

CBI Clubhouse Edition

# Book Apps for Beginners



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# **Book Apps for Beginners CBI Fightin' Bookworm Edition**

Karen Robertson

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## Welcome

Welcome to this special edition of “Book Apps for Beginners,” created especially for CBI Clubhouse members. This book is designed to introduce you to the book app format as a publishing option for your work.

I’ll take you through the what, why and how of creating book apps and I’ve included the personal stories of 11 CBI Fightin’ Bookworms who have published their books as apps (including my personal story).

### **Please note:**

- If you’re a Fightin’ Bookworm and you publish your book as a book app, please send me your story and I’ll consider it for the next update of this book. You can reach me through the Contact form on my website, [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/contact](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/contact).
- This book includes excerpts from my book, “What is a Book App and Could YOU Create One? How 27 Writers Did!” “What is a Book App” is more in depth and includes over 35 additional author stories.
- Finally, please let me know if you see any typos in this book. Despite multiple proofreaders being involved with this book, things can slip through. Thanks!

## Introduction

Did you write your children’s book to have it sit in a drawer? Probably not! Most of us want kids to read our stories. That’s why we want them published.

Imagine if you could publish your book in a way that gave you guaranteed distribution and instant access to a global market. That’s the opportunity that digital publishing delivers, and it’s a possibility for any writer to do, in a quality way, even if they’re not technically inclined.

It used to be that children’s writers were dependent upon publishers to make their publishing dreams come true. While publishing via a traditional publisher is still possible, the number of new writers being signed is diminishing every year, and even midlist authors are finding that their new work isn’t selling, because publishers aren’t buying.

You don’t have to wait for someone else to make your publishing dreams come true.

## About this Book

In this book, I introduce you to a proven, step-by-step process for publishing your book as a book app. I also share with you the stories of 11 CBI Fightin' Bookworms who've published their books as book apps, so you can see how varied these types of projects are.

By the end of this book, you'll not only be able to decide **if** you'll create a book app, you'll also know **how** you can do it, and where you can find more training if you decide this route is right for you.

### **This Book is for You If...**

You are wondering whether the book app format is right for your work. It's written by a writer for other writers, and it's a jargon-free zone!

### **This Book is NOT for you if...**

You're a techie looking for the types of software you can use to code apps yourself. While I'll touch on some DIY tools that you can use to develop an app yourself, these tools use drag-and-drop technology, which don't require programming.

Some of the author stories mention software, but the ins and outs of specific programming software is not the focus of this book.

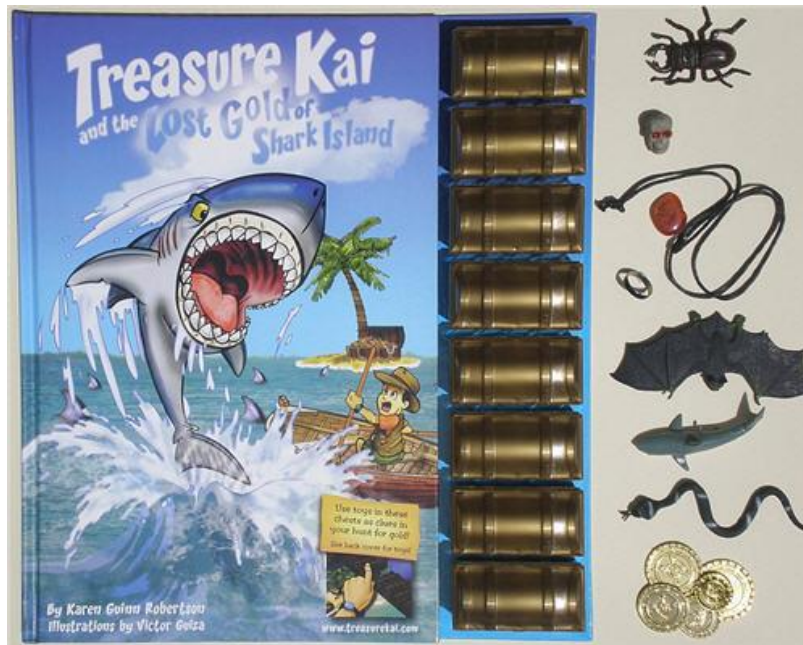
## **Why I Wrote This Book**

I'm not a gadget girl so no one is more surprised than I am that I've not only created award-winning, story book apps, but I've also taught others how to transform their books into apps. This certainly wasn't my plan!

I'm an accidental author who'd been enjoying a successful, 19-year marketing career when one night, I had a dream that changed my life.

I'd been struggling to get my kids (6 and 9 years old) to read for fun. One night, I literally had a dream about a new kind of book, where every time you read a page, you had to physically do something to move the story forward. That dream inspired me to find a way to integrate toys into a book in an interactive and reusable way.

I created a treasure hunt adventure book that used toys, hidden in treasure chests, as clues to finding a gold treasure. I wrote "Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island," a twist on the choose-your-adventure format that was designed to motivate kids to finish the book they started, because they read until they found treasure.



Because I wanted speed to market and I knew the unusual format was a problem for publishers, I decided to self-publish my book. I printed 5,000 copies, keeping 4500 in Australia (where I lived at the time), and sending 500 to a warehouse in the U.S. (where I'm originally from).

I sold my books primarily via author visits at elementary schools in Sydney.

In May 2010, I was about to re-print and publish the sequel to “Treasure Kai” when two things happened.

First, my illustrator, Victor Guiza, told me that he was illustrating a book app for a friend of his. I asked him, “What’s a book app?” And he told me about these new storybooks that kids could read on iPad, iPhone and iPod touch.

The second thing that happened was my dyslexic son picked up an iPad for the first time and chose to “play” with storybook apps over game apps.

My friend, Jeff Wannberg, and I had been exploring the idea of turning my first book, “Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island,” into a game. We decided to create a book app instead.

At the time we started, there was no information about how to transform books into book apps. We made it up as we went. We downloaded other book apps (like Ayar Animation’s, “Jack and the Beanstalk”) and mapped out how we wanted “Treasure Kai” to work.

We hired a developer to program the app for us and in February 2011, we launched “Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island,” to rave reviews and market success. We were so excited.

But just a few weeks later, the iPad 2 came out and we found that occasionally, a bug would occur in our app. So I ceased all marketing and promotion of the app.

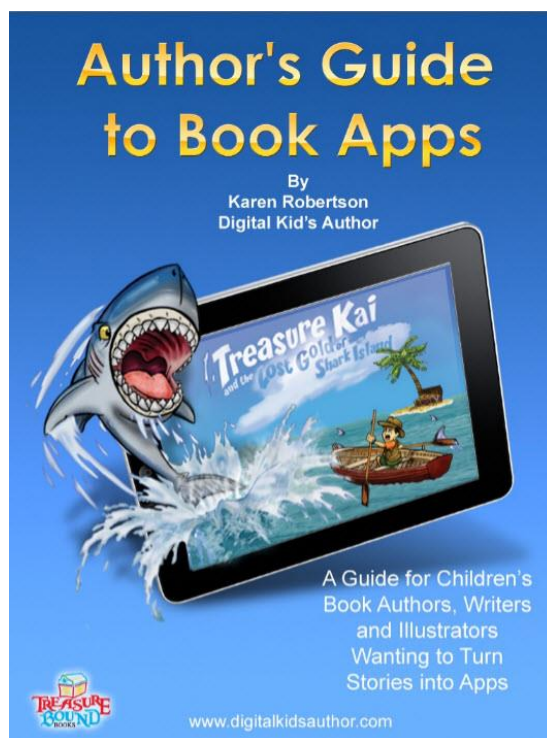
It was at this point that we realized we'd made a big mistake. We hadn't contracted our developer to manage app updates (fixes) for us.

Our developer tried to fix the bug, but he'd moved on to another job so when he found it wasn't a quick fix, he couldn't commit to fixing it. We pulled the job from him and wound up being out of market for 10 weeks!

At the same time, other authors started asking me to share how I turned my book into a book app. I was one of the first authors in Australia to create a book app and other writers wanted to know how we'd done it.

I found I had a lot to share and my main message was, "Be sure to plan for updates!"

That 10-week period that we were out of market was one of the most stressful in my professional life. So like many writers, I started writing to save my sanity. I wrote an eBook called "Author's Guide to Book Apps," where I detailed our experiences and started sharing how other writers could turn their books into book apps.



When I first published "Author's Guide to Book Apps," I never dreamed that just a few months later I would start getting emails from people who'd used what I'd written to publish their own books as book apps.

I heard from:

- Published authors who wanted to give new life to works that were out of print.



- Authors who wanted to extend their work beyond one country to a global audience.
- Self-published authors who wanted to break free from the boxes of books in their garage.
- Writers who'd been sitting on their stories because they didn't know what to do next.
- Writers who'd just missed out on publishing deals, who wanted to take their futures into their own hands.
- Author-illustrators who wanted to start bringing their own personal projects to life.
- Picture book authors who wanted the freedom to create beyond 32 pages.
- Entrepreneurs who imagined using book apps in a whole new way.
- Writers and creators who wanted to demonstrate "proof of concept" for their work, in hopes of attracting traditional publishing, TV or movie deals.

You get the idea.

Their stories were so varied, yet each was equally inspiring because each person I heard from had discovered a way to bring new possibility to their work.

Those first few emails I got inspired me to get serious about helping other writers make their publishing dreams come true.

### **The experience that has gone in to this book**

Things have changed so much since we started working on our first app in June 2010. Now, writers have a lot of choices about how to get their apps developed. And there is information about how to do it too.

The experience I've drawn on for this book includes:

-Writing two award-winning book apps, "Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island," and "Treasure Kai and the Seven Cities of Gold." Each of these book apps was published in very different ways.

- Transforming a published book, "Zak the Yak with Books on His Back," into a book app to be used as a fundraiser for nonprofit, Room to Read.

-Interviewing dozens of authors who've transformed their work into apps.

-Interviewing dozens of developers and suppliers.

Through all of that, I've paid attention to processes, discovering what works and where the pitfalls are. I've cataloged suppliers and resources, and I've worked out how writers can save themselves frustration, time and money by understanding what's involved and helping them to connect with others.

I've used this experience to publish five books on creating and marketing book apps. And I've delivered scores of articles, speeches, workshops and coaching sessions. I've even created an online video course called "Book App Academy" and created a course for Digital Book World's DBW University.

I urge you to learn from those who have been before you. Save yourself time, money and frustration by taking the time to read our stories.

And remember, if we did it, you can too.

## **What' a Book App and is it an Option for You?**

### **How can you know if Creating a Book App is Right for Your Work?**

The best way to know if creating a book app is right for your work is to make sure you understand:

- What a book app is (and what it's not)
- Why you might want to publish your book in this format
- What's involved with doing so

First we'll look at what a book app is and what's the opportunity. Then we'll look at the step-by-step system to create one. Finally I'll share a few stories with you from those who've done it.

### **What's a Book App and how is it Different from an eBook?**

Explaining what a book app is isn't as easy as simply stating a definition, because the market understanding of what a book app is keeps evolving.

A book app is a digital book that runs on digital devices like smart phones and tablets (iPhone, iPad, Samsung Galaxy, Kindle Fire, etc.).

An eBook is a digital book that's created in the ePub format (or via iBooks Author for Apple iBookstore) and is read on an eReader (like Kindle or Nook). An eBook can also be read using an eReader app (you can use the Kindle app to download and read eBooks).

I tend think of book apps as "eBooks on steroids" because book apps can do things that eBooks can't, and they tend to be more interactive.

That being said, "enhanced eBooks" can look a lot like an app. There are eBooks now that have narration, sound effects and simple animations.

It's confusing, I know!

The important part is how your developer programs your app and what devices your book app will work on.

I believe a great book app integrates the functionality of a device into the narrative so that the reader starts to feel a part of the story.

I've created a short (2-minute) video showing you what a book app is. You can this at [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook).

## **Are You Eligible to Create a Book App?**

Anyone who owns their digital rights can publish their book in a digital format (eBook or book app).

So if you are unpublished or self-published, you can create a book app.

If your book was published by a traditional publisher, but is out of print, you'll need to find out if you own your digital rights. If you don't, get your rights back.

If your book was published by a traditional publisher, is still in print, and you want to publish that book as a book app, you'll need to find out if you own your digital rights. If you do, you can. If you don't, you will have to depend on your publisher to publish the book in a digital format.

If you are a published author under contract with a publisher, and you want to write new work to publish directly as a book app, you will need to make sure your contract allows you to do so. If you have a multi-book deal, the publisher could preclude you from writing new work outside of the contract. Or they might have first right of refusal on new work.

## **8 Reasons to Publish Your Book as a Book App**

1. The market potential is huge. The digital device and digital book markets are exploding in growth, while the printed book market is diminishing and book stores are closing.
2. Digital reading is growing as well. According to a study from PlayCollective and Digital Book World, 67% of U.S. children aged two to thirteen are now reading eBooks. That's up from 54% the previous year. (<http://www.digitalbookworld.com/2014/two-thirds-of-kids-now-reading-ebooks>). The latest Scholastic report on eBooks and kids' reading from 2012 revealed that the percentage of kids who'd read eBooks had nearly doubled (to just under 50%) in the past two years. Access the full Scholastic report at [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook).
3. You have guaranteed distribution. As anyone who has a printed book knows, getting distribution can be a real challenge. So can keeping it! With an app, once your app is approved, you are guaranteed distribution in the App Store if your app meets their technical specifications. And if your sales are slow for a few months, you aren't hit with returns. Your app stays live in the App Store. (The App Store is the digital marketplace where book apps are sold and downloaded from. For Apple, this is the iTunes App Store). "Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island" has been available on the App Store for nearly three years.
4. If you publish your book in digital form, you can instantly reach a global market, with all of the back end fulfilment handled for you. "Treasure Kai" apps have sold in nearly 100 countries and have sold daily for over 2-1/2 years.
5. There's no inventory to manage or ship. Anyone who has ever had boxes of books in the garage knows how important this is!
6. You can maintain your rights.

7. You have complete creative freedom. If you don't want to be limited to 32 pages for your picture book, you don't have to be.

8. You can earn a higher percentage return on sales. If you are traditionally published, you might earn a 10% royalty (or 5% if you share with an illustrator). Compare that with up to 70% on a book app. Of course, the price point is lower, but you have access to a much bigger audience. Also, you receive payment approximately six weeks after your apps sell, versus the 6-monthly royalty checks that come with traditional publishing.

### **Why Wouldn't You Create a Book App?**

1. Some writers are intimidated because it's a technical project. They believe it's in the too-hard basket, so don't want to explore this option. If that's you, that's OK. Remember though, that writers like you are exactly why I started writing and teaching about how to publish your book as an app. I want to show what IS possible, even for those who are technophobic.

2. Just like with printed books, marketing is essential to success so if you don't intend on marketing your work, don't expect sales. Apps AREN'T a license to print money.

3. If your work is long text, has no visuals or additional content, then it should be an eBook, not a book app.

## **How do You Create a Book App?**

After creating three book apps myself and coaching numerous others on their projects, I've identified a step-by-step system you can follow to transform your book into a book app.

Each major step in the system has steps within it.

The purpose of this part of this book is to outline the system for you, so that you can see it's just a step-by-step process. If you follow the steps, you will end up with a book app!

I call it the **D-R-E-A-M System for Creating a Book App**. Here's what the system looks like:

D – Determine your objectives and get educated

R – Review your book and create your brief

E – Evaluate developers

A – Assemble your assets (the “ingredients of your book app; illustration, narration, sound effects, etc.)

M – Manage your project to completion

Let's look at each step in the D-R-E-A-M System for Creating a Book App in more detail.

I've deliberately kept most of this information at a high level so as not to overwhelm you with detail. At the end of each section, I direct you to videos and resources where you can learn more.

## **D=Determine Your Objectives and Get Educated**

This is your most important first step because your objectives will determine whether or not you create a book app, what type of book app you create and the type of people and suppliers you work with.

So what kind of objectives might you have?

Let's look at some of the objectives other writers have and how these objectives impact what they create and how they create it.

Sample objectives:

*"I just want to publish my work so my family and friends can enjoy it."*

If your primary objective is to create your book in a format where others can see it, then you might not do a book app at all. You might want to create a simple eBook or even publish it as a PDF.

Or if you want your story to be interactive, but you're not looking to market it or reach a big audience, then you might want to minimize costs by using do-it-yourself (DIY) service.

*"I want to extend the life of my work."*

One of the really exciting things about digital publishing is that books that have gone out of print can now be re-born as digital books for a worldwide audience.

If this is your objective, then transforming your work as an app could be a great option for you.

*"I want to reach a global audience."*

Digital publishing is definitely an option for you if you want to reach a global audience.

"Treasure Kai" apps have been downloaded in nearly 100 different countries and it's so exciting to know that kids from Australia to America and from Kuwait to Kazakhstan have searched for gold with Treasure Kai!

*"I want to create an interactive reader experience."*

If you want to create a story that brings the reader INTO the narrative, or non-fiction content leveraging the functionality of devices like the iPad, then a book app is definitely the right format for you.

*"I want to provide content 'beyond the book.'"*

Another strength of the book app format is that you can integrate all kinds of content that goes beyond the text into to app. Things like video, other documents, audio interviews, puzzles, games and so much more.

*“I want to demonstrate ‘proof of concept’ to secure a publishing or TV deal.”*

I know writers who want to use their book apps to prove “proof of concept” to secure a traditional publishing deal. And I know writers who want to create book apps to demonstrate “proof of concept” for a film deal.

If your goal is to attract a publishing contract, your story will need to be exceptional quality and will most likely need to sell well so you can demonstrate that you have an audience.

If your goal is to attract interest from film makers, your production values will need to be very high.

*“I want to make money”*

If your primary goal is to make money, then creating a book app is probably not the best idea. A lot of people think that an app is a license to print money. It’s not! The market is crowded. Marketing an app is challenging and it takes commitment from the author and time to build awareness.

That being said, the same thing is true for marketing a printed children’s book. In today’s world, marketing is the responsibility of the author. Very few publishers put time or money behind marketing new books. And marketing children’s books has become more challenging as the number of book stores are closing, distributors are closing and reader habits are changing.

Once you’ve Determined your objective, it’s time for the R in the D-R-E-A-M System.

## **R=Review Your Book and Create Your Brief**

Your next step in the D-R-E-A-M System is to Review your book and then lay out what you want it to look like as a book app. The document you create will be your project brief.

“Brief” is the term used to describe the plan for your app. You might also hear it referred to as a story board by some people. I believe a story board is just part of the bigger brief. A story board is the term used for mapping out your app, page by page. Your brief will include more than the page-by-page layout.

It’s a document that will specify exactly how you want your book to work as a book app, both overall AND page by page.

You will use this document to brief developers on your project (that's where the term "brief" comes from!), so they understand what your project involves. They need this understanding to give you an accurate cost estimate.

Your brief will also be the blueprint to which you work while your project is in production.

More than likely, things will change as your project evolves, and that's OK.

If you're sitting there thinking, "I have no idea how to do that," don't worry! It's a step by step process and I'm going to outline it for you in this book, show you examples and give you links to videos and book apps that you can look at.

I'll provide the link for each book app example I mention, the first time I mention it.

All of these links can be found in one place at [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook).

Before you can start working on your brief though, you need to Review your book or manuscript and think about how it could work as a book app.

Study your story and determine what's unique about it and think about how you can bring it alive using the functionality of devices like the iPad.

Let's look at an example:

I originally wrote "Treasure Kai and the Seven Cities of Gold" to be a printed book. It's the second book in the "Treasure Kai" series and it was written and illustrated before I even knew what a book app was.

The way that the story originally worked was that the opening scene for the second book in the series was the last scene from the first book, "Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island."

Kai wakes up from his Shark Island dream to find a real map and clue in his pajama pocket. Using these items, he goes back in time to save the Seven Lost Cities of Gold from Francisco Coronado. From a story structure perspective, the reader would read the opening of the story, randomly visit the Seven Cities of Gold, achieve the goal, and the book would end.

The book app format opened up a number of ways to make this story an interactive reading experience for kids.

Here are some of the things I did:

-As with the original printed book plan, the opening scene is the same as the last scene from the first book. Kai wakes up from his Shark Island dream to find a real map and clue in his pajama pocket.

-As the story progresses, we see Kai and his best friend Kate comparing the "Shark Island Dream" they both had the night before. (Kate wasn't in the original story I wrote). As they compare their

dreams, scenes from “Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island” cycle through a thought bubble that the two characters share. We couldn’t have done that in a printed book!



-Kai then goes back in time to save the Seven Cities of Gold from Coronado. He visits the Seven Cities in random order, just as was originally planned in the printed book. But we introduced a game component by requiring readers to move each golden key into place on the map in order to progress the story. (This is what Kai must do to progress from city to city). This interactivity brings the reader into the adventure with Kai.





-I wrote a new ending for the book app because the story presented a natural idea for gamifying the story and involving the reader even further.

In the original printed version, Kai finds the Seven Cities of Gold and that was the end of the story. What I realized though was that because Kai was randomly visiting the Seven Cities of Gold, and because there were thousands of combinations for the order he could visit those cities, we could do something neat with the fact that the order would almost always be different.

I thought, "What if Kai and the reader had to remember the order they visited the Seven Cities of Gold? How could I incorporate that into the narrative?"

Here's how I rewrote it: After visiting the Seven Cities of Gold, Kai faces a choice between staying in 1540 and being King of the Seven Cities of Gold or going home and keeping the Cities hidden forever. But the only way he can get home is if he remembers the order he visited the Seven Cities of Gold. At this point, the reader is presented with a memory game to complete in order to get Kai home.

Motivating kids to remember the order they visited the Seven Cities encourages reading comprehension. An added bonus!

Watch the app demo video (access via [www.treasurekai.com](http://www.treasurekai.com)) to see the keys/map and memory game in action.

So, I could have transformed my original Seven Cities story into a book app as it was originally written, choosing things to animate and adding sound effects. And it would have been good.

But the gift of the book app format is how we can bring the reader into the story with relevant interactivity. That's what makes a book app great.

So I encourage you to REVIEW YOUR STORY and ignite your imagination first. Think about how you can make it something special for a digital format that isn't possible in printed form.

Once you've reviewed your story in this context, it's time to create your brief.

### **Five Steps to Creating Your Brief:**

You'll find a downloadable a template for creating your brief at [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook).

Brief - Step 1: Structure (how reader will experience the story)

Brief - Step 2: Design (the creative stuff)

Brief - Step 3: Bringing the reader into the story

Brief - Step 4: Navigation and controls (how the app works)

Brief - Step 5: Page-by-page details (sometimes called a story board)

Let's look at the decisions you need to make for each of these.

#### Brief - Step 1: Structure

If you want your book app to be read like a regular book, from front to back, then you simply state that in your brief.

But if your book app is going to involve nonlinear storytelling or decision points, then you need to map out how the story works so the developer knows he will need to develop for that.

Here's an example:

As I mentioned, "Treasure Kai and the Seven Cities of Gold" works in an unusual way.

For the first 17 pages, the book app is read like a traditional book, by turning the page.

But then a treasure map is presented with gold keys situated on the map. There are seven treasure chests at the bottom of the page.

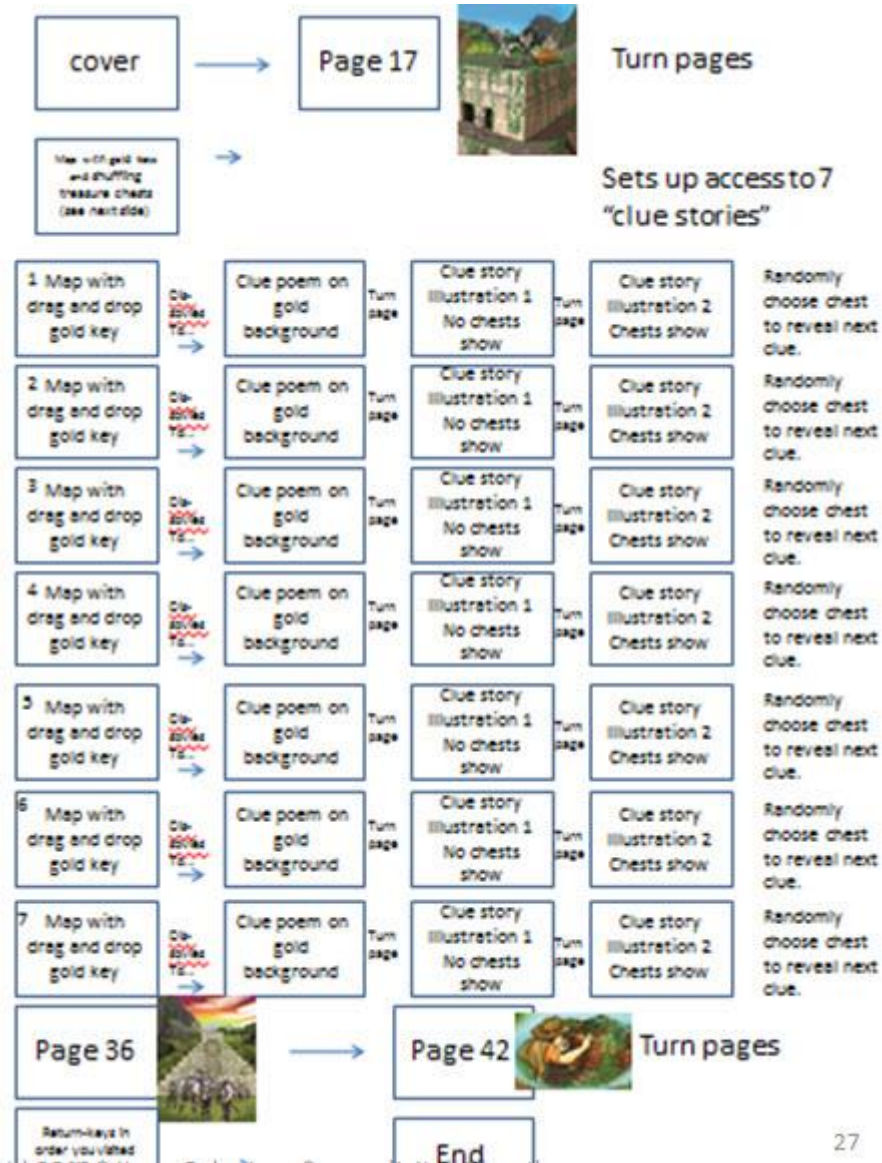
The gold keys fly off the map and into the chests, the chests close and scramble.

From this point onward the reader progresses the story by selecting a treasure chest, revealing a gold key, placing the key on the map and reading the correlating adventure story, until all seven Cities of Gold are visited.

Once all seven Cities of Gold are visited, the story continues to be read by turning pages until a memory game is presented.

To explain this, I created a schematic for developers so they would understand the complexity of the app structure.

Here is the schematic.



It was absolutely critical that we include this schematic when talking with developers about this project because it's not an ordinary book. We needed to make sure that developers could not only do the work, but also knew to include that work in the cost estimate they provided when they bid on the project.

Another example of an app that needed a structure schematic is Julie Landry Laviolette’s “Brush of Truth.” Her app has 65 decision points and 20 different endings. You can read her personal story in this book.

### Brief - Step 2: Design

The next step is to document your overall design preferences for your book app. There are a number of components you will need to make design decisions for (like how text is handled, whether you have narration, how you use sound, music and animation).

I’ve outlined each below and have provided examples, so you know what I’m talking about!

I’ve also provided a video for you at [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook) that provides a show-and-tell for each of these components. Watching this video will help you make sense of these components, even if you’re not a natural designer!

The best thing to do is to download other book apps and study them, to decide what you like and what you don’t like. You can also look at book app demo videos to see examples as well.

At the end of this section, I’ll direct you to a resource for finding great book apps and some book app demo videos that will show you some of these design components in action.

Now let’s review the key components you will need to think about for your book app. Here is a checklist you can use to document your decisions for these components.

Book App	Must /nice to have?
Text highlighting	
Text layout	
Narration	
Sound effects	
Music	
Animation	
Other (game, video, languages)	

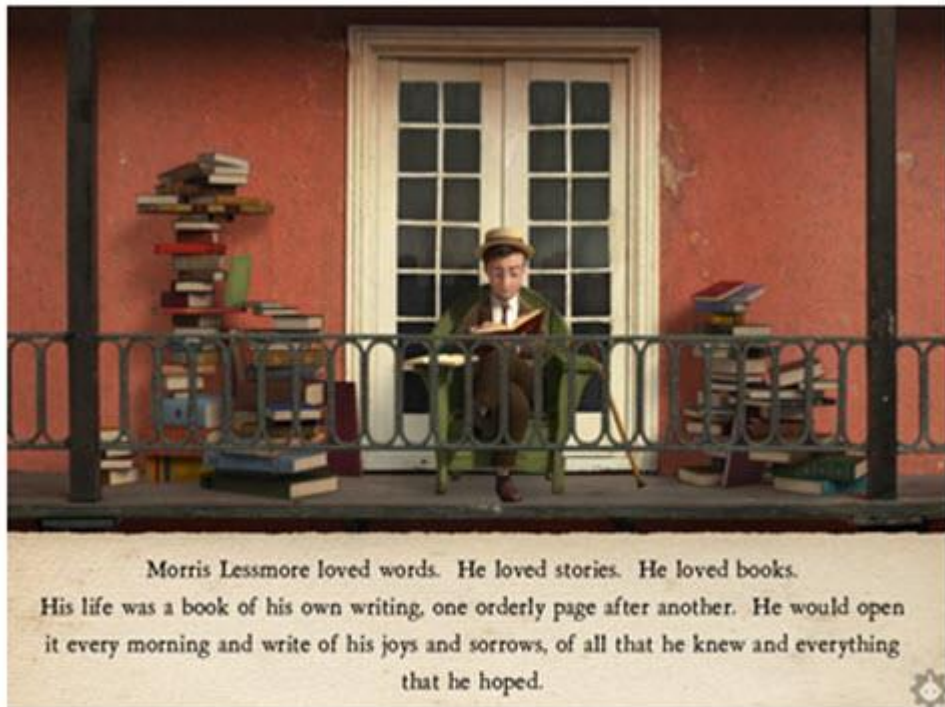
**Text layout** - How do you want text to be handled in your book app?

Just like with book design, you need to think about how text will be presented to readers.

Here are some examples.

## Book Apps for Beginners

You can have a section on every page that's designated for text. See the image from "Morris Lessmore" that shows how text sits in a separate area from the illustration.



### Morris Lessmore

You can have only a certain amount of text appear at one time, within a text box. See the image from "Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island." This book app is designed especially to appeal to reluctant readers, so a limited amount of text is revealed at any one time. The text advances as the narrator reads, or if in read-myself mode, the reader advances the text when ready to move on by touching a button on the screen.



Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island

Or you can have the text sit within the illustration. If you do this, you'll want to indicate where and how (is it in the same location on every illustration, is it centered, left justified, right justified, etc.). "A Fine Musician" is a beautiful example. This app changes the placement of text on each page. Sometimes it's centered, sometimes it's left justified. Sometimes it's right justified.



## A Fine Musician

How will you handle situations where there is too much text to sit well on one page? Not all apps handle this well. Some have text running over an important part of the illustration. Look at other apps to see how this issue is handled.

**Text highlighting** - Do you want the words to be highlighted when your narration is playing?

Your choices are to have no text highlighting, word-by-word highlighting (see the image from *Monster at the End of This Book*) or phrase-by-phrase highlighting (see the image from *Treasure Kai and the Seven Cities of Gold*).

If a book app is for a new reader or young child, word-by-word highlighting is often used. Otherwise, phrase-by-phrase highlighting or no highlighting at all are good choices.



Monster at the End of This Book – Word-by-word





Treasure Kai and the Seven Cities of Gold – Phrase-by-Phrase

**Narration** – Do you want to have narration?

If so, you need to document what type of narration you want in your brief.

If you'll have a narrator, write that in your brief. Also write if you prefer a male, female, older, younger, certain accent, etc.

If you want to have more than one narrator, state that in your brief too. Some apps provide two options; a male and female, an adult and child, a professional and the author, etc.

An example of an app where this works well is “Zak the Yak with Books on His Back,” where the author’s narration is one of the options. We decided this was important for this book app because the story was written by Room to Read founder, John Wood, to share how he was inspired to start an organization that’s helped millions of kids in developing countries get access to books and literacy. The book app shares his story and inspires kids to be philanthropic, so we wanted to let kids hear the voice of the man who’s made such a difference in this world. (By the way, all profits from the “Zak the Yak” book apps are donated to Room to Read if you want to buy this app).

Another thing you can do with narration is provide an option for the reader to record their own voice reading the book. This can involve more programming so if it’s important to you, make sure you check to see if your developer offers this as a standard option or if it’s extra.

**Music** – Are you going to use music in your app?

If so, will you use royalty free music or have original music written for your book? You can't just choose a song you like and use it in your app. You have to make sure it is royalty free or create something you have the right to use.

For a few examples, look at:

No music – “The Lorax” has no music. Instead, it uses sound to set mood in an extraordinary way.

Royalty free music – “The Prisoner of Carrot Castle” uses royalty free music as background throughout the book app and it fits the story.

Original music – Two examples from apps already mentioned are “Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island,” and “Zak the Yak with Books on His Back.” Each of these apps is an example of how much can be added to the mood of the story with original music.

For “Treasure Kai,” the cinematic score changes for each adventure story Kai has. “Zak the Yak” takes place in the Nepal so the music helps set the scene in this exotic land.

**Sound effects** – Are you going to use sound effects in your app?

Sound effects can really add to a story and they can be used in several ways. I'll point to specific examples from “Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island” because you can see these in the demo video for this app. <http://youtu.be/H1zyYrTP9Xc>.

You can have sound effects that are triggered when the reader touches something. The “treasure shop” scene has a number of these as seen in the demo video.

Or you can have “automatic” sound effects that play when the page opens. These can be constant background sounds like jungle sounds on the jungle page in the demo video.

You can also have sound effects triggered at a certain point in the narrative (as seen when the shark jumps out of the water in the demo video)

**Animation** – Will you use animations in your book app? What style of animation do you want to use?

Again, I will provide examples from the demo video for “Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island.”

You'll most likely want to use “automatic animations” that play the moment you land on the page, because these help make the page feel alive. See the “raining rock” scene in the demo video.

You can use touch-triggered animations. These are animations that are triggered only when the reader touches something. See the chattering skulls in the video.

And you can use narrative-triggered animations. So animations that happen at the right time when the narrator speaks. See the shark jumping out of the water and the skeleton popping up in the demo video.

**Other content** – Will you include other languages, games, puzzles, videos or other types of interactivity?

You need to specify this up front, so developers can confirm their ability to do the work and the costs.

For some examples have a look at:

“It’s Cool to Be Clever” to see how they integrate video interviews, audio files and documents within their nonfiction book app.

“Smarty Britches: Nouns” to see how noun games are integrated into the story.

“Penelope the Purple Pirate” to see fun facts included at the back of the app

### **Where to Find Great Book Apps and Two Demo Videos to Look At**

It’s best to download apps to really experience them. One of my favorite places to find the best book apps is the leading book app review site, Digital Storytime [www.digital-storytime.com](http://www.digital-storytime.com).

You can also look at app demo videos to see some of these components above in action.

You can see two book app demo videos at: <http://digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook/>

1.The video for “Zak the Yak with Books on His Back” shows the following components in action:

- Phrase-by-phrase text highlighting
- Text sitting within a specific text box on the page
- Narration – two options, professional and author
- Music – original music was written for this book app
- Sound effects – touch-triggered sounds demonstrated
- Animation – you’ll see “automatic” animations and touch-triggered demonstrated
- Other activity – there is a hidden Himalayan Marmot on each page to be found

[http://youtu.be/\\_7ZqZ8NOV-Y](http://youtu.be/_7ZqZ8NOV-Y)

2.The “Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island” demo video shows the following components in action:

- Phrase-by-phrase text highlighting
- Text sitting within a specific text box on the page and turn narration on/off
- Music – original music was written for this book app
- Sound effects – touch-triggered sounds demonstrated (treasure shop page) and narrative-triggered (when shark jumps out of the water)
- Animation – touch-triggered animation (skulls chattering) and “automatic” animations (shark jumping out of water and skeleton popping up)

- Other activity – nonlinear storytelling – the book is read by randomly choosing treasure chests, revealing a clue and accompanying adventure story

Brief - Step 3: Bringing the reader INTO the story

How will you use the functionality of the iPad or other interactive elements to bring the reader into the story.

For example, in “Treasure Kai and the Seven Cities of Gold,” Treasure Kai must touch a spot on a globe lamp to go back in time. The story won’t progress until the reader touches the globe lamp.



And the reader must complete a memory game (just like Treasure Kai has to within the story) in order to get Kai home.



In Chris Pederson's book app, "The Prisoner of Carrot Castle," the character of Aidan can't escape a tower until he eats his carrots. The only way to progress the story is for the reader to help Aidan eat the carrots. He then falls through a chute that is navigated by the reader by tilting the iPad back and forth (using a functionality feature called the accelerometer).



To see a video example of the interactivity mentioned in “Treasure Kai and the Seven Cities of Gold,” see the book app’s demo video. You’ll see Kai presented with the game within the story and then the same game presented to the reader.

<http://youtu.be/tCpXPCQBGMU>

#### Brief - Step 4: Navigation and Controls (how the app works)

The next thing you need to document is how you want your app to actually work. What navigation and controls will it have?

Some preferred standards are starting to emerge in the industry.

Here are some examples:

**Home button** - The ability to go back to the start of the app from any page.

**Page turning** – There are two primary ways pages are “turned” in book apps. One is to swipe the page (this is neat but can interfere with or trigger touch-triggered animations and sounds on a page) or touch-based buttons (usually arrows but sometimes other images are used).

For my “Treasure Kai” book apps, we’ve used both types of page-turning techniques.

“Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island” uses swiping (and you can see that in the video). “Treasure Kai and the Seven Cities of Gold” uses arrows.

The reason we changed the way pages turn in the second app was that we were concerned that when kids swiped the pages, they would accidentally trigger touch-based sounds and animations. We found the touch-based arrows provided a better user experience for the second book app.

**Page list** - A presentation of thumbnails for every page so the reader can skip to her favorite page.

**Volume control** - For narration and/or music.

**Read to me/Read myself Options** – There are several ways to handle this. Many book apps handle this at the start, asking the reader to choose “read to me” or “read myself.” In both “Treasure Kai” apps, we give readers the ability to turn the narration on and off at any time within the text box itself (by pushing the pause button) or in “Treasure Kai and the Seven Cities of Gold,” via the control panel as well.

**Record reader’s voice or change narrators** – If either is an option you’re including in your book app.

**Parent Information Section** – with the FTC putting more and more attention on the way that children’s app creators are using data, it’s becoming best practice to have a parent’s section to house any external links to websites, “more apps” pages, “contact” functionality and even review requests.

#### Brief - Step 5: Page-by-Page Details (sometimes called a story board)




In this part of the document, you will map out what you want to happen on each page of your book app.

If you have a printed book, you might want to approach this by taking a copy and literally writing on each page, circling and noting what elements you want to move, what sound effects you want, what music will play in the background, what game is launched where, etc.

Another way to do this is to create an Excel spreadsheet and create a row for each page. Create headings like “Music,” “Sound Effects,” “Animations,” etc. and document what happens on each page.

Here’s an example.

## Zak the Yak with Books on His Back

Illustration	Touch sprites	Background sound/music	Automatic animation	sfx etc.
	1. Touch temple and marmot is on the ledge.	Music	This opening scene sets the tone. The scene starts zoomed in showing just the mountain and town edge and then slowly zooms back to reveal the whole scene.	
	1. Touch people and they say "brm". 2. Touch little child and he holds the marmot.	Background noise: howling wind.	Snow falling	howling wind, etc
	1. Touch horse and he "neighs". 2. Touch sack and a little split appears with rice falling out 3. Touch river for river sound. 4. Touch rock on lower left and there is marmot sitting there waving.	music	clouds moving slowly	Horse neigh, split river sound

Having a hard time seeing this image? For a full-sized, full-color version you can print or download to your computer, simply go to: <http://www.book-app-basics-ebook.com>

### Why You Might Not Always Have a Choice with Design

Some developers will have a certain style guide they follow so you might not have a say on some of the components I outlined above.

For example, they might offer their own standard control panel across all of their apps or they might have page turning programmed to work a certain way.

If you've done your homework, looked at other apps and thought about what you want your app to be, you will have an idea of what you are willing to compromise on and what you aren't.

### Resources to Help You Create Your Brief

Your head might be swirling and you might be thinking, "That's a lot of work." And you're right. There are a lot of things to consider when developing your app.

For this reason, I want to point you to a couple of other resources you can use to get more information, including screen grabs of apps to help you see what I'm talking about.

Visit [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook) to access these resources:



1. I have a free video called “How to Create Your Brief” you can access at [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook)
2. I have a template and checklist you can use to make sure you’ve covered everything in your brief.
3. “How to Create and Market a Book App” workshop video recordings. Late in 2012, I taught a one-day workshop in San Francisco on how to create and market a book app. The event also featured Carisa Kluver, creator of leading book app review site, Digital Storytime, talking about what makes a great book app, standards she’s starting to expect and trends she is seeing. And it features an author panel with four authors who are or have created book apps.

Once you’ve Determined your objectives, Reviewed your book and created your brief, you’re ready for the E in the D-R-E-A-M System, Evaluate developers!

## **E=Evaluate Developers**

The purpose of this section is to help you understand the role the developer will play in the production of your book app and to help you understand the key decisions you will need to make when choosing this critical resource.

It’s critical that you start talking with developers as soon as you have your brief so that you can determine how much your project will cost.

You’ll also want to make sure you understand their production process and requirements so that you create your assets according to the specifications they need. (For example, provide the narration files the way they need them, the sound files in the right format, etc.).

### **For Some Writers This Tech Stuff is Scary**

Choosing a developer can be one of the most intimidating parts of creating a book app for many writers because it’s a “techie” thing. It can be scary because many of us writers don’t know the jargon and we don’t know what we don’t know.

But we do know that without a developer, we don’t have an app!

The good news is that today, you have a lot of choices for the type of developer you work with. In this chapter, I’ll outline what those choices are and how you make the right choice for you.

The other good news is that I’ve been through this process twice myself and helped dozens of others go through it too.

Because I’m not techy, I explain this process and provide you checklists in a non-techy way. And I hear from my readers that that’s a good thing!

## First, What Does the Developer Do?

The developer is a programmer who will turn your book into code that will make it work on various devices like tablets and mobile phones! He or she is a coder.

This is what your app could look like under the hood.

```
#import <Foundation/Foundation.h>

int main (int argc, const char * argv[]) {
    NSAutoreleasePool * pool = [[NSAutoreleasePool alloc] init];

    WSMMethodInvocationRef rpcCall;
    NSURL * rpcURL;
    NSString * methodName;

    rpcURL = [NSURL URLWithString:@"http://192.168.2.40:8069/xmlrpc/object"];
    methodName = @"execute";

    rpcCall = WSMMethodInvocationCreate((CFURLRef)rpcURL,
                                       (CFStringRef)methodName, kWSXMLRPCProtocol);

    NSArray * arguments = [[NSArray alloc] initWithObjects:@"id",@"", [NSNumber numberWithInt:1],
                                                         [NSMutableDictionary dictionaryWithCapacity:6]];

    [params setObject:@"andro" forKey:@"db"]; //database
    [params setObject:[NSNumber numberWithInt:1] forKey:@"uid"]; //uid
    [params setObject:@"andro" forKey:@"passwd"]; //password
    [params setObject:@"res.partner" forKey:@"object"]; //object
    [params setObject:@"search" forKey:@"method"]; //method
    [params setObject:[NSArray arrayWithObject:arguments] forKey:@"args"]; //args

    NSArray * parameters = [[NSArray alloc]
                           initWithObjects:@"db",@"uid",@"passwd",@"object",@"method",@"args",nil];

    WSMMethodInvocationSetParameters(rpcCall, (CFDictionaryRef)params, (CFArrayRef)parameters);

    id result = (id) WSMMethodInvocationInvoke(rpcCall);

    if (WSMMethodResultIsFault((CFDictionaryRef)result)) {
        NSLog(@"Error code %d error string %@",
              [result objectForKey:(NSString*)kWSFaultCode],
              [result objectForKey:(NSString*)kWSFaultString]);
    } else {
        NSLog(@"Result %d class %@",
              [result objectForKey:(NSString*)kWSMethodInvocationResult], [result class]);
    }
    [arguments release];
    [parameters release];
}
```

Other things your developer might do, depending on whom you work with:

- Manage your app in the App Store
- Contribute creatively
- Cross promote your app with other apps they've done
- Help you market your app

## What is a “Book App Engine” and Why Do You Care?

Before we get into the categories of developers you have to choose from, I wanted to define a term I'll be using, “book app engine.”

“Book app engine” is a term I use to describe a computer platform a developer has created to develop their book apps on. Think of it as a framework or template. Your content (text, illustrations, music and sounds) will sit within the developer's book app engine.

Developers can systematically adapt new book content as long as the functionality is standard.

And many developers can also provide custom development, to let your app do things that other apps they create might not do (like games).

You'll see in a moment why this term is important.

So why do you care about what a book app engine is?

Because developers who already have a proven book app engine have a lot of the work completed before your project arrives! They already have the programming for a book app working in a certain way. And you can try that work before you buy.

Companies that already have a book app engine will most likely be cheaper for you to work with than companies or individuals who are starting from scratch.

### **What are the Categories of Developers?**

Having talked with hundreds of book app authors and dozens of developer companies, I've outlined four main categories of developers. In the next section, I will walk you through a Developer Checklist that you can use to choose the right type of developer for you.

Also, I have categorized the book app case studies for you based on the type of developer used for each project, so that you can see the types of projects created by each category of developer.

#### 1. Book app specialists who offer full service (done for you)

Book app specialist companies specialize in creating book apps. They've already created a book app engine that they will use as the platform for creating your book app. If you download other book apps they've created, you should notice some consistencies in the way each book app works.

Some book app specialists can do custom work as well, so if you want to add a little game or do something a bit different, be sure to ask if they are able to do this.

#### 2. Do-it-yourself (DIY) book app companies

These companies offer a do-it-yourself platform on which to develop your book app. Many of these use a simple drag-and-drop approach that doesn't require programming skills. And a number of my students have used these services to create their book apps. Some DIY companies also offer full service or studio service, meaning they will do the programming for you.

#### 3. Custom developers (could be game or other type)

By "custom developer," I'm talking about developers that do projects beyond book apps, so they're ideal if your book app is beyond a book.

#### 4. Individual developers or Team

This is the term I use for working with an individual person, small team (that's not a company per se) or a personal relationship. A lot of authors tell me they want their neighbor or a local college student to develop their app. While this is definitely a way you can go, there are some key questions to ask when interviewing them to make sure this is the best choice for you long term.

## **5 Steps to Finding a Developer Who Will Deliver**

Finding the right developer for your project is also a step-by-step process. Here are the steps involved:

Evaluate Developers Step 1: Complete your Developer Criteria Checklist

Evaluate Developers Step 2: Identify your shortlist, research and interview them

Evaluate Developers Step 3: Brief your final short list on your project to get cost estimates

Evaluate Developers Step 4: Assess the cost estimates and things to consider besides price

Evaluate Developers Step 5: Choose your developer

Now we'll have a look at each step.

### Evaluate Developers Step 1: Complete Developer Criteria Checklist

This first step is critical because once you make decisions about your personal and professional requirements, you'll naturally exclude categories and start to identify possible types of developers that would be right for you and your project.

Each line item on this check list is defined below, so that you understand what it is and why it's important.

- What type of project is your book app?
- Do you want a DIY or Done for You service?
- Do you want to work with an individual or do you want to work with a company?
- What platforms do you want to develop for?
- Do you want to manage the app in the App Store yourself or do you want the developer to do it?
- Do you want your app to stand alone in the App Store or do you want it to be part of a larger app?
- What kind of commercial terms do you want? Fee for service, revenue share or a blend?
- Do you want input on the art direction or asset creation?

You can download this checklist at [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-eBook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-eBook).

### Checklist: What Type of Project is Your Book App?

Your first step is to think about what type of project your book app is. Your project will determine which type of developer resource is a possibility for you.

If you're creating a book app that behaves like many other book apps (turning pages, basic animation and sound, music, etc.), then you'll be able to use a DIY service or a done-for-you, book app specialist. This is a good choice because you can leverage their existing book app engine.

If your project behaves like most other book apps but has some special functionality, you will probably require some custom programming. This means that a DIY developer program might not work for you. However, a book app specialist who can do custom development as well is an option. As are a custom developer or individual developer.

If your project is quite innovative, you'll need custom development and will need to find a developer who can do custom work.

An individual developer can do any of these types of projects.

### Checklist: DIY or Done for You

Once you've assessed what type of project you have, you'll want to decide whether you want to develop the book app yourself or if you want someone to do the development for you.

For many of you, like me, this is an easy decision. There's NO WAY I wanted to develop my own app. But a lot of people, especially illustrators and graphic designers, do!

### Checklist: Should You Work with an Individual or a Company?

I've done both. And there are pros and cons to each.

#### Individual

Working with an individual means working with a person you hire or know (as opposed to a company). This choice means that the person you hire will be the person who does the work. And if something happens to them, you need to have a Plan B.

My biggest word of warning is to make sure they are there for the long haul. They will need to be available to update the app when updates to operating systems or devices happen. For example, when Apple makes changes to their software (iOS), these changes can sometimes affect the way apps work.

## Company

Working with a company means you are contracted to the company and not necessarily the individuals who are working in the company. The good thing about this is that if they have a developer leave, then it is up to the company to replace him. The bad thing about this is if you selected the company based on the talent of an individual you met at that company, and that person leaves, then your contract is with the company so you are dependent upon whatever solution they provide.

### Checklist: What Platform(s) do You Want to Develop For?

Do you want to develop just for Apple products (iPad and iPhone) or both Apple and Android?

Some developers only develop for certain devices so you need to decide what you want and then find out what the developer can do.

### Checklist: Do You Want to Manage the App in the App Store Yourself or have the Developer do It?

It's about Control!

Depending on the contract with your developer, you might have the option to have your app associated with your own Apple developer account. Your developer would still submit your app to the App Store, but the app would be under your account, not theirs.

If your app sits on your own account, you will be able to access your app via iTunes Connect so you can, check sales reports when you want to, update your description (as reviews come in), pull your own promotion codes and change your app price for sales.

However, if the developer uses their account, they will need to provide sales reports to you and make these marketing changes for you because if they gave you access to their account, you'd see information for all of their apps.

Be sure to find out what process is in place for you to do things like hold price sales or access promotion codes.

### Checklist: Will Your App Stand Alone or be Part of a Bigger App?

What does this mean?

Apps can either stand alone (have an independent presence) in the App Store, meaning an app has its own unique download URL and once downloaded, sits on the device represented by its own icon.

Or an app can exist as a downloadable book app that sits within a bigger bookshelf (or reader app) where consumers who visit that bookshelf can discover and download it.

Or it can do both.

The advantage of having an app stand alone is that once it's downloaded, the icon stays present on the device so kids will remember it's there. If it only sits within a bookshelf, the child might forget it's available to play.

An advantage of having an app within a bookshelf is that it's more discoverable by people who are browsing that bookshelf. But people have to be in the bookshelf to find the app! And reviewers don't tend to like to review apps that sit exclusively within a bookshelf or reader app.

#### Checklist: What Type of Commercial Terms do you Want?

There are a number of ways you can pay for your app development:

Fee for service – pay a fee for the development work.

Free with fees to publish – some DIY services offer their software free for you to use and then charge a fee when it's time to publish the app on the App Store.

Revenue share – you and your developer might decide to have no money exchange hands up front. Rather, you share revenue generated by sales of the app at an agreed percentage. Note, for Apple apps, Apple takes 30% of every app sale so any revenue share you do will be split from the remaining 70%.

Hybrid – you might pay your developer a fee and agree a revenue share as well on app sales.

#### Checklist: Do you want Input on Creating Assets or on the Creative Direction?

Some developers can help you find an illustrator or other resources like a narrator or sound effects.

Also, some can make suggestions for creative improvements to your app as well if you wish.

If you're creating something beyond the basic book app, you might find a developer will have valuable suggestions on how to structure the app or they might make creative suggestions on how to leverage the technology in ways you hadn't thought of.

Be aware though that some developers don't have these types of creative skills.

Also, some developers price projects strictly based on the brief you provided and agreed to. They won't make suggestions and will only do what you ask them to do. Anything you want to do in

addition to what's documented in the brief could be considered a change in scope and might cost you more money.

So you need to know what expectations you have for the developer you are hiring.

### Evaluate Developers Step 2: Identify Your Shortlist, Research and Interview Them

If you go through each part of the checklist above, you will immediately start eliminating certain developers and perhaps even whole categories of developers.

Once you have a good idea of what you want, you can start assessing developers to see which ones might be a fit.

Once you've selected your short list of developers, you need to research them.

If you are shopping for a DIY service, then you should be able to learn most of what you need to know from their website.

If you want to work with a full-service developer, then I recommend that you have a conversation with them in addition to doing your research.

You want to make sure they are a fit for you and that you are a fit for them.

I suggest you try to have a conversation before they quote on your job because it will save both of you time. If you both think there might be a fit, then you can send over your brief and talk them through your vision.

### Researching and Interviewing Developers

Your developer relationship is one of the most important relationships you'll have when creating a book app.

I can't stress enough how important it is that you both feel good about the relationship.

Here are some of the things you'll want to find out initially either by researching the company (in the case of a DIY program) and/or by talking with someone there.

### Initial Research/Interview Questions Before you Decide if You'll Have Them Quote:

NOTE: Don't send this list to a developer and say "please respond!" Many of the issues below are things you will want to know about, but each isn't relevant to every development job. Do some of this homework yourself and only ask the questions that are relevant to your project!

1. What kinds of projects do they specialize in and is yours a fit?



2. How do they capture and manage your app requirements?
3. What devices do they develop for and is there a charge for each additional platform?
4. What is their submission process for providing a cost estimate for your project?
5. What is their project management process?
6. What is their quality control, testing and release process?
7. Do they offer technical support and if so, what hours is their help line available?
8. How do they manage updates? (Both client-requested and those required by new versions of software or new devices)
9. What is their cost structure?
10. How do they handle changes to the brief?
11. Who owns the rights to what?
12. What availability do they have to work on your project?
13. What is their estimated turnaround time for the project?
14. How many people are on their team? How do they handle a change in personnel?
15. Check references and download samples of their apps
16. Contract – If they have an existing contract, read it! Or have a written agreement drawn up for your specific project. Get legal advice on it. And make sure you and the developer sign it.

Evaluate Developers Step 3: Brief Your Final Short List on Your Project to get a Cost Estimate

Make sure that you have walked them through your brief and storyboard so there are no surprises!!

Evaluate Developers Step 4: Assess the Cost Estimates and Things to Consider in Addition to Price

Once you get your cost estimates, don't just choose the one with the lowest price.

There are other things that can cost you a lot more money than an up-front price tag. Things like disorganization, poor quality of work, inability to meet deadlines, etc.

Make sure you choose the developer you believe is the right fit for your project, who will deliver quality work, on time and on budget.

Remember, the developer relationship is one of the most important relationships you will have. Period.

### Evaluate Developers Step 5: Choose Your Developer

It's exciting when you've made the choice! Everyone is usually buzzing and optimistic about the project.

In order to stay that way, make sure you've reviewed and signed your contract, established your lines of communication and project management and make sure you know who your single point of contact is.

### Summary

In summary, choosing your developer is one of the most important things you will do besides writing a high-quality story and designing/planning a terrific book app.

If you take the time to consider your needs and get the developer that's right for your personality and your job, then the development process will be so exciting!

### Where do you Actually FIND Developers to Research?

There are a number of ways;

- See my "Developer List" on [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook)
- Learn about developers from the author stories in this book
- Do an internet search for "Book App Developers"
- Research the book apps on Digital Storytime and compile a list of developers. Contact them to see which ones develop for other authors
- When you see book apps you like, find out who the developer is (the developer is listed on the app's iTunes page)
- See the eBook, "How to Choose a Book App Developer" that includes information on over 20 different DIY and full service book app developers

"How to Choose a Book App Developer" – this eBook goes into even more detail about the 5 steps presented above and includes information on over 20 developer companies and DIY services you can consider for your project. Most of them have provided information about themselves, including their ideal client, projects they've done, platforms and devices they develop for and cost structure.

Access each of these tools via [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook)

Now that you have completed the E (Evaluate developers) in the D-R-E-A-M System, it's time for the next fun, creative part, Assembling your Assets!

## **A=Assemble Your Assets**

“Assets” is the term for the components that make up your book app. Think of them as the individual ingredients of the book-app cake you are making. (Text, illustrations, narration, music, sound effects, games, etc.).

Once you've selected your developer, you will need to check with them to see what format they want these assets delivered in. For example, is there a specific file type they want for an image (layered PSD for example) or for a sound effect (mp3 vs. wav).

In this chapter, I list the primary assets you might want to create for your app and provide a description for each.

With each of these steps, you need to be sure that you are clear on rights ownership. For example, if you hire someone to edit your book, make sure everyone is clear that copyright stays with you as the author, even if they contribute to a significant change.

If you hire an illustrator, you need to be clear on who owns the right to the art and how it can be used.

For music and sound effects, if you buy these, you'll need to make sure they are royalty free and can be used in a commercial project that is going to be sold.

Here is the list of assets you will assemble during this step in the production process:

**Edited Story Text** – Quality writing is absolutely essential so I recommend that unless you are transforming a previously published book, you hire an editor to make sure your story is as strong as possible. Bad writing will kill your book app.

**Illustrations** – A lot of unpublished writers get stuck because they don't know how they can get their stories illustrated. First, if you are starting from scratch, you will want to work with a digital illustrator so that the illustrations can be created in a way that they can be animated. If you have an already published book and the art is NOT digital, don't worry. There are still ways to use this art in your app and even get new layers created so that you can have animations in your book app.

**Narration and character voice** – Bad narration is one of the biggest mistakes I see in book apps. Very few people have a voice that sounds like professional narration. And a bad narration job makes an app completely amateur. There are a number of ways to find a great voice artist. One of my favorites is via a site called [voices123.com](http://voices123.com).

**Sound** – Sound can add so much to a book app, from sounds that automatically play to sound effects that are triggered by touch. There are a number of sound effect libraries you can use or you can create your own sound effects.

**Music** – The right music adds an extra something magical to a book app. You can either create your own music, use royalty free music or have an original score written for your app. Or you can use no music at all and use sound as a way to set mood.

**Bonus material** – If you are going to include any extra content like videos, games, puzzles, etc., these will need to be made or specified, and provided to your app developer.

Many writers get really stuck on where to even start looking for people to create these different assets for them. My eBook, “Author’s Guide to Book Apps,” discusses each of these areas and provides information about where to find suppliers for each (illustrators, editors, royalty free sound effects and music, music composers). You can learn more about “Author’s Guide” at [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook)

Once you’ve Assembled your Assets, the final step in the D-R-E-A-M System is to Manage your project to completion.

## **M=Manage Your Project to Completion**

Now that you’ve planned your book app, chosen your developer, and created your assets (or had your developer help you do so), it’s time to manage your project to completion.

I’ve not included this step in previous books I’ve written and I should have because sloppy project management causes a lot of stress and costs time and money.

So I want to take a few minutes to talk about good project management.

On your end, you want to have a central place that you organize all of your Assets. This includes:

- Your Brief
- Final text
- Illustrations
- Narration files
- Sound effects
- Music
- Contract
- Key communication about the project

Make sure you have a back-up for all of this information in case your computer crashes!

I’ve got my files organized on Dropbox. Dropbox is one of several online services that let you upload your files to their servers so you can access them from any place where you can access the

Dropbox website. This service is great for file sharing with others on your team as well. Dropbox is free up to a certain level of usage and then there is a fee.

When you are interviewing developers (and checking their references), make sure you ask about their approach to:

1. Schedule management
2. Asset management
3. Communication

First, let's look at schedule management. Ideally, your developer should be able to give you an estimated project timeline so you know what is happening when. Even if the schedule changes, there should still be specific dates so you know when you need to supply assets and when you need to be around to approve different aspects of the book app, etc.

Second, asset management is essential! There are so many components involved with creating a book app, from text to narration files to illustrations to sound effects, that an efficient way to manage and store them is mission critical. It is extremely frustrating to have to supply and re-supply the same assets over and over. It is even worse to have a developer say they don't have assets when you supplied them months prior, so keep a record of when you deliver what assets.

I've heard some horror stories about this so believe me, it's worth asking how assets are managed.

Some developers are highly organized. I'll give a shout out to Dragonpencil because they were a dream to work with when they helped me publish my book as a printed book years ago. I hear authors who have worked with them on book apps within the past year that they are equally as efficient now.

Finally, communication is important. You want to find out how often your developer or project manager will update you on the progress of your app. Regular status meetings are a good idea.

This final step in the D-R-E-A-M System, Managing the project to completion, will be the step that leaves you wanting to work with your developer again or not.

Even if you've created a terrific product in the end, a bad experience with "M" can kill your desire to do more!

## **Summary: D-R-E-A-M System**

So there you have an overview of the proven system for creating a book app.

D – Determine your objectives and get educated

R – Review your book and create your brief

E – Evaluate developers

A – Assemble your assets (the “ingredients of your book app; illustration, narration, sound effects, etc.)

M – Manage your project to completion

Now that you understand the steps in the system, the natural next question is...

## **How Much Does it Cost to Make a Book App?**

This is a how-long-is-a-piece-of-string question, and it’s one of ones I’m asked the most!

This question is one of the reasons I wanted to share so many case studies with you. I wanted you to see that there are so many ways to create a book app within a wide range of budgets!

The cost of your book app will depend on:

-Which costs you're including in the overall budget.

-What you do yourself and what you hire an outside resource to do.

-The commercial arrangement you have with your suppliers (fee for service, revenue share on sales or a combination of the two).

-What you want your app to do. How many pages will the book app be? How interactive it is? What functionality does it have, etc.

I know writers who have created book apps for less than \$500 because they've used a do-it-yourself program, but they've spent hundreds of man hours.

Or you might spend several thousand if you outsource your illustrations and hire a development company.

Here is a list of line items you need to budget for:

- Editing
- Illustrations
- Narration
- Sound effects
- Music
- Development
- Marketing

## **What about Marketing?**

I can't write a book about how to create a book app without spending a little time talking about marketing.

As any book app developer will tell you, (and many do in their interviews in this book), "Built isn't bought." Once you've created your app, the real work begins as you start to market it.

If you define success as selling your work, then marketing will be absolutely essential to your success.

Some people believe that apps are a license to print money. I can assure you that they're not.

Just like with printed books, marketing is essential so that people will know that your book app is available to buy.

Creating a great app is not enough because even the best book apps won't sell themselves.

There are some amazing book apps sleeping in the App Store, because no one knows about them. And there are some very average book apps in the Top 200 because they are marketed well or part of a big brand.

### **So How do You Market a Book App?**

I've defined the S-E-L-F approach for marketing your book app. Understanding this approach will save you a lot of time and money.

- S = Start connecting early
- E = Establish your platform
- L = Leverage what the App Stores give you
- F = Forget the Finish Line

Let's look at each.

#### **S = Start Connecting Early**

One of the first recommendations I make to any author is to start connecting with your community as soon as you can. You can connect via social media, networking groups, forums and events.

In the book app world, some of my favorite groups are:

Parents with Apps forum ([www.parentswithapps.com](http://www.parentswithapps.com))

Moms with Apps ([www.momswithapps.com](http://www.momswithapps.com))

Facebook group, Developer Exchange

Linked in groups for children's writing and digital publishing

### E = Establish Your Platform

Marketing a book app is like marketing a book. It's not about your book app. It's about what your book app can do for the reader!

Your "platform" is your main message that you and your content stand for and it's the following and fan base you create around that.

You need to identify your platform early and then set up your messaging and your social media to support that.

My best advice for you here is to study general book marketing in addition to book app marketing and general app marketing.

### L= Leverage what the App Stores Give You

There are a number of tools the app stores give you. Take Apple for example.

Your app name, app description, keywords, icon and screen shots are all tools you can use to promote your app.

You also get 50 promotion codes to use how you see fit. Many developers use those codes for reviewers.

### F – Forget the Finish Line

I always say that "Marketing is a marathon, not a sprint" (and actually it's more like a cross country due to the ups and downs and obstacles along the way!).

There is no finish line when it comes to marketing your app.

The good news is that after three years of marketing book apps, I've learned that some of the best techniques are free.

Because I have a marketing background, I've tested a number of ways to market my apps. I've made the mistakes and wasted money so you don't have to.

### How to Learn More about Marketing



I've got a free report called "7 Secrets of Book App Marketing," an extensive, 150-page eBook called "How to Market a Book App." Visit [www.howtomarketabookapp.com](http://www.howtomarketabookapp.com) for more information.

## **Fightin' Bookworms Who've Made their D-R-E-A-M Come True**

Now that I've shared the step-by-step D-R-E-A-M System with you and provided some insights about marketing, I hope you feel you have a better understanding of whether or not this opportunity is right for you.

Next I want to share a bit more about my experience and the inspiring stories of other Fightin' Bookworms who've made their publishing dreams come true by publishing their work as book apps.

Most of these authors would welcome your approach if you want to contact them about their projects and experiences.

So enjoy!

### **A Bit More about Karen's Story/Book Apps (Yes, I'm a Fightin' Bookworm!)**



I've already shared a bit of my story with you but wanted to share a few more of the key lessons I've learned while working on my own creative projects.

Before creating book apps, I'd written two books in the "Treasure Kai" series. The first one was published as a printed book. I was about to re-print the first book and publish the second book in the series when I decided to "go app."

What I love about the book app format is that I'm able to deliver multi-sensory, interactive reading experiences to kids. I'm motivated by my own kids who are dyslexic. Book apps are the only type of books that my youngest will choose to read for fun, on his own.

"Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island" is a treasure hunt adventure book that's a twist on the choose-your-adventure format. I designed the book to motivate kids to finish the book they started because they read until they find gold. The app originally launched in February 2011 but I consider its birthday to be in May 2011 when we got the bug fixed and went live again.

We worked with an individual developer who wrote the code and we negotiated to own that code. He did a great job developing the app, however we failed to negotiate how updates would be handled and found that when we needed updates, he wasn't available.

After that experience, I decided I wanted to work with a book app specialist company for my second book app, "Treasure Kai and the Seven Cities of Gold." I felt that the book app and my business were at too much risk if we relied on a single individual again. I reasoned that with a company, if there were any issues with personnel leaving, I wouldn't be stuck.

Like the first app, this app required custom development. It's designed to pique kids' curiosity about history, Coronado and the legend of the Seven Cities of Gold. It's also designed to motivate kids to remember what they've read by having kids randomly visit the Seven Cities of Gold and then presenting them with a memory game to complete in order to get Treasure Kai home.

I worked with a company called RipplIFX Mobile Media (now called Fat Red Couch) and we interviewed the key team members prior to starting the project.

It wasn't smooth sailing, however we eventually delivered a stunning app that was:

- One of only 20 apps to receive a 5-star rating from Digital Storytime in all of 2012
- Named a Padgadget "must have"
- Awarded the Quality Excellence Design Seal of Approval from Digital Book World
- Won a Global eBook Award

We are all very proud of how unique and beautiful the app is.

See the app demo videos for "Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island" and "Treasure Kai and the Seven Cities of Gold" at [www.treasurekai.com](http://www.treasurekai.com).

I've been so grateful for the opportunities that creating book apps have brought to my work. I've expanded the team I work with to take "Treasure Kai" to places I'd never dreamed of when I first created the series.

Book apps have delivered such a sense of freedom to me. I am free to market "Treasure Kai" globally via social media because I know I can deliver the product globally (effortlessly and free!). I'm free to dream big when it comes to the number of apps I sell as there are no inventory limits. I can sell 500, 5,000 or 500,000 without worrying about running out of stock.

I've had the opportunity to work with the very inspiring John Wood from Room to Read to transform his children's book, "Zak the Yak with Books on His Back" into an interactive book app that we use as a fundraiser for Room to Read.

"Zak" was an opportunity to take a printed book with "flat artwork" (meaning no layers in it so we couldn't animate anything with existing art), and find a way to bring it to life. Each download of the "Zak the Yak" book app funds three local language children's books to be published in a developing country.

I encourage you to watch a free, one-hour webinar about how we transformed the book into a book app so you can see possibilities for your own work if you have a printed book with no digital art. Access the webinar via the link near the bottom of the resources page, [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook)

I've had the opportunity to meet scores of inspiring authors from all over the world. The book app (and children's app) community is a warm, welcoming, supportive and global one. When I started connecting with people, I still lived in Australia. But that didn't matter. I met friends in from every continent (except Antarctica). And we supported each other.

So there's a bit about my story. Now I want to share with you some of the stories from other Fightin' Bookworms.

## **Stories from 10 Other Fightin' Bookworms Who've Created Book Apps**

**Nina Lim** – When her "yes" from a publisher became a "no" at an editorial meeting, she decided to create her book as a book app. She has now published two book apps and has even been approached by another digital publishing company to write for them.

**Cyndie Seburn** – A retired National Board Certified English teacher, Cyndie is passionate about combining technology with learning and stories. She started out creating her own book app that teaches kids about nouns and the South, and wound up with an even bigger purpose. Cyndie develops Common Core Standard's aligned curriculum activities for book apps. Her Apps With Curriculum website, [www.appswithcurriculum.com](http://www.appswithcurriculum.com) is a valued resource for teachers looking to combine literacy, technology and CCSS-aligned curriculum activities.

**Alexis Purcell** – For 10 years, the story her children begged her to get published languished in a bottom drawer. One day she decided to do something about it and created a story book app. That app is now being loved by kids and used by speech pathologists in the U.S.

**Chris Pedersen** – What I love about Chris’s story is that she is thinking “beyond the app.” She launched the print version of her book in 2013. Plus understanding that her marketing platform is healthy eating, she coaches on this topic which helps build her profile and her brand.

**Melissa Northway** – Melissa is a passionate book app creator and marketer. If you want to follow someone who is committed to creating book apps and driving awareness of her work, hers is a must-read story. Melissa is one of the leaders in the book app community.

**Michelle Anaya** – Like many writers, Michelle Anaya thought that the dream of being published was beyond her reach. She thought that really, only celebrities get published as new children’s authors these days. She’s a print designer by day and a trip to the book store changed her life because she saw the work of another print designer, published as a book. So she started to dream again. She’s published two book apps.

**Julie Hedlund** – I’m inspired by Julie because she’s someone who is so committed to both her own writing and other writers that she invests in herself and she innovates. When she left the corporate world to pursue her writing dream, she invested in her own education about writing and publishing. She’s published two books as book apps.

**Julia Stilchen** - What strikes me about Julia’s story is that she’s spent years creating other people’s work and now she’s so excited about creating her own work and bringing it to a global audience.

**Sofia Caessa** – Sofia’s publishing deal fell through when her publisher filed for bankruptcy. Rather than be deterred, she started investigating other publishing options and discovered that the book app format would let her take her vision to a whole new level. She’s published two apps in her Augui series.

**Susan Dieker** - I wanted to share Susan’s story because she's passionate about her project yet ran in to some issues that others have run in to and she's been open about sharing them. She'd had some success with selling her self-published book and was inspired to create an app by her grandson, who loved story book apps.

## Nina Lim - “Super Harry’s Rotten Luck” and “Henrietta is Hungry”



What I love about Nina’s story is that she came so close to securing a traditional publishing deal for her first book, but when it fell through, she didn’t give up. She took her destiny in her own hands and created a story book app with PicPocket books. She got educated about how to create a book app, she chose a developer and made her dream happen! She’s now published two book apps and is working on her third.

Here’s Nina’s story:

“It’s been a wonderful experience creating a storybook app and I’m so glad I’ve done it. I feel like there’s a little bit of me and my imagination out there in the world hopefully making kids laugh and smile. I’ve met so many fabulous, passionate, creative and talented people and I’m really grateful for the experience.” Nina Lim

### **Q: Tell us a bit about yourself and how you came to write Super Harry.**

I am a former university teacher turned author and mother of three. I’ve always loved reading and writing and kids’ books have always held a special place in my heart. I had the idea for Super Harry one day when I was walking in the sun. An idea popped into my head about a boy who keeps on having rotten luck. And each day his rotten luck snowballs until he can’t take it anymore and he shouts, “That’s it! Things have got to change!” I thought it was a funny idea and I set to work on it.

### **Q: Why did you decide to create Super Harry as a book app?**

I originally sent Harry out to all the major publishers as a manuscript. Astonishingly, Walker Books (home of Paddington Bear) picked it up off the slush pile and I got an email from an editor indicating they were interested and were going to bring it into an editorial meeting. Before I could break out the champagne however, I received another email saying sorry they were no longer interested. One of the other editors put the kibosh on it. And that was that. Instead of falling down into a heap though, I decided to take it as an enormous confidence booster. The story had merit and originality and I was going to bring it to the world! After that I read Karen’s eBooks and I realized that creating a storybook app was the perfect thing for me to do.

### **Q: What’s unique about your book app?**

One of the nice things about Super Harry is that it has a positive and empowering message for young kids. That with determination and the right attitude you can turn even the worst of days around. It is your attitude and your actions that influence how you meet the world and how the world meets you.

**Q: How did you get it developed? How did the development process go?**

I worked with a developer called PicPocket Books. They specialize in bringing children's books to mobile devices. I had already downloaded quite a number of their books and I liked their style. I was thrilled to join their stable of authors.

**Q: When did it launch?**

It launched in the beginning of March 2012. So at the time of writing it has been live on the App Store for about 6 weeks.

**Q: What have been your most effective marketing strategies?**

Remembering that it's a slow build. Staying in the market and keeping your app's names popping around by participating in social media, giveaways, donating prizes to Facebook parties, going on sale or free from time to time. There are people who are constantly looking for what's gone free and they will spread the word.

**Q: What's been your least effective marketing strategies?**

I would say be cautious when it comes to spending money on paid advertising for apps. I think you can expect very little return on paid ads whether it's sponsored posts or banner ads. Some careful use of paid advertising can be great, but certainly don't go overboard on it.

**Q: Did you use "Author's Guide to Book Apps" and if so, what was most useful about it?**

Oh, this was essential for me! To be honest, apart from the loads of practical information it provides, one of the best things about the eBook is that it got me off my butt and into action (metaphorically speaking!).

**Q: What other apps did you use to inspire you?**

There are so many brilliant story apps that I love. And many are by small and independent publishers. I (and my kids) love Maid Marion Muffins, The Monster at the End of this Book, Mabel and LuLu, Charlie Brown's Christmas, Treasure Kai, The Edible Suit, Penelope the Purple Pirate, The Little Book of Feelings. The list goes on and on.

**Q: Estimated budget**

When it comes to budget I would say you need to allow yourself more than you originally think. Before you know it everything starts to add up. Once you factor in preproduction, production, and then website and marketing costs you need to be prepared to invest some serious money to make a quality product.

**Q: How are your sales going?**

In the short time Super Harry has been on the market it has already sold in a number of countries which is an amazing feeling!

**Q: What will we see next from you?**

I've released a new app, "Henrietta is Hungry," which was chosen as a Top Pick by Fun Educational Apps.

**Q: Anything else you'd like to add?**

It's been a wonderful experience creating a storybook app and I'm so glad I've done it. I feel like there's a little bit of me and my imagination out there in the world hopefully making kids laugh and smile. I've met so many fabulous, passionate, creative and talented people and I'm really grateful for the experience.

**Q: Links you'd like to share**

**Super Harry app:** <http://itunes.apple.com/au/app/super-harry-hd/id504334647?mt=8>

**Henrietta is Hungry app:** <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/henrietta-is-hungry-hd/id572431382?mt=8>

**Website:** [www.ninalim.com](http://www.ninalim.com)

**Cyndie Sebourn – “Smarty Britches” and Apps with Curriculum**



**Q: Tell us a bit about yourself**

I am a southern woman, which means that I have the amazing ability to turn two syllable words into four syllable words. I live in Hot Springs Village, Arkansas, surrounded by woods and lakes, and I treasure the peacefulness of it all. There is no place better.

I taught secondary and college English for twenty-five years, and I like to think that I taught it well. My master's degree is in Education/English; I am a National Board Certified teacher, and in 2010 the Veterans of Foreign Wars awarded me State Teacher of the Year. This – because I received it from people who fought for my freedom – means the most to me.

**Q: Describe your book app and what's unique about it?**

My love for students and my passion for teaching fueled my desire to continue to educate – but through a different format: technology. With the *Smarty Britches* book app series, I share the culture of the South, and I share the charming beauty of its southern people.

This app series aligns with Common Core State Standards and incorporates cultural differences and cross-curricular subjects as well as reading strategies and fluency. At the Apps with Curriculum website ([www.appswithcurriculum.com](http://www.appswithcurriculum.com)), you can find lessons for educators and parents that have student-friendly objectives, align with CCSS, use upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, and incorporate technology.

My inspiration for the *Smarty Britches* series began with the gift of two Baby Grands: Jackson and Wyatt. I had thought that I knew love. Then those two little boys tiptoed their way into my heart and taught me its whole new meaning.

My first app in the series, *Smarty Britches: Nouns*, teaches kids about nouns in the form of story and games. I'm soon publishing *Smarty Britches: Verbs*.

**Q: Tell us about Apps with Curriculum ([www.appswithcurriculum.com](http://www.appswithcurriculum.com))**

My inspiration for Apps With Curriculum began with recognizing a need – a need for app developers to empower educators. I wanted to create lesson plans that aligned with Common Core Standards.

My mentor, Karen Robertson, first identified that this was my special gift for the book app world. I created curriculum activities for *Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island*, and we piloted the lessons in third grade classes in Arkansas and received rave reviews. You can see a video of



teacher, Katie Wainscott, talking about some of the activities she tried in class by visiting the links below.

**Q: Why did you decide to create “Smarty Britches: Nouns” as a book app?**

I wanted to include little games within the book to help kids practice their people, animal, place, thing and idea nouns. An eBook wouldn't have let me create the interactivity and games I wanted to deliver.

**Q: How did you get it developed? How did the development process go?**

I worked with a company called Dragonpencil. I knew I didn't want to try to develop the app myself. I went with Dragonpencil because they have such a professional project management system, and they were confident they could create the book app I envisaged.

**Q: When did it launch?**

July 2012

**Q: What have been your most effective marketing strategies?**

Social Media connections are a must. Also, it helps to connect with other book app developers and cross promote. Making connections with television stations and sending out press releases also increase your exposure.

**Q: What is your pricing model?**

*Smarty Britches: Nouns* is a paid app. It's \$2.99. I occasionally put it on sale.

**Q: Did you use “Author’s Guide to Book Apps” and if so, what was most useful about it?**

Yes! I discovered this eBook through an internet search. I contacted Karen with a question about remuneration, and we became friends and she became my mentor. She coached me through a number of key decisions such as choosing a developer. She helped me immensely with my narration. I wanted the narrator to speak with a southern accent, but because my own southern accent is so strong, I was struggling to tell which reads sounded good and which ones sounded like a caricature of a southern accent. Karen worked with my voice artist to make sure the narration was right.

**Q: Estimated budget (only ballpark or any insight you can give and only if you're comfortable)**

Everyone wants to know how much a book app costs. Actually, it depends on how much of the

work (illustrations, custom music, voice over artist, programming) you can do yourself. Also, it is dependent on your search for a quality team that works for reasonable prices.

**Q: How are your sales going? (only say what you are comfortable saying)**

My sales are steady, but I am always looking for ways to improve my marketing.

**Q: Anything else you'd like to add? (might be neat to talk about some of the PR you've had.)**

Never underestimate the use of former connections. My first television interview was by a former student who now manages a station. Also, discover your niche – your special skill – and use it! I find that volunteering to speak at educational conventions regarding Apps With Curriculum inevitably leads to more invitations for speaking engagements, which leads to more exposure and ultimately more sales.

**Q: Links you'd like to share**

**Smarty Britches: Nouns:** <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/smarty-britches-nouns/id546046418?mt=8>

**Cyndie Sebourn's website:** <http://www.cyndieseourn.com>

**Apps with Curriculum:** <http://www.appswithcurriculum.com>

**Facebook:** <http://www.facebook.com/appswithcurriculum>

**Twitter:** <https://www.twitter.com/appscurriculum>

### Alexis Purcell- "The Turkey Who Forgot How to Gobble"



I love Alexis's story! Alexis originally wrote "The Turkey Who Forgot How to Gobble" 10 years ago. And while her children encouraged her to publish it, she didn't. This wonderful manuscript was sitting in a bottom drawer for years.

Now it's a touching book app that's already thrilling kids and being used by speech pathologists across the US.

Here's Alexis's Story:

**Q: Tell us a bit about yourself**

I was born and raised in San Diego, CA but spent most of my adult life in the San Francisco Bay Area, specifically, Larkspur, CA with my family. My career for the past 31 years was as a senior administrator in financial administration and project budget development for academic and healthcare organizations. Becoming an author of children's books and interactive apps is new to me, but I was ready for a change!

**Q: How did you come to write your first book, "The Turkey Who Forgot How To Gobble?"**

It's a sweet situation that took place when my kids were young. Every night before bed we would pop on the bed, one child on each side of me, and read a story. One evening, after coming home exhausted from a long day at work, they asked: "*mom, instead of reading books tonight, could you please make up a cute story?*" Well somehow, as tired as I was, I created the story of Joey the turkey who forgot how to gobble and how his barnyard friends came to help him; a story about how friends will be there when you need them. They loved it and the next day recited it during "show and tell" time at their elementary school. Their classmates and teachers loved it. Every day for weeks they would ask me to "write the story and get it published", but being so tired that night I honestly could not recall much of the story and I was very busy at work, so I never got around to it. Months went by and they were tired of asking and no action, so they sat me down at the computer and told me they were going to help me write the story. So, with their input and detailed memory of the storyline, the manuscript was written and we submitted and received a copyright in 2003.

**Q: You said you created the story 10 years ago, what made you decide to create the book app now?**

It's one of those sobering moments. My daughter was getting ready to head off to college and it struck me that I had never fulfilled this dream of creating this book as a keepsake for them to cherish. I guess you could say they simply gave up that I would ever fulfill their dream. It was then and there I decided it was time for me to step away from the full-time corporate world and venture into this new journey for my children, and for me. Scary, yes, but for once in a long time, I found myself feeling so full of life and joy...who knew?!

**Q: How did you know how to begin or what to do to create the book app?**

I really didn't know anything about this new journey I was on other than I needed to educate myself on EVERYTHING. I began in July, 2012 and set a goal of completing it by end of October; four months of intense devotion in educating myself and learning how to do this. I began reading as much information as I could on the internet, networking, talking to friends, etc. Karen Robertson's name kept coming up as someone with whom I should talk.

Karen was (and still is) so gracious to me. She provided information that I don't think I would've known I really needed, and put me in touch with people in the industry that have been very helpful along the way. Most importantly, I couldn't have done this without Karen's books, particularly

“How to Market a Book App”. That was my bible and I referred to it continually, and still do to this day.

The other thing that was very helpful is her seminars, where like-minded authors come together to learn from Karen, and she from us; it also provided great networking opportunities. Paying for Karen’s books and seminars (a minor cost by the way) was money well spent. I encourage anyone who is considering writing apps for children, to get her books or attend her seminars.

**Q: Thank you for your comments about my book: “How to Market a Book App.” Could you be more specific on the items in the book you found were useful during the creation of your book app?**

The book is clear and easy to follow, simple as that! For me, the topics I found to be most helpful were: her step by step detail in understanding key essentials of the Apple App store and how to navigate through the complex web of the multiple categories, ranking summaries and search functions. I learned a great deal from her “lessons learned” in creating and placement of the app name, app icon, description, selecting key search words, etc.

The step by step overview and description of understanding the market, understanding book apps and the associated challenges, the components of establishing a marketing plan, pre-launch essentials, app reviews and review sites were informative and very helpful.

Karen’s books were invaluable tools I referred to many times not only during the forming and creation of my first book app, “The Turkey Who Forgot How To Gobble”, but also for my current book app, “Twinkle, Twinkle, Nighty Night.” Her books and seminars are an absolute must for anyone interested in creating book apps. I couldn’t have done it without the books and Karen, who so graciously gave her time to help and encourage me along the way.

**Q: You mentioned my seminars, what specifically about them was helpful?**

In addition to the networking and sharing of ideas with the other attendees and invited speakers, I appreciated that the seminar content was refreshingly realistic. What I mean by that is there was no sugar coating in what it takes to create an app, the hard work involved, having realistic expectations for sales, etc. Karen walked you through the beginning to the end, the roadmap of your journey so to speak. I’m very organized and good at managing projects. This was in line with how Karen delivered her presentation, very organized and thoughtful.

**Q: When did your book app launch and how was the response?**

My app was accepted in Apple iTunes in late October but I waited until November to make it available to the public so as not to compete with the Halloween apps. It was launched in Amazon.com a week prior.

The response was great. I was ranked #11 in Apple iTunes in the Paid iPad book apps category for about two weeks. Below is a copy of the screen shot. It was very exciting to see my book app alongside heavy hitters such as Dora the Explorer, Finding Nemo, and Goodnight Moon.

**Q: Were there any surprises from your book app experience?**

Yes, there were several surprises.

Although we were #11 in Apple iTunes Paid iPad Books apps, sales for and ranking of my app declined after about a month. It is very difficult to break through and be discovered in the Apple iTunes store; the market for good children's book apps is saturated!

A nice surprise was hearing how others were using my book. For instance, a speech pathology group was using it to teach animal sounds to their students. An elementary school in New Jersey used it to teach their students about friendship. The one that touched me the most, however, was what happened shortly after the shooting in Newtown Connecticut. A local elementary school asked me to come to the school for a "meet the author day." They asked me to meet with the kids to discuss my book and, through the book, relay the message of how friends can help one another in time of need. I must say that was quite a moving experience both for them and me, and I will never forget it!

Another nice surprise I discovered along my journey is how **people in this industry are collaborative, not competitive**. Everyone I talked to along the way were willing to help me, provide advice, or provide names of others who might be able to help. That was such a breath of fresh air!

**Q: You mentioned you have another book app coming out soon, can you tell us about it?**

Absolutely! I am currently working on my next book app, "Twinkle, Twinkle, Nighty Night", which is a peaceful and imaginative picture book that invites the reader to help comfort their animal friends for bedtime by making a wish upon a special twinkling star.

As I mentioned above, I make sure there is a message woven in the story which, for this story, is how your child will be ready for sleep knowing they will be loved and protected throughout the night, and how they help their friends to feel the same love and comfort.

**Q: Is there anything else you would like to leave us with?**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share with others some of the tips I've used that have honestly made this process easier; many of which were learned from reading your books and attending your seminars. Please accept my heartfelt thanks and gratitude for making this journey fun and easier to navigate.

**Q: Links you'd like to share**

**"The Turkey Who Forgot How to Gobble":** <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/turkey-who-forgot-how-to-gobble/id567766441?mt=8>

**Website:** – [www.alexispurcell.com](http://www.alexispurcell.com)

## Chris Pedersen - “The Prisoner of Carrot Castle”



Chris Pedersen’s “The Prisoner of Carrot Castle” is one of those rare book apps that uses interactivity to bring the reader INTO the story. I often use her app as an example when I teach about how to integrate the iPad’s interactivity within a book app. What I love about Chris’s story is that she is thinking “beyond the app.” She launched the print version of her book in 2013. Plus understanding that her marketing platform is healthy eating, she coaches on this topic which helps build her profile and her brand.

Here is Chris’s Story:

**Q: Tell us a bit about yourself and how you came to write Carrot Castle.**

I have a passion for healthy eating and teaching others how to be healthy ([www.healthyjourneycafe.com](http://www.healthyjourneycafe.com)). Out of this passion, being a children’s writer and wishing to contribute to the fight against childhood obesity, I wrote **The Prisoner of Carrot Castle**.

**Q: Why did you decide to create Carrot Castle as a book app?**

I first shopped the manuscript to a few publishers, but soon realized developing it as an app would bring the book to life, and offer a deeper experience for kids.

**Q: What’s unique about your book app?**

In addition to a unique page turning style, kids engage in the exciting adventure by helping the hero, Aiden, move ahead in the story. Interactions involve the accelerometer to help Aiden down a tunnel and sliding veggies onto Aiden’s fork so he can eat his way out of his dilemma. A popular dress-up game appears at the story’s end enticing kids to slide battle gear onto a knight who, once dressed, dances to the sound of cheers.

**Q: How did you get it developed? How did the development process go?**

I contacted Kate Jeong (fellow Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators) to illustrate

the world of Carrot Castle and enlisted my son, already a talented Mac OS developer, to do the iOS programming.

None of us had ever done an iPad app before, but we each possessed an entrepreneurial spirit. Once I developed the storyboard, Kate created the stunning illustrations. We lived in different locations, Kate in Vancouver B.C. while Nur and I live two hours apart in Northern California. We communicated via email and frequent Skype meetings.

I managed the project, creating task lists with a schedule for completion. I learned to do the sound, searching on the Internet to find sounds and editing or combining sounds with Audacity (open source free sound editing software) if needed. When I couldn't find what I liked, I created sounds with my iPhone Voice Memos app.

Since we intend to do more apps, it was important to develop a brand identity. Following the veggie idea, we became Purple Carrot Books ([www.purplecarrotbooks.com](http://www.purplecarrotbooks.com)).

The process went well, however, longer than we had hoped. Here's what I learned about the process:

- Quality illustrations take time. Color studies are needed for each character and the world they live in.
- Searching for sounds is extremely time consuming. I spent hours and hours listening to sound effects and music. The editing process was easy by comparison.
- When your programmer has a full-time job, the programming takes a lot longer.

It didn't help the schedule that each of us moved during the course of the project, adding further delays. That's life.

**Q: When did it launch?**

“The Prisoner of Carrot Castle” launched on the Apple App Store on February 10, 2012.

**Q: What have been your most effective marketing strategies?**

Most effective was giving away Promo Codes through reviewers at the time the review is posted and growing a presence on Twitter (@prplcarrotbooks). I've also been working the traditional press route. I'm featured in the June edition of a local magazine with great results.

**Q: What's been your least effective marketing strategies?**

Using Facebook. It takes a lot of time, but doesn't seem to provide an equivalent return.

**Q: Did you use “Author’s Guide to Book Apps” and if so, what was most useful about it?**

I read “The Top 5 Things You MUST Know About Creating Book Apps for Kids!” by Karen Robertson. It gave me courage and encouragement to jump in.

**Q: What other apps did you use to inspire you?**

I built a relationship with Jeff Keeme of My Black Dog Books, creator of the “Violet” book app series. He was very helpful and encouraging.

**Q: Estimated budget?**

The costs for developing the app were very inexpensive (Apple developer fee, and sound purchases = approx. \$200), especially if you have an agreement to get paid from sales after costs. However, there are other necessary costs such as website development and maintenance (approx. \$1000). Other costs include business licenses and fees (approx. \$150), LLC setup (approx. \$300) and any marketing (paid reviews, printed material to pass out, etc. = \$300).

Adds up to \$1,950. Forming an LLC is not necessary unless you have a fictitious name (i.e., branding) other than your personal name. Apple requires an LLC or incorporation for liability purposes if you have a fictitious name.

Warning: If you live in California as I do, you pay \$800 on April 15th whether you made any money or not (Ouch!).

**Q: How are your sales going?**

Sales have been steady after the release rush with various spikes in sales from reviews and giveaways. We released a free app on May 25th, a game titled Dress a Knight of Carrot Castle, to cross sell the book app. It has definitely contributed to more sales.

**Q: Anything else you’d like to add?**

**Purple Carrot Books** is hard at work with our new partner Possibility Media Group to bring printed books and more apps to the market. “The Prisoner of Carrot Castle” will be released in March 2013 in print version and two more books will soon be published in print and digital.

Future releases for 2013:

“The Prisoner of Carrot Castle” in print with curriculum included (March 2013)

“Ethan Blecher Braves a Bully” written by Chris Pedersen with Kate Jeong (chapter book/early reader as print and eBook)



“Blondilocks and the Caring Bears A Cautionary Tale” written by Chris Pedersen, illustrated by Kate Jeong (picture book as print and app)

### Q. Links you’d like to share

**Website:** [www.purplecarrotbooks.com](http://www.purplecarrotbooks.com)

**“Prisoner of Carrot Castle” app:** <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/the-prisoner-of-carrot-castle/id499981407?mt=8>

### Melissa Northway – “Penelope the Purple Pirate” and “Gerry the Giraffe”



Melissa is a passionate book app creator and marketer. If you want to follow someone who is committed to creating book apps and driving awareness of her work, hers is a must-read story. Melissa is one of the leaders in the book app community.

Here’s Melissa’s Story:

The idea to write and create a children's book had been in my head since my daughter was about six months old. She and I would visit our local independent bookstore quite often and spend hours looking at any children's book that had yellow in it. She went through a stage of loving anything yellow!

I loved looking at all the wonderfully illustrated books and decided that one day I would write a children's book. Now having an idea and actually seeing it through took some hard work but it was so worth it.

The idea to write a story about Penelope came one night when my husband was telling tall tales about Red Beard and his adventures on the high seas to my daughter at bedtime. I thought *that's it*, what about a story about a little girl (a redhead like my daughter) who loves to go on adventures - much like a modern-day Pippi Longstocking.

Thus “*Penelope the Purple Pirate*” was born! From there I spent about a year attending local Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (SCBWI) events and having the story edited by agents, editors and other writers.

The idea to first make the story into a storybook app came from a mom at my daughter's preschool in the spring of 2010. She mentioned to me that she and her husband had just created an app that helps children with speech difficulties. She thought that Penelope would make a good app and suggested I start there first.

I researched the market and located app developer PicPocket Books. I sent in about five pages of illustrations that my illustrator, Paul Johnson, created and the story, and heard back from the owner in about a week. She thought the story would make a great app and we went to work to finish the illustrations and fine-tuning the story to include Fun Facts about Pirates, and the other sea creatures in the story.

We sent in the final product to Apple end of December and it went live in January 2011. It was so exciting to see Penelope as an app as this was a whole new world for me!

That following April we created the printed book version and it's available through Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Powells in both printed and eBook form. This is an exciting time to be a writer and to make ones dream of writing and creating an app and book is much easier to do than you might think.

Make sure to have lots of eyes on your story, illustrations and finished product to make sure it is the best it can be - then go out there and really market it to let people know about your wonderful story!

We have built up a loyal group of mates who follow Penelope and her endeavors on Facebook and Twitter. Don't underestimate the power of social media.

Another adventure we took this past year was to create a lifestyle site that would be a platform for moms as well as inspire women to go after their dreams - whatever they may be.

Thus dandelion moms was created in August 2012. The essence of dandelion moms is to remind women to slow down and enjoy the journey as it really does go by so quickly.

We feature women who have gone after their dreams - whether it be writing books, starting a new company or developing a product - so as to inspire others. And we always provide reminders to relax and enjoy this time.

Links

Penelope the Purple Pirate: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/penelope-the-purple-pirate/id413515760?mt=8>

Gerry the Giraffe: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/gerry-the-giraffe-hd/id548810045?mt=8>

Melissa's website: [www.melissanorthway.com](http://www.melissanorthway.com)

Dandelion Moms website: [www.dandelionmoms.com](http://www.dandelionmoms.com)

## Michelle Anaya – “Grendel’s Great Escape” and “Monster Jam”



Like many writers, Michelle Anaya thought that the dream of being published was beyond her reach. She thought that really, only celebrities get published as new children's authors these days. She's a print designer by day and a trip to the book store changed her life because she saw the work of another print designer, published as a book. So she started to dream again.

She decided to create her work as book apps because her son has ADHD and she saw how engaged he became when he read book apps.

Her first book app, “Grendel’s Great Escape” was inspired by her son and the main character’s personality is a lot like her own sons!

She worked with book app specialists, Dragonpencil.com, to develop her first app. She was most surprised by how long it took to create an app and how many steps are involved along the way.

But she's so excited by what she's created that she's working on her second book app, Monster Jam. It's music themed and will include activities where kids can play instruments with the band.

You can see a video interview I did with Michelle here: <http://youtu.be/lbWNga861t4>

Here's Michelle's Story:

### **Q: Tell us about yourself**

I have always had a passion for reading and writing stories for children. While working as a Print Designer in New York, I discovered the vividly illustrated picture book “My Hair is Full of Colors.” It inspired me to incorporate my prints and love for color within a picture book.

About two years ago I started preparing to write guest blogs and eventually started a blog of my own. I joined CBI clubhouse which gave me the tools and courage to make my dream of becoming a published Author a reality.

With two sons, the importance of encouraging voluntary reading among children is important to me, and lead to my decision to create my first book app, “Grendel's Great Escape.”

I’ve now begun production on a two-part, music-themed book app called “Monster Jam.” “Monster Jam” is about a little monster with a big dream of becoming a “Mon-star” rock star. It will not only introduce children to Rock music, but will engage them with instruments as they choose an instrument to play with the band. It's a family production as my sons, who are both musicians, are taking an active part in the brainstorming sessions.

**Q: Are “Grendel” or “Monster Jam” already published as books?**

No, neither is published as traditional books yet. I’m doing the process in reverse. I’m keeping the option of printing the books open.

**Q: Why did you decide to create book apps rather than an eBooks?**

As the mother of two boys, I noticed that after the age of five, their interest in voluntary reading wanted. They gravitated to electronic games that were full of action and sound.

Book apps are more interactive and engage them. They hold their interest in a way that a game would, and helps them develop a love for reading. eBooks don’t do this. They’re basically “books on the go,” without the interaction and animation that apps have.

And I wouldn’t be able to do what I want with interactivity and music in “Monster Jam” if I tried to publish it in the eBook format.

**Q: When and where did you launch?**

“Grendel’s Great Escape” is now live on the Apple iTunes App Store. It will also be available on other platforms in the future; Nook, Kindle and Android tablets.

**Q: Tell us about “Grendel’s Great Escape.” What makes it unique?**

This interactive story was inspired by my eldest son who lives with ADHD.

I noticed that technology, digital games and apps had a calming effect and kept him intrigued. He loved the interactivity of the games and even focused on the educational computer activities. Unfortunately, until a few years ago the iPad and digital tablets weren't around. Handheld games were the only portable option for kids with ADHD. Book Apps are beneficial because they stimulate the brain positively while encouraging a love of reading.

Much like my son's room, the main character, Martin's, room is like an obstacle course. He misplaces his pet and puts tasks off until later. It's a relatable and funny take on Martin's adventurous Show & Tell day adventure with a few surprises. In this app, kids will join Martin in his race against time to find his Ferret, Grendel, while avoiding the grizzly school principal.

**Q: What process did you go through to hire your developer? Did you interview many? What criteria did you use to make your decision?**

I researched many developers online but after reading the e-book "Author's Guide to Book Apps," I decided that my first app should be with a developer that could assist in the management of the app development. Dragonpencil listed all their services and prices clearly on their website. They also provided illustration services. When contacting the owner, he was able to clearly explain the process, give advice and realistic price quotes.

**Q: What's been the hardest part of creating a book app?**

I enjoyed writing the book, researching the illustrator and voice talent. It was a very positive experience. The time involved in the creation however was the hardest part. I wasn't expecting the technical delays due to glitches and unforeseen mishaps.

**Q: What's the biggest surprise?**

The biggest surprise was just how many components go into the development of the app. Completing the story was just the first step in many. I knew it had to be illustrated, but the animation adds a whole other level to that. I had to find sound effects, audition narrators, work on music cues and plan how it would all come together. It's quite the production and I loved every step of it.

**Q: What did you not know going into this that you wish you would have known?**

I wish I would have known the amount of time involved, my app situation is unusual and has taken almost nine months. There are always unexpected issues and next time I will allow for them.

**Q: Any words of advice for other writers who are thinking about creating apps?**

I say “go for it!” Book apps are the wave of the future for writers at the moment and the best part is that it gives the author the amazing opportunity to reach a global audience.

**Q: Was the “Author’s Guide to Book Apps” eBook helpful? If so, what parts?**

It was extremely helpful in so many ways, a virtual road map to app development. Buying this eBook was a great investment, it saved me months of research. The most useful part was the list of developers and the detailed description of the services they provide and Karen’s note that “once built isn’t always built.” Because of that advice, I was able to discuss producing updates as needed with the developer from the very beginning.

I’ve actively recommended it to people interested in self-publishing eBooks and book apps.

**Q: Did you use “How to Market a Book App?” If so, how?**

I read “*How to Market a Book App*” on a flight from Florida armed with a highlighter and lots of post-its. I’m using the information in so many ways, from acquiring product reviews to advertising. It’s full of great advice but the best marketing nugget was establishing a social media presence in advance of launching the App. It’s taking some time to establish my voice but while doing so, I’ve made valuable connections and gotten best practice tips from app developers and bloggers.

**Q: What are your expectations?**

My expectations are to make this a positive experience no matter the outcome. Like all ventures, it has its ups and downs. As Karen says in “How to Market a Book App,” “Marketing is a marathon not a sprint,” so I intend to learn from the disappointments and celebrate the triumphs.

Above all else I’ll pace myself, have patience and perseverance.

**Q: What has been your most effective marketing strategy?**

I’m still working on developing an effective marketing strategy but as a newbie I’m aligning myself with established developers and Mommy bloggers. I’m making arrangements to partner with them to generate raffle-copter giveaways for big ticket items such as iPad mini’s. It’s very effective for driving prospective customers to websites & social media sites.

**Q: Links you’d like to share**

Grendel’s Great Escape for iPad: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/grendels-great-escape/id585972636?ls=1&mt=8>

Monster Jam: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/monster-jam/id671916311?mt=8>

Website: [www.bluesandpiper.com](http://www.bluesandpiper.com)  
Blog: [www.pipersand.wordpress.com](http://www.pipersand.wordpress.com)

## Julie Hedlund – “A Troop is a Group of Monkeys” and “A Shiver of Sharks”



I’m inspired by Julie because she’s someone who is so committed to both her own writing and other writers that she invests in herself and she innovates. When she left the corporate world to pursue her writing dream, she invested in her own education about writing and publishing. To help others (and motivate herself), she created the 12 x 12 Picture Book Writing Challenge. She’s amazing. Read on!

Here’s Julie’s Story:

### **Q: Tell us about yourself**

Three years ago, I left a well-paying, high-power corporate job to pursue my dream of writing for children. In that time, I learned everything I could about the craft of writing for children, I started a blog, created the 12x12 Book Writing Challenge, and slowly built up a portfolio of picture book manuscripts. My app, “a Troop is a Group of Monkeys” is my first published book.

### **Q: Is the story you turned into an app already published as a book?**

No, TROOP is what they, in the business, call a “digital first” product, meaning it will come out first in digital form and will be followed with a print version later. My publisher, Little Bahalia, and I are planning to publish three titles in this app series in 2013, with a print book coming out in late 2013 with excerpts from all three apps.

### **Q: Why did you decide to create a book app rather than an eBook?**

There are other print books on the market featuring collective nouns for animal groups. I found that out years ago when I tried submitting TROOP to traditional publishers. Once apps came along, I knew that animation and sound could set my story apart and increase the educational value.

For example, instead of simply reading, “A parliament of owls hoots in the night,” we hear the owls and make their heads spin around with a touch.

**Q: Tell us about your app. What makes it unique?**

TROOP is lyrical and fun and gives children the opportunity to interact with the animal groups in surprising ways. The narrator, Tim McCanna, is also a talented musician. He turned the text into lyrics to create an original song for the app. Children can now sing and dance to the story as well as act out the animals' actions.

What is really unique about the app, however, is its appeal to a broad range of ages. While little children adore the lively colors and the animal interactions, older kids enjoy the song and learning the names of animal groups.

Many of the collective nouns are unfamiliar even to adults, which makes TROOP fun for parents and teachers to share with kids. We also have a Common Core-aligned set of reading strategies at the end of the app to help teachers use TROOP in the classroom.

**Q: What process did you go through to make your app? Did you hire a developer?**

I did not hire a developer. Instead I looked for an e-publisher who could do the art direction, production, development and publication to the App Store. It took quite a while to find the right fit because when I first started looking for a publisher for TROOP, few e-publishers were accepting submissions and I found almost no guidance on how to submit a storybook app.

I chose the e-publisher route for three reasons. First, I am not an illustrator. I knew the illustration, animation and design would be a huge factor in TROOP's success, and I felt my limited expertise would make it difficult to effectively outsource those tasks.

Second, I knew if I went with a developer I would have to take the time to learn enough about the underlying technology to provide adequate direction. Armed with so little knowledge about app illustration, design and development, I decided instead to search for a publisher.

Third, I simply didn't have the budget to fund the app development upfront.

**Q: Was the "Author's Guide to Book Apps" eBook helpful? If so, what parts?**

Yes! It was actually the "Author's Guide" that convinced me I didn't have the chops to work with a developer directly, but it also reinforced my belief that TROOP would make an excellent app. The Guide helped me determine the publishing path I wanted to take with TROOP.

**Q: Did you use "How to Market a Book App?" If so, how?**

As I write this, the app is still in the approval process, but I've read and taken MANY notes from "How to Market a Book App." One thing I learned was the importance of PR and that I wasn't



going to have time to do much (hmmm... I'm seeing a recurring theme here). So my publisher and I decided to hire a PR professional.

I did, however, get oodles of grassroots marketing ideas for TROOP, including setting up a blog tour, getting people on board to buy the app pre-release, building buzz in advance and just the importance of having a plan in general. Everyone who is publishing an app needs to own this book!

**Q:** What's been the hardest part of creating an app?

The hardest part actually came before I found my publisher – Stacey Williams-Ng at Little Bahalia. I found it incredibly complex and time-consuming to research the various options for publishing an app, and I found next to no information about which e-publishers were accepting manuscripts and/or how to submit to them.

In the end, I created the type of proposal I imagined an e-publisher would want to see, including a template for the app brief (which I learned about from your book, Karen!). I got such great feedback from agents and editors on the structure and content of my TROOP proposal that I turned it into a template for other authors and illustrators to use.

The template includes, as a bonus, a list of e-publishers that accept submissions and DIY tools for creating your own app. It does not, however, list individual or developers, as I did not feel qualified to evaluate them.

Once Stacey and I signed a contract, the creation and development of TROOP went very quickly. Stacey knows her stuff!

**Q: What's the biggest surprise? Biggest reward?**

As someone who always equated publishing with a traditional, print book deal at a big publishing house, the biggest surprise came when I first started seeing illustrations and animation for TROOP and realized I felt every bit as much of a published author as I would have with a traditional deal.

TROOP was coming to life before my eyes, and it no longer mattered one whit that it would be on the iPad instead of a printed book.

I think the greatest reward is the time to market. Stacey and I signed our contract in late August 2012 and the app will be in the store mid-February 2013. That is lightning speed in the publishing industry.

Furthermore, we have two additional apps slated for release in 2013 AND a print book to accompany the third. For an author, there is no greater thrill than realizing that children all across

the globe will be able to read your stories. The fact that the stories can reach them in months versus years is part of what makes digital publishing so compelling.

**Q: Any words of advice for other writers who are thinking about creating apps?**

As with any other type of writing, study the market. Read/play many apps and remember that for book apps, story is still king. If you think your story would be well suited to the app format, educate yourself on your publishing options with resources such as this very book you are reading, and those created by others who have published apps.

One thing I would advise writers *not* to do is to think that digital publishing is somehow inferior to traditional. A great story is a great story – no matter the format. So if you’ve got a fantastic story that will make an amazing app, I say, “Go for it!”

**Links**

Website: [www.juliehedlund.com](http://www.juliehedlund.com)

“A Troop is a Group of Monkeys” on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/a-troop-is-a-group-of-monkeys/id601767840?mt=8&ign-mpt=uo%3D2>

“A Shiver of Sharks” on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/a-shiver-of-sharks/id656564554?mt=8>

**Julia Stilchen – “Koala Loves Hearts”**



What strikes me about Julia’s story is that she’s spent years creating other people’s work and now she’s so excited about creating her own work and bringing it to a global audience. In 2012, she moved from the USA to Japan and revels in the freedom that digital publishing provides

Rather than waiting for someone else to make her dreams come true, she’s taking control of her own destiny on her own time and in her own way.

She used a DIY service called Interact Builder for her first app.

Here's Julia's Story:

**Q. Tell us about yourself.**

I have always been interested in writing and illustrating since I was twelve. I had the opportunity to work at Fox Animation Studios in their Digital and Ink department, which was an exciting experience, however I have ultimately found a greater joy working as a writer and illustrator.

Currently, I live in Japan with my husband and two children. Living far from home could make this very challenging, however with the internet and the new digital book format, I have an increased opportunity to seek publishing on my own, which has been a huge open door of opportunities.

**Q. Why did you decide to create a book app?**

Upon the release of the iPad and witnessing an interactive book app for the first time, I was mesmerized. It sparked a growing interest to learn how it works. Like many others, I wanted to create one myself!

I did some research and am so thankful I came across your awesome websites. After reading "Author's Guide to Book Apps" and "How to Market a Book App" I have had renewed confidence to pursue my own ideas. Your books and workshops are filled with very helpful information that has helped me with understanding all that goes into the entire process.

As a writer and illustrator, having full control and options without having to relearn another skill, such as coding, is thrilling. Having the freedom to take my own concept, develop it and create a book that I have always wanted to make, without having to wait for someone to let me, is like giving me a magic wand and saying, "Here. Go unleash your imagination. Have fun!" Yes please. Finally! It feels so freeing.

I'm enthusiastic about working on my own personal projects, to have an idea and see it through. It's very rewarding. My stories can have a life of its own rather than dreaming about it and hoping it will happen. Creating a book app makes that possible and it doesn't have to be a difficult process.

**Q. What's unique about your book app?**

Koala Loves Hearts is a book illustrated in a Kawaii style, which is Japanese for cute. I have always been hooked on this style since I first saw Hello Kitty. I wanted to combine this style along with my own and it's been evolving over the years from my exposure to digital art and anime.

**Q. How did you get your app developed?**

I used the online software at Interactive Touch Books (ITB).

**Q. When and where did you launch?**

February 10<sup>th</sup> 2012 was the first launch date through Interactive Touch Books, which can be purchased via their free bookshelf app in the App Store or via their website.

**Q. What has been your most effective marketing strategy?**

Friends and family, Facebook, YouTube and online marketing ads posted at various app review sites.

**Q. What's been your least effective marketing strategies?**

With there being a vast arena of methods to market, limiting oneself to a few isn't effective. Getting the exposure as much as possible in the right place where you know your target audience is, is vital.

**Q. Did you use "How to Market a Book App?" If so, how was it useful?**

I have used the book and have found it to be very helpful in understanding the market, and not just any market, but more specifically the children's market. It's important to know whom you are marketing to and how to reach them in every way possible.

**Q. Estimated budget?**

\$100 used for stock music and advertisement fees.

**Q. How are sales going?**

For a beginning book, sales have been ongoing and a great start for a learning experience as a beginner.

**Q. Any advice for other book app makers?**

Don't get too caught up in creating a book that has too much interactivity. Balance is good. If you are going for a storybook, make sure the story doesn't get lost or become less because of all the interactivity options.

Planning everything out is best to know what you want to include. There are different categories of book apps: storybooks, activity books, coloring, educational and the different ages that they all appeal to. These are to be considered during the planning process.

Don't be in too much of a hurry. I rushed on my first app to meet the Valentine's Day deadline and in doing so, I paid less attention to the storyline. If you are creating an app book around the theme of a holiday, make sure you also give yourself enough time to pace yourself with plenty of time to get the book out there in order to market it.

**Q. What was it like using the do-it-yourself ITB tool?**

My Experience using ITB was that it was easy to learn and use. Once I became familiar with the tools I was able to easily produce page by page, an interactive activity book. It was very exciting. I only wish there is an offline option to work and preview on the software directly from my computer then uploading.

My overall experience was awesome. I enjoyed that I had full control over the whole development, verses if I tried to learn to code, I'd rather be spending my time creating these projects instead of learning a whole entire new skill. Their software made it an easy process, easy to learn and utilize.

To download "Koala Loves Hearts," you need to download the free InteractiveTouchBooks app (ITB) and then buy "Koala" from within the app. <https://itunes.apple.com/ca/app/interactive-touch-books-for/id423957406?mt=8>

**Sofia Caessa – "Augui"**



Sofia's publishing deal fell through when her publisher filed for bankruptcy. Rather than be deterred, she started investigating other publishing options and discovered that the book app format would let her take her vision to a whole new level. She's published two apps in her Augui series.

Here is Sofia's Story:

**Q: Tell us about yourself and about the Augui series?**

I am a dreamer! I love dreaming about ideas and stories and characters. I was born in Lisbon, Portugal, but throughout my life I have lived in Holland, Brazil, the USA, and Belgium. I grew up with friends from all corners of the world and I truly value multiculturalism. My background is in

theater, but my true passion is creating characters, rather than reenacting them. In fact, instead of rehearsing I would write about the character's back story.

In Brussels, I founded a cultural organization that promoted artistic projects, and taught creative workshops (writing, theater and film) for kids. I started the Little Film Academy in Brussels in 2010. The Little Film Academy, which organizes film workshops and activities for children, is now operating in Portugal. I also work in film as a producer and screenwriter. My short film "Should the Wife Confess?" was in competition in several festivals, having been invited to open the Culinary Cinema section of the Berlin Film Festival in 2011.

I live in Portugal with my partner, a musician, and our 15 month old son Giani.

My business partner happens to be my father, who is a huge inspiration for me - as a human being and as a businessman. Jorge was a senior executive at Unilever and worked in several countries. Retired for four years now, he is dedicating his time to creativity (he paints and is fascinated by everything that is multimedia). He is strongly engaged in our project.

**Q: Is the story you turned into an app already published as a book?**

Ten years ago, while living abroad, I wrote, illustrated (using PowerPoint) and bound a picture book to give my grandmother, Augusta, for her birthday. My parents were so touched by the gift that they showed it to their friends. Everyone I knew at the time fell in love with Augui and suggested I try to publish it. In 2008, I sent the manuscript to several publishers in Portugal and got a book deal. However, a year later, the publisher filed for bankruptcy and was unable to publish my book.

**Q: Why did you decide to create a book app rather than an eBook?**

When my father and I decided to work together, we had imagined an online platform for digital stories - a website with a library of stories that could be read online or printed. After meeting with several companies regarding the website, we learned of the iPad and the concept of interactive story apps. We fell in love with the idea and realized that book apps were the best way to bring Augui to life. In fact, we marveled at the synergy between technology and art.

**Q: When and where did you launch?**

Our apps have been available worldwide since November 28<sup>th</sup> 2013.

**Q: Tell us about your app! What makes it unique?**

Augui is a series of stories that follow the adventures of Augui, the Witch of the Moon. Augui is a caring grandmother and a fantastic witch. Her mission is to save the fairies that have been frozen in time by a mysterious creature. She must make a special potion to reverse the spell and cure the

fairies.

This potion is composed of seven rare ingredients and each represents a human value: Love, Peace, Respect, Courage, Truth, Friendship and Loyalty. In each story, readers must find a secret ingredient and, at the end of the series, Augui will prepare the potion and bring magic back to the world.

**Q: What process did you go through to hire your developer? Did you interview many? What criteria did you use to make your decision?**

We had a hard time finding an independent programmer/developer. We met with some firms who gave us extremely pricey quotes, which we couldn't afford. One day, we watched an interview on the news about a new creative IT development firm who were creating interesting and innovative products, including mobile apps. We requested a meeting with them and explained our project and vision. They were very excited about the project and we decided to hire their services.

**Q: Who is part of your team?**

We are a small, family-based team.

When we decided to create this app, we knew that we couldn't use my cute PowerPoint illustrations! So, we put out an ad looking for a children's illustrator. Much to our surprise, we were swarmed with portfolios. After a thorough analysis of all the portfolios, we selected about 10, and sent them the story so they would draw us a sketch. Of those 10, we then selected 2 candidates for an interview. When I saw Pedro Fernandes' sketch, I fell in love with it because it represented exactly my vision. During the interview, we realized we had found the right person because he shared the same values and showed the same passion. After half an hour, his interview became a brainstorming session!

My partner, Pedro Güerne, is a successful Jazz musician and teacher. It was a challenge for him to compose the music because at the time, he was making the transition to music composition. He worked with João Lucena, a talented pianist and teacher at the Music Conservatory, to create all the original songs. They then adapted the songs and performed them live at our release party.

My mother, Filomena, is in charge of the financial part of the company. She also plays devil's advocate when my father and I aren't seeing eye-to-eye.

**Q: What's been the hardest part of creating an app?**

The hardest part was having no control over the technical aspect of production. Also, having no experience, there's no term of comparison. When I work on a film, I don't know every aspect of production (lighting, camera, etc.), but I have a basic knowledge and that helps me understand what is going well and what must be improved. In this project, I've had to trust the developer almost without questioning anything. I feel that at times, I had no control over the situation/decisions that had to be made because of that lack of experience and knowledge. Jorge has immense experience managing large and complex projects and he feels that it was essential for us to go through this learning curve with patience and perseverance. We feel that after developing our first apps we are now more knowledgeable and equipped to progress further.

**Q: What's the biggest surprise?**

My biggest surprise was that creating a book app is a lot like producing a film. Much of the process is the same: preproduction (writing the script, creating the storyboard, finding the right team), production (creating the actual app and all its components), post-production (releasing the app, building marketing tools such as a website). Like in film making, an app depends on a team whose work is equally important. It was great to be able to rely on my experience as a filmmaker.

**Q: What did you not know going into this that you wish you would have known?**

This can be a lengthy and frustrating process if we aren't true to our vision. We weren't quite prepared for the massive complexity of children's privacy and safety. We only knew that we did not want to compromise children's safety. To tackle this issue required more time and energy than we had initially expected.

**Q: Any words of advice for other writers who are thinking about creating apps?**

I believe the book app is an amazing platform for writers to find their voice. Keep true to your vision and trust your instincts. Believe in what you're doing and do it passionately. I believe that whatever is done with passion and love can only have positive results.

Research other apps and have fun while doing it. Understand what a book app truly is and take advantage of this amazing technology.

Find the right partner (whether it's the illustrator or the developer), who you believe in and who believes in your vision. In the end, this partnership must be about trust and respect, and believing in the project. I've had the privilege of having my father as my business partner, which has offered me a lot of confidence and security. Trust the wise advice offered by people who have done this before and who are committed to bringing this industry to a higher level of quality.

**Q: What are your expectations?**

We wish for Augui to be a success and for children (and parents) to fall in love with the stories.

Currently, we are developing Augui's second story. We are also brainstorming a new kid's series, which is entirely different from Augui.

We hope our apps are successful so that we are also able to develop apps for other artists. In Portugal, there are so many talented young people who need an outlet for their work. Getting published or one's work recognized can be pretty tough, and we would like to contribute.

**Q: What has been your most effective marketing strategy?**

We have built a website for the Augui series: a safe, kid-friendly site where children can explore



Augui's world and know more about all the characters. Our Facebook page already has quite a few friends and we try to update it as regularly as possible.

We were surprised by the media coverage we had in Portugal, where I was on the news of the main TV channel at prime time for nearly 15 minutes. A few educational entities have also encouraged our vision.

However, we are still learning and we are still trying to figure out what works best. We used and continue to use Karen Robertson's Marketing Book as our bible. We are aware that we need to be persistent and do everything we can to improve our apps.

**Q: How much did it cost to make your app?**

The total cost of our apps is higher than we had envisioned when we began its development. However, it is less than we thought it would be when we were in the very initial phase. We also believe that the next apps will be easier to make and less costly. There is clearly a steep learning curve in this business and thus it must be seen as a medium term investment and not a golden tree.

**Q: Anything else you'd like to add?**

We have encountered so many cooperative and helpful persons in the developers community as well as organizations, and we're very thankful to all of them.

**Q: Links**

[www.augui.com](http://www.augui.com)

[www.leleland.com](http://www.leleland.com)

**Susan Dieker – “Knuckles The Hound of Hanalei”**



I first corresponded with Susan in May 2013. I wanted to share her story because she's passionate about her project yet ran in to some issues that others have run in to and she's been open about sharing them. She'd had some success with selling her self-published book and was inspired to create an app by her grandson, who loved story book apps. She worked with an individual developer who didn't have the skills to fulfill the vision she had for her story.

Here is Susan's Story:

I became a dog lover very late in life. In fact, the only reason I agreed to getting a dog was that my husband, Rick, really wanted one, and once we settled down on the Hawaiian Island of Kauai, in 2004, I agreed. We were fortunate to rescue a wonderful Airedale Hound mix that Rick named "Knuckles" from our local Humane Society. Knuckles was a real character, making many friends on our beach. Rick kept a notebook of his antics, thinking that one day he would write a children's book.

In September of 2010, Rick passed away suddenly. I decided to write the book Rick had envisioned, as a tribute to him and, honestly, as therapy for me. I had the help of a wonderful illustrator, Mel Sandler, and the first "Knuckles, The Hound of Hanalei" was released in a, self-published, hardcover book in 2011. I have been very blessed to sell out my first run of 2500 books and I have just released the second book in the series.

In 2012, I had family visiting. I spent some time with my 2 year old nephew, looking and reading book apps with him on my iPad. He loved it so much, I thought I would try to turn my book into an app. I decided on an app, rather than an eBook because of the possibility of interactivity.

I ran an ad on the Kauai Craig's List and got only a couple of responses. One of them was someone finishing his University studies and he offered to do it for free as a way to learn. What did I know...nothing...so this sounded like a good idea! I did not find Karen's books until we were well into the process and, unfortunately, I did not have any idea of what to look for in a developer.

In the end, I did pay about \$1800, and it took over a year. I wish I understood more of the technical issues. There were so many things my developer could not do. We gave up some of the ideas I wanted and launched at the beginning of November 2013. The app is not perfect, for one thing, it only works with the iPad with retina display, but I am happy for it to be out there!

The app is unique, as are my books, in that the text, while in English, has Hawaiian words and with the "read to me" feature gives one the opportunity to learn to pronounce some Hawaiian words. And the story, which takes Knuckles from the animal shelter to a new life on the beach, is heartwarming.

I have to work on my marketing which has been seriously lacking. I am hoping that this piece might help generate some interest in the app and my books.

Links:

Download the app: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/knuckles-the-hound-of-hanalei/id713282897?mt=8>

Website: [EverybodyKnowsKnuckles.com](http://EverybodyKnowsKnuckles.com).

Facebook: [Facebook.com/KnucklesTheHoundOfHanalei](https://www.facebook.com/KnucklesTheHoundOfHanalei)

## **Ready to Make Your D-R-E-A-M Real?**

I hope you're now as inspired as I am and are thinking about what's unique about your story and how you can bring it to life as a book app.

I would love to hear your feedback on this eBook and these stories. Feel free to contact me via my website, [www.digitalkidsauthor.com](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com).

I'll be continuing to add new Fightin' Bookworm stories to this eBook as well. So if you create a book app, please feel free to send me your story for consideration.

Dare to **D-R-E-A-M** and I can't wait to see what you create!

### **Resources**

There are a number of ways you can gain more information about creating book apps and work with me as well.

Visit [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-basics-ebook) to learn more about:

- My free training webinar
- Free reports and videos
- eBooks – “Author’s Guide to Book Apps,” “How to Choose Your Book App Developer,” and “How to Market a Book App”
- Video workshops – “How to Create and Market a Book App” and “Author Success in 2013”
- Home Study Course – 35 show-and-tell video tutorials (plus PDFs and audio files) to walk you step-by-step through the process of how to create a book app. [www.bookappacademy.com](http://www.bookappacademy.com)
- 1:1 coaching

## Other Books



***What is a Book App and Could YOU Create One? How 27 Writers Did!*** (this expands on content here plus has additional author interviews) <http://digitalkidsauthor.com/whatisabookapp/>  
***Author's Guide to Book Apps:*** [www.authorsguidetobookapps.com](http://www.authorsguidetobookapps.com)  
***How to Choose a Book App Developer:*** [www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-developer-book-2](http://www.digitalkidsauthor.com/book-app-developer-book-2)  
***How to Market a Book App:*** [www.howtomarketabookapp.com](http://www.howtomarketabookapp.com)

## About the Author



It all started with a dream.

In 2007, Karen was struggling to get her sons to read for fun when she had a dream that lead her to create a new kind of book that combined the magic of stories with the fun of toys. She left her 19-year marketing career to write and publish “Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island,” an award-winning book that used little toys as clues to finding a treasure.

When her son picked up an iPad for the first time and chose storybook apps over game apps, she knew she’d found a way to take interactive reading to a new level.

Her first book app, "[Treasure Kai and the Lost Gold of Shark Island](#)” has won numerous honors for its unique approach to nonlinear storytelling. The sequel, “[Treasure Kai and the Seven Cities of Gold](#),” integrates game play into the narrative and was one of only 20 book apps to be awarded 5 stars by Digital Storytime in 2012.

Karen is passionate about helping other writers make their publishing dreams come true. She’s an international speaker and lecturer on how writers can turn their stories into book apps and she’s written several books on the topic.

Originally from Texas, Karen lived in Sydney, Australia for 18 years before moving to Austin in 2012. She lives with her husband, two sons, and her stash of dark chocolate.

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