

Photo Forum Camera Clinic

Photo Books – Jan. 11, 2011

Tom Donahoe led a discussion on the production of internet photo books in which 24 members participated. Photo books serve many purposes – preserving family history, commemorating special occasions, assembling family or travel albums, and composing a photo portfolio (some professionals and semi-professionals offer their photo books for sale). Participants had experience with several programs including Blurb, My Publisher, iPhoto, AdoramaPix, Kodak, CostCo, Snapfish, and Shutterfly.

Blurb seemed to be the program used by most participants, but several members mentioned that they were disappointed by the quality of the reproductions. AdoramaPix produces high quality reproductions and a book binding method in which the pages lay flat, but it is assembled through an internet connection, not with downloaded software. That makes a book more difficult to assemble over a period of time. Both Blurb and My Publisher provide free software with which the book is composed and then uploaded for printing. Your books are also stored in the program.

The various services are continuously improving their programs, increasing flexibility, improving paper, and offering more choices and designs. [Here is a link](#) to a review of 14 of the top photo book services is a good place to start in choosing one. But such reviews can be quickly out of date. Nevertheless, the reviews may help you decide which to try based on the subject and style of the book you'd like to produce. Some services may be better for vintage, family books, others for more design elements, or still others for more straight-forward photo presentation.

The services provide various book sizes and formats, soft and hard covers, and cover treatments. There's a lot to choose from. The largest format is My Publisher's Deluxe hardcover which is 15 x11.5 inches. The paper in that book is a very heavy 182 lb. high-gloss archival stock. It reproduces both color and black and white extremely well. Blurb's largest format is 13x11 inches with a choice of papers.

Tips

Never pay full price. Once you have downloaded the software for Blurb or My Publisher, those services will frequently offer steep discounts. The

discounts are good only for a few days, so you need to assemble a book and then wait patiently for a discount offer before uploading it. My Publisher's periodic discounts are 30, 40, and even 50 percent. You should be able to make an 80-page book for less than \$100.

Check the instructions for recommended dpi and resolution. Not getting these factors right could result in, for example, noisy photos, especially those that are full page.

The most time-consuming and tedious aspect of making a book is the selection, image management and enhancement, and sizing of photos. Once the photos are loaded into the software, the process is relatively quick, easy, and fun. Just be sure to load the photos into the software in the approximate order in which you think you'll use them. You want the next photos in front of you as you think about the layout. (For example, number your photos 001.jpg, 005.jpg etc., leaving some number room between photos for later insertions.)

For books that are primarily photos, consider a black background (with white type). The photos really pop. With Blurb you can also put a thin border around the photo, which, using white, works well against a black background. If your service doesn't provide that feature, you could also apply the border in Photoshop before loading the photos into the software.

Maximize the size of your better photos. You don't need to use every page template available. Too much variety can lead to a cluttered look. Avoid bleeding photos into the gutter. You may lose some key elements of the photo. You may also want to create more space between photos on a page than the templates provide. Some textures may conflict, or even blend, too much.

The most difficult task in My Publisher is achieving an error-free text. The pages need to be maximized in size in order to be able to read what you are typing or to proofread. Also, you need to take care that your type face and size are consistent throughout. The software will sometimes change things up on you. It's imperative to have someone else proofread and critique the book. Final advice – **proofread, proofread, proofread.**

When you are ready and have your discount, upload your work and two weeks later you'll have a beautiful book to share with family and friends.

They will enjoy the book so much more than the endless slide programs you used to inflict on them.