

“Get Your Book in the Stacks” Guide

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Here's a step-by-step guide to getting your book into libraries—public, school, and academic. This applies whether you're an indie/self-published author or traditionally published, and especially if you're a Black author aiming to reach wider, often underserved, communities.

Step 1: Make Sure Your Book is Library-Ready

Libraries look for professionally published, high-quality books. Check these boxes:

ISBN & Barcode: Your book must have an ISBN (International Standard Book Number). Many libraries also prefer a scannable barcode on the back cover.

Library-friendly formats: Offer both print (paperback or hardcover) and digital formats (eBook and audiobook, if possible).

Professional editing and design: Libraries want polished books. Hire editors and designers if needed.

Reviews: Libraries rely on credible review sources. Try to get reviewed by:

Kirkus Reviews (especially Indie)

Booklist, Library Journal, or School Library Journal (SLJ)

Publishers Weekly

Blogs or influencers recognized in the library community

Step 2: Get Your Book in Library Distribution Channels

Libraries usually order through trusted vendors—not Amazon. Here's where you want your book listed:

IngramSpark (widely used by libraries for print books)

Baker & Taylor (for public libraries)

OverDrive (for eBooks/audiobooks in public libraries)

Hoopla, Bibliotheca, and cloudLibrary (alternative digital lending platforms)

Mackin & Follett (used by school libraries)

EBSCO or ProQuest (for academic libraries)

Step 3: Create a Library One-Sheet

This is your book's sell sheet just for librarians. It should include:

Book title, author name, ISBN, cover image

Book description and genre/category

Publisher/distributor info (IngramSpark, OverDrive, etc.)

Library-friendly formats available

Awards, notable reviews, or press coverage

Contact info and website

Mention any local connection if applicable (libraries love to support local authors)

Step 4: Start with Your Local Libraries

Begin where you have roots:

Reach out to your local public library and offer to donate a copy.

Ask about their process for local author submissions or book talks.

For school libraries, connect with media specialists or English teachers.

Bonus tip: Libraries often have Local Author Days or panels—pitch yourself!

Step 5: Contact Libraries Directly (Strategically)

Here's how to do it:

Email or call the acquisitions librarian.

Use your library one-sheet in the pitch.

Offer to donate a copy or send one through their preferred distributor.

Be polite, professional, and patient.

Step 6: Offer Events or Author Visits

Libraries love programming!

Pitch a virtual or in-person author talk.

Offer to run a writing workshop or themed book club.

If your book is relevant to Black history, youth empowerment, mental health, etc., highlight that.

Step: Promote and Keep Momentum

Once you're in one library:

Post about it! Tag the library to show appreciation.

Use that momentum to pitch to others.

Track where your book is available—consider a map on your website.