as my website domain and, through that, got my custom business email
  - <https://www.wix.com/domains/business-email>
  - \$7/month for the Starter plan

### ➤ Website host & domain

- A website domain is the web address of your site (i.e. [vblaceybooks.com](http://vblaceybooks.com)). You have to claim & purchase this when setting up a website. The host is who is providing the server space for your actual site. While you can use different services for each one, most find it more convenient to get it all done in one

- Wix: I don't love Wix; it isn't as user friendly as I'd like in terms of customization. But it gets the job done. Also, if you sign up to use Wix as your website host, they typically give you the domain for a year for free
  - <https://www.wix.com/plans>
  - Domain: \$29.25/year
  - Host: \$204/year - I have the Premium Unlimited plan, and when I signed up, I got 50% off. They often have discounts going on
- Squarespace: I've never used it, but several other authors highly recommend
  - <https://www.squarespace.com/pricing>
  - \$16/month for a Basic plan, \$23/month for their Core recommended plan

➤ Newsletter

- MailerLite: I like this one for the most part. It allows me to integrate things like newsletter forms onto my website and run various automations based on reader interaction. A big downside is the more your list grows, the more expensive the plans get. Eventually, I'll have to switch to something else
  - <https://www.mailerlite.com/pricing>
  - They do have a **free** option for up to 1,000 subscribers
  - As it grows, the price per month increases. Ex: from 1,000-2,500 subscribers, you're paying \$25/month. 2,500-5,000 = \$35.10/month, and so on
- Flodesk: this is one I might switch to. Their base price for unlimited subscribers is hard to beat
  - <https://flodesk.com/pricing>
  - They also have a **free** option for up to 2,500 subscribers
  - \$35/month after that, unlimited subscribers
- Squarespace and Wix also have newsletter hosts, but I'm not as familiar with them

➤ Designing/content creation

- Canva: I basically use this for 95% of my marketing. Content creation, creating my own book covers, adding things for interior formatting, QR codes, everything
  - <https://www.canva.com>
  - There's a **free** plan
  - \$15/month (or \$120/year) for Canva Pro - access to more designs and tools
- CapCut: video editor that I use a lot for TikToks, Reels, and YouTube shorts. They also have lots of great templates you can plug your content into for easy marketing
  - <https://www.capcut.com/>
  - There's a **free** plan
  - \$9.99/month for CapCut Pro - everything I need is in the free version, but this gives access to a lot more tools and presets

➤ Printing

- Smartpress: highly recommend. They have great quality prints and fairly competitive pricing. I use them mostly for printing art prints, but they have a ton of products
  - <https://smartpress.com/>
  - Use my link to get 15% off your first order: <http://rwr.io/tw6zkk1?c>
- Vistaprint: I use them when I'm doing bulk orders and/or bookmarks because they have good pricing for that, and they tend to run discounts for bigger orders
  - <https://www.vistaprint.com/>
- The Sticky Brand: keep an eye on them for huge sticker discounts. I tend to order in bulk whenever they're running a promo (like 100 stickers for \$29)
  - <https://thestickybrand.com/>
- Mixam: I haven't used them yet, but I hear they're unbeatable in terms of pricing (and I *think* they're one of the only ones who prints NSFW)



- <https://mixam.com/>

➤ Book tours

- Companies that have bookish accounts sign up to help with big marketing pushes for authors, such as cover reveals, review blasts, and release day hype. Gets a lot of new eyes on your book all in one big push
- RR Book Tours: I've worked with them and they do a great job!
  - <https://rrbooktours.com/services-rates/>
- MTMC Book Tours: I've never worked with them, but they always have beautiful posts
  - <https://mtmctours.com/services/>
- Hidden Hollow Book Tours: I know one of the owners and it's a great group!
  - <https://www.hiddenhollowbooktours.com/book-tour-services.html>

➤ Character art

- Bookish Artists Compendium: some beautiful souls have put together this website that lists 80+ artists, their commission status, and links. **HAVE FUN** (I apologize to your wallet)
  - <https://www.bookishartists.com/>
- I find all of my character artists on Instagram by just keeping an eye out for styles I like and taking recommendations from fellow authors. **Be very cognizant** of the use of AI, as it's been a common problem lately. If you ever have concerns about whether an artist is using AI, do your due diligence to check for signs or ask a trusted friend

# Events & Signings

Buckle up, I'm about to drop a lot of links and lists

## ➤ Taking payment

- Square: you also get a free Square reader when you create an account. Highly recommend. This has made all my book conventions run so smoothly
  - <https://squareup.com/us/en>
  - Free (+ processing fees, which is 2.6% + 15¢ per transaction for in-person sales)
- Can also use Venmo or PayPal and just have QR codes for customers to scan and make payments

## ➤ Supplies

- Tablecloth (90"x132"): <https://amzn.to/43WBVlb>, \$14.89
- Table runner
  - For a smaller table (3-4 ft) I started with a 13"x72" table runner, <https://amzn.to/41YihD5>, \$7.99
  - I upgraded to one I recommend: 36"x72", <https://amzn.to/4kY22hI>, \$28.99
  - 24"x90", <https://www.signs.com/table-runners/>, \$51.54
  - 24"x72", <https://www.boothpop.com/table-covers/adorn-custom-size-full-color-table-runner/>, \$50
- Retractable banner
  - I recommend size 33"x81" (or something close). This is the one I got: <https://amzn.to/4kAlwJf>, \$67.99
  - <https://www.signs.com/retractable-banners/>, \$123.83
  - <https://smartpress.com/offering/retractable-banners>, \$137.22
- Acrylic sign holder: great for my price list and other things I want to prop up
  - 5.5"x8.5", <https://amzn.to/4c5ytXx>, \$14.95
  - Or have fun with cute frames and other ways to display!
- Book stands

- 6-pack acrylic easels, <https://amzn.to/3DQJKyi>, \$7.90
- 5 pack metal stands, <https://amzn.to/4bFyiSE>, \$8.79
- Other miscellaneous stuff to bring
  - Tape
  - Scissors
  - Sticky notes
  - Pens/pencils/Sharpies
  - Clipboards (I use this for preorders and to hold giveaway sign-up sheets)
  - Newsletter sign-up form OR giveaway form to get people to sign up for your newsletter in exchange for being entered to win a prize
  - Power bank/cordless charger
  - Water bottle
  - Décor
  - Swag – stickers, bookmarks, and art prints always do well (see [printed materials](#) section for where to get them printed)
    - Put your QR code on the back of EVERYTHING

## *Miscellaneous*

- Shipping
  - Pirate Ship: highly recommend. Super competitive pricing and lets you create shipping labels from any shipper, track, and manage packages
    - <https://www.pirateship.com/>
    - **Free** to set up an account

➤ Universal links

- Books2read: you can input the link to your book and it automatically creates a universal link so that no matter what country you're clicking from, it will take them to their location's link (like with Amazon)
  - <https://books2read.com/>
  - **Free**
- Linktree: not a universal link but it fits here. Highly recommend putting some sort of main link in your bio that directs people to all of your relevant links
  - <https://linktr.ee/>
  - **Free**

## *Thanks for reading!*

I hope this has helped. If you want to connect more, you can find me on Instagram and Tiktok as @vblacey.books, or visit my website, [www.vblaceybooks.com](http://www.vblaceybooks.com)!



Interested in my books? I write no-spice epic and dark fantasy romance, and currently have 3 books published – the completed *Elementals of Iona* duology, and a romantasy standalone inspired by *Wicked* and the *Hunger Games* called *In the Wake of the Wicked*. You can find them on any major online retailer!

[Elementals of Iona](#)

[In the Wake of the Wicked](#)