Affinity Publisher to IngramSpark: A Children's Book Journey

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By Dave Cohen
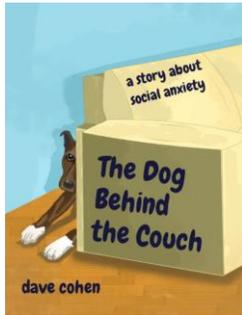
I recently had inspiration to write a children's book about our newly adopted dog. The impetus was not just another book about a kid's lovable dog, but to share the trials of working with a dog suffering from what I diagnosed as "social anxiety". I thought that what I was experiencing could be helpful for children who also shied away from social situations. Or at least it would give them a relatable friend who struggled in a similar fashion. So that's the background for "The Dog Behind the Couch".

About five years prior, I had written an adult novel, "Executable File", and self-published through Amazon's (https://www.amazon.com) service., CreateSpace. Response was pretty lousy, even though I had amassed a number of very good reviews, including through Kirkus

Reviews (https://www.kirkusreviews.com/). I was also discouraged by book stores' refusals to sell it in their stores, as CreateSpace was essentially a competitor and they would realize no profit from sales. My research, and suggestions from others, pointed me to IngramSpark (https://www.ingramspark.com) for future books. So, there's the starting point for getting "The Dog Behind the Couch" into print.

Fast forward through the hard parts: writing the book, getting an illustrator, and fruitlessly trying to find a publisher. This was a children's picture book, so I quickly learned that Microsoft Word was not a good avenue. IngramSpark has a Book Builder feature,

and I used it to create the cover. But it was limited, and far too tedious to use for the inner pages. So, I looked at some other options, including Adobe Publisher (https://www.adobe.com), but was really happy to find a one purchase option (no subscriptions!) that looked easy to use: Affinity Publisher (https://affinity.serif.com/en-us/publisher/). And it worked great. So, we can jump ahead to taking my Affinity Publisher created children's picture book and getting it into, and out of, IngramSpark.

Without the gory details about pulling my hair out and banging my head against the wall trying to figure out what did and did not work, here are the three things I had to do to get the print and eBook versions of my book from Affinity Publisher to IngramSpark and out the door. Hopefully, this will save you a lot of angst.

As noted, I created the cover in IngramSpark BookBuilder. So, we are now just going to look at the inner pages. **Let's start with the hardest part first, creating the eBook version.**

Step 1: In Affinity Publisher:

- Export the book as a PDF with Preset of PDF (flatten). That's because I used layers of text and pictures.
- For the Area, use All Pages, not All Spreads (that shows 2 pages at a time, like opening a book).
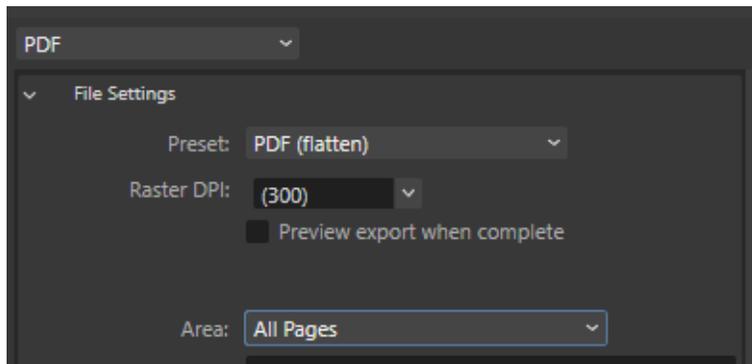
- Save the result. I used "dogbehindthecouch-epub-FINAL.pdf".

Step 2: Use the free software package Calibre (https://calibre-ebook.com/) to create the ePub file.

- Use Add Books to add the PDF file created in Affinity Publisher.
- Then use Convert Books to convert the book to an ePub file. I checked the option for No Default Cover.
- Unfortunately, IngramSpark will not like the resulting file (discovered at the end of the approval process!) because Calibre does not embed the language by default. To fix that, use Edit Book. This is getting into the weeds a bit, so hang in there. There is an index.html option in the left side panel. Choose that, and on line 2 you will see two places that look like lang="". Simply insert the letters 'en' (for English) inside both sets of double quotes.
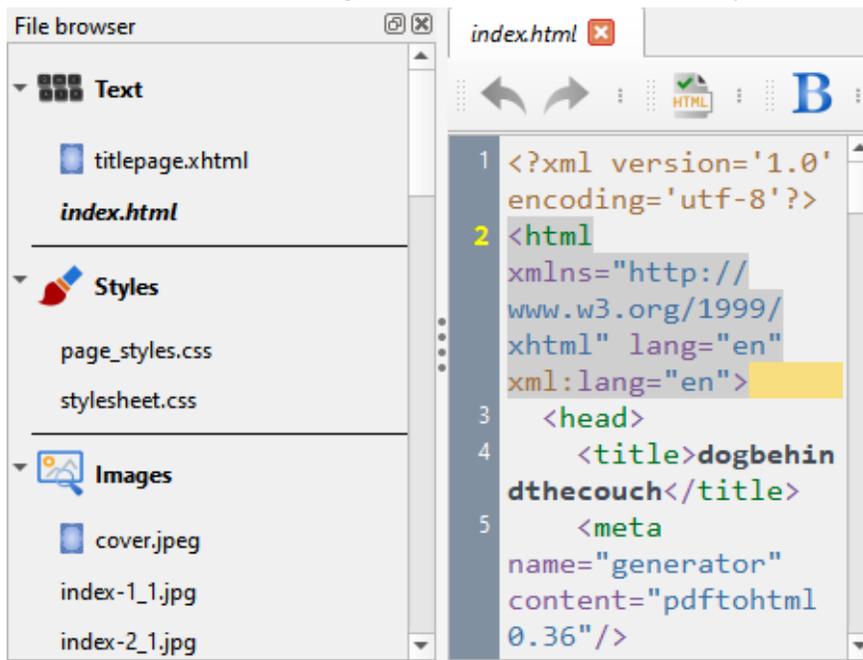
- Then use Save to Disk. This will create the ePub file inside a folder that itself is created where you specify. For me, the folder created was "cohen,dave". That is the ePub file we want. I copied and renamed mine to "dogbehindthecouch-FINAL.epub".

Step 3: As a sanity check:

- Use an eBook reader like the free Aquile Reader (https://www.aquilereader.in/) to take a look at your ePub file.

Step 4: In IngramSpark:

- Use BookBuilder, and for the Inner Pages, load the ePub file you created in Calibre as the IngramSpark ePub file.

Next, let's tackle the print version.

Step 1: In Affinity Publisher:

- Export the book as a PDF with Preset of PDF/X-1a:2003.
- For the Area, use All Pages, not All Spreads.
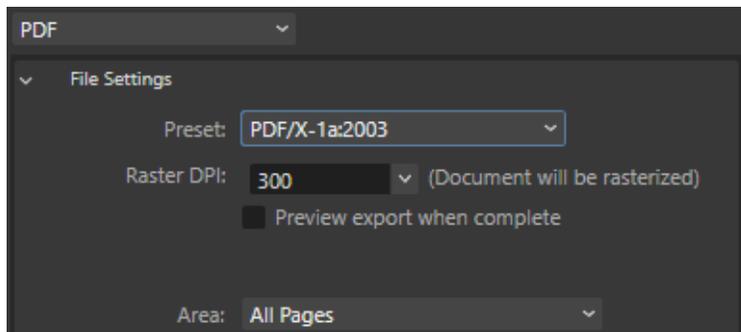
- Save the result. I used "dogbehindthecouch-pdfx-FINAL.pdf".

Step 2: In IngramSpark:

- Use BookBuilder, and for the Inner Pages, load the PDF file you created as the IngramSpark PDF file.

Finally, I made a normal PDF version that shows spreads. This is useful for sending off for reviews.

Step 1: In Affinity Publisher:

- Export the book as a PDF with Preset of PDF (for print).

- For the Area, use All Spreads.
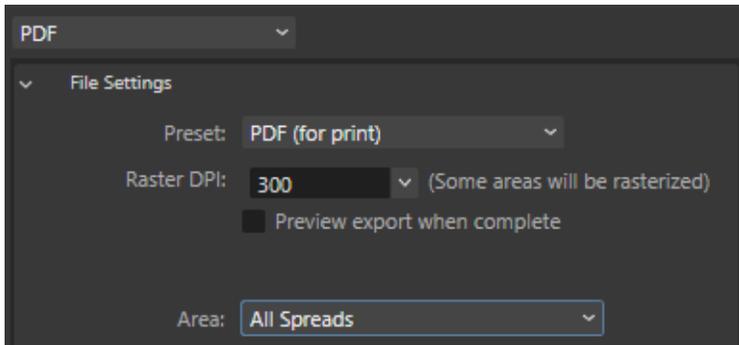
- Save the result. I used "dogbehindthecouch-paged-FINAL.pdf".
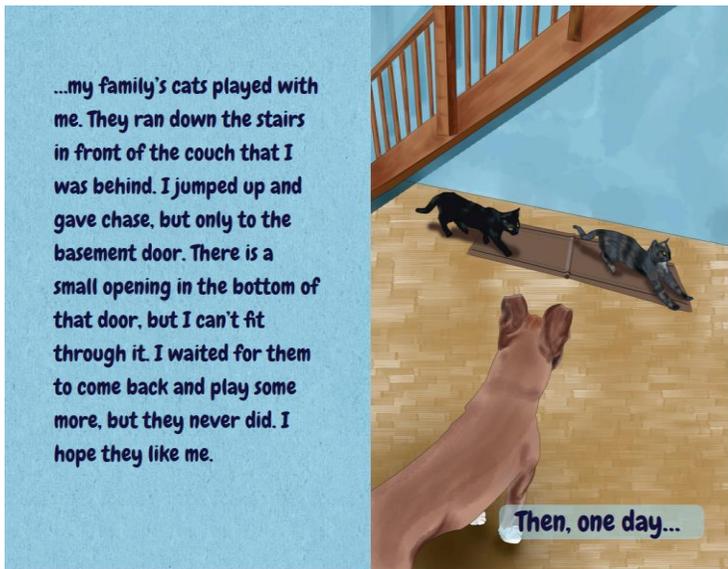
Back at IngramSpark, you can now review the result, and go through the confirmation process as needed. Then they will send you the proof, which you can approve.

Three versions, a little discomfort, but this process lets you use the nice tools from Affinity Publisher and IngramSpark. For the record, I used:

- [Affinity Publisher](#) 2 version 2.2.1
- [Calibre eBook Management](#) version 7.8
- [Aquile Reader](#) version 1.1.37