# Put Your Family Stories Between the Covers

I wanted to learn about my ancestors and show my children and grandchildren who their ancestors were and the lives they lived. I also wanted to prove or disprove some family stories. I wanted to put the information I found in books along with photos and newspaper articles about my family. Then I found out the outrageous cost of having a book printed and bound. So, I printed and spiral bound them myself. With a little work you can do it too. We will look at some hints on research as well as best practices and compiling your book from start to finish. If I can do it, you can do it.



If I can do it anybody can do it. This is how I work on my books.

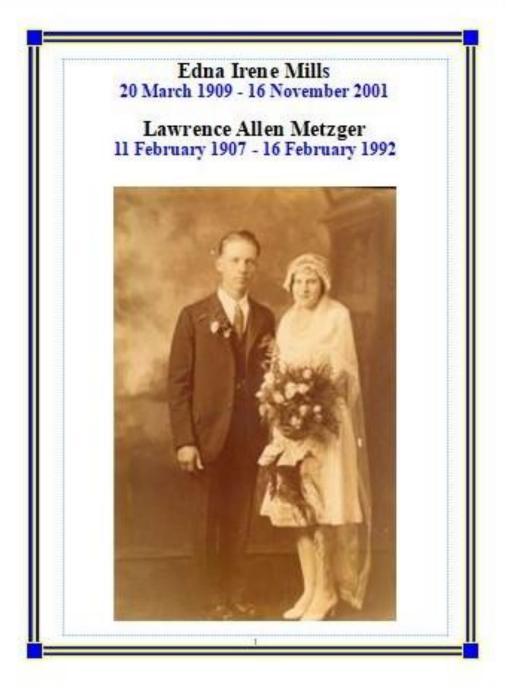
I am going to show you how I produced the family books I have here today. From the research, to the printing and binding. Always remember: **If I can do it, anybody can do it.** 

First, you must decide what size of book you want to produce. This will partly be determined on the subject of your book. It will take time and effort. Of course there isn't any deadline except your own.

Second, I must admit that I had a lot of help. My mother was an avid genealogist, and had gathered lots of information and photos over the years, which I inherited when she died. Which brings me to my first point. Contact your living relatives, get the information they have, and if you inherited boxes of stuff, don't wait 12 years to go thru them like I did after my mother's death. There were items in those boxes I wish I had had when I printed my first three books.

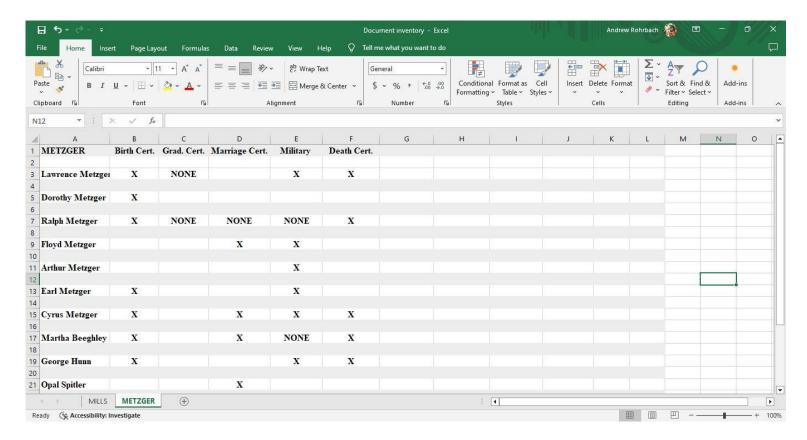
However, she didn't have everything I wanted, or needed, so I had to become a detective of sorts.

First you need to determine the subject or subjects of your book <u>AND</u> the time span you are going to cover. Then you begin to gather the photos and information you have on hand to see what you need or where you have blank spots in your data.



My current project.

I strongly recommend you create an inventory chart to track what you have and what you need. If you don't I guarantee you will waste time looking for photos or information you already have. Books contain a lot of information; you can't keep track of all of it in your head.



I use an Excel spreadsheet for this but you could just as easily hand draw a chart and fill it in. Now you know what you have and what you need. How do you find the things you need? Research!

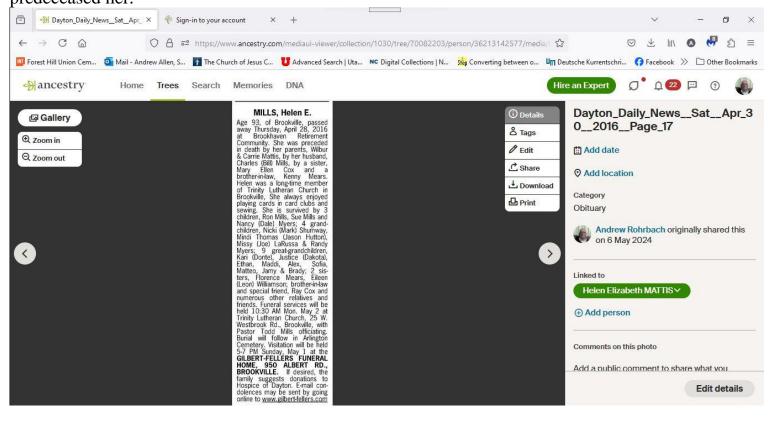
If you live in Montgomery County, Ohio you can receive digital photos of birth, land, and marriage records by emailing the Montgomery County Archives at <a href="mailto:genealogy@mcohio.org">genealogy@mcohio.org</a>. This is a free service. They have marriage records for Montgomery County from 1959 and older, birth records for Montgomery County 1908 and older, and land records as well. All as a free service.

Where do I start? Most times I start with an obituary.

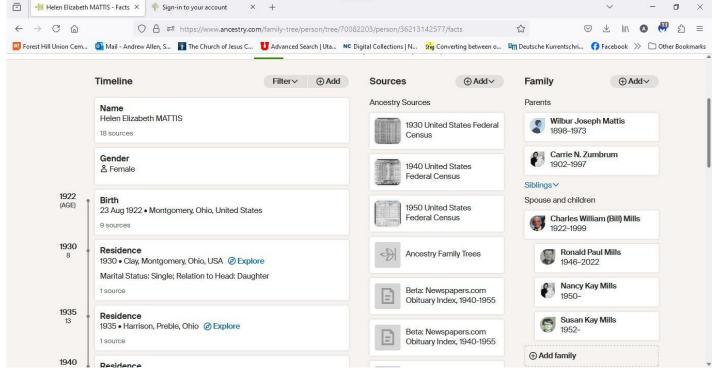
What does an obituary tell you? The name of the deceased, when they died, and most important for our purpose, the survivors! Who is going to have all their photos and documents? The Survivors! And usually, the obit will tell you their names and what town the survivors live in.

## First case

I was looking for information on Bill and Helen Mills. Helen died in 2016. I knew her husband Bill predeceased her.



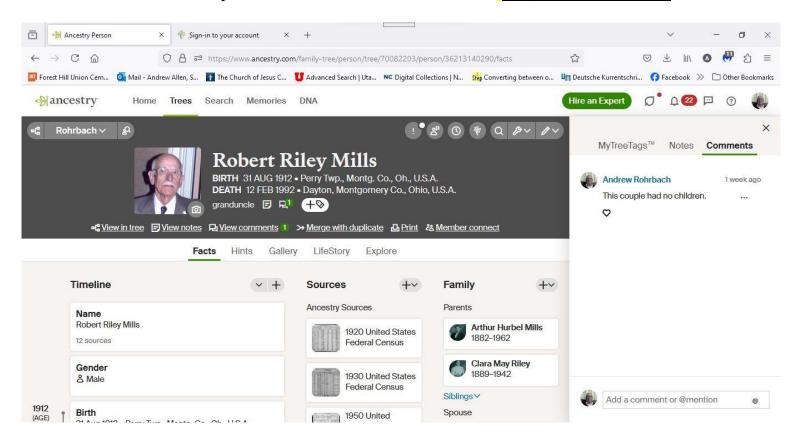
Her obituary says three children survived her. However, her oldest child died in 2022. So, I found her daughter Nancy on Facebook.



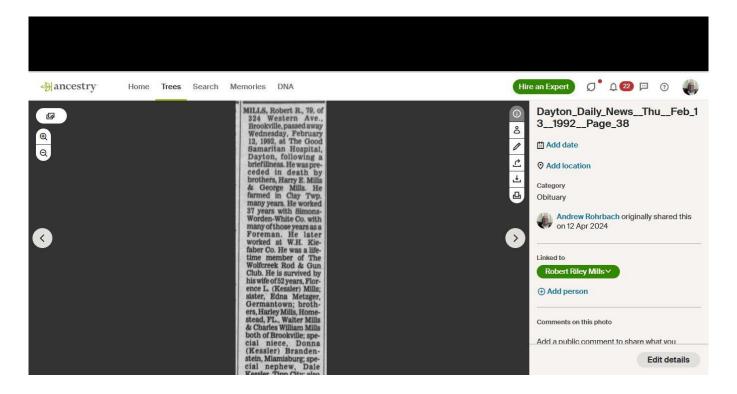
I made contact with her. She has all her parents' photos and records, and has made them available to me.

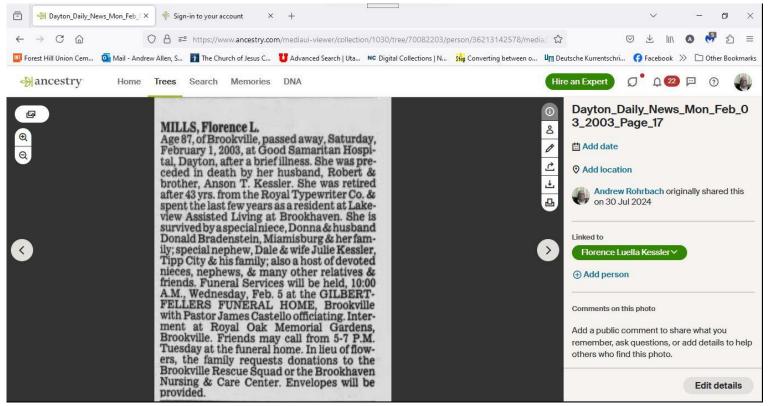
#### Next case

I needed information and photos of Robert and Florence Mills, they had no children.



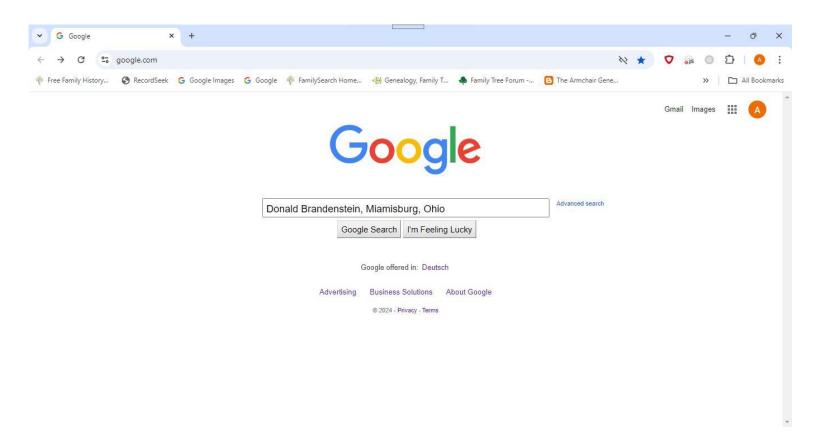
I checked Robert's obit. and found that his wife had survived him.



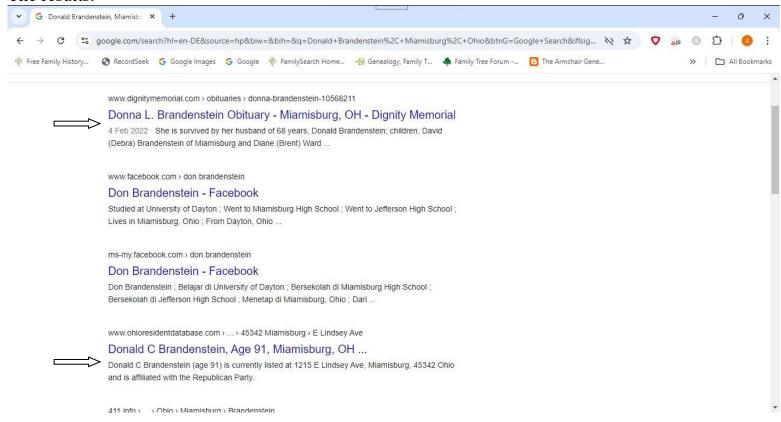


I checked her obit. a special niece is listed as surviving her, Donna and Donald Brandenstein and they lived in Miamisburg.

# So, I Googled Donald Brandenstein.



#### The results:



I saw in the Google results that Donna had passed away. But a Donald Brandenstein was still alive at 91! I drove to the address in Miamisburg not knowing if it was the right Donald Brandenstein. Knocked on the door, and no one answered. A few days later I went back and knocked on the door, and no one answered.

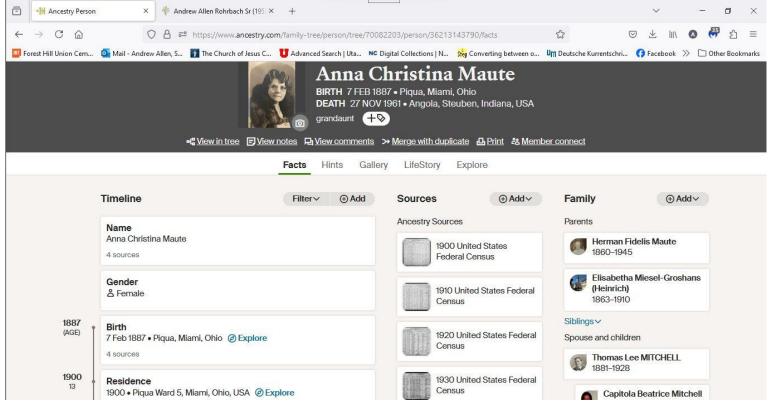
Just as I was about to leave, the neighbors pulled into their drive and asked if they could help me. I explained what I wanted, and found they also knew Bob and Florence Mills. I had found the right Donald Brandenstein! They told me that Mr. Brandenstein was now in a nursing home, and gave me his phone number.

I called Donald Brandenstein and told him my story and what I wanted. He told me that his son (David) now has all the photos and documents from Bob and Florence Mills, and he was sure he would let me look through those items and copy what I wanted. Sure enough I called David Brandenstein (the son) and he gave me access to all the items I wanted. Lucky for me Donald Brandenstein was still alive!

Don't wait to find the information you need.

## Next case

My paternal grandfather had multiple half siblings. I only had photos of two of them. I wanted photos of all of them for the book I was working on.

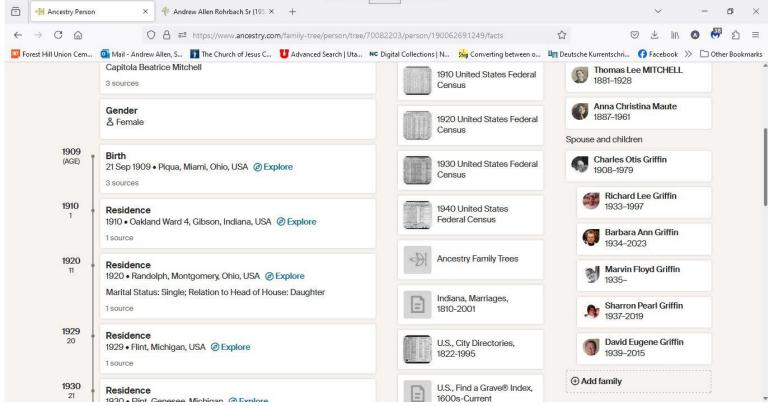


Anna Maute is one of his half siblings. Her only child was Capitola Mitchell.

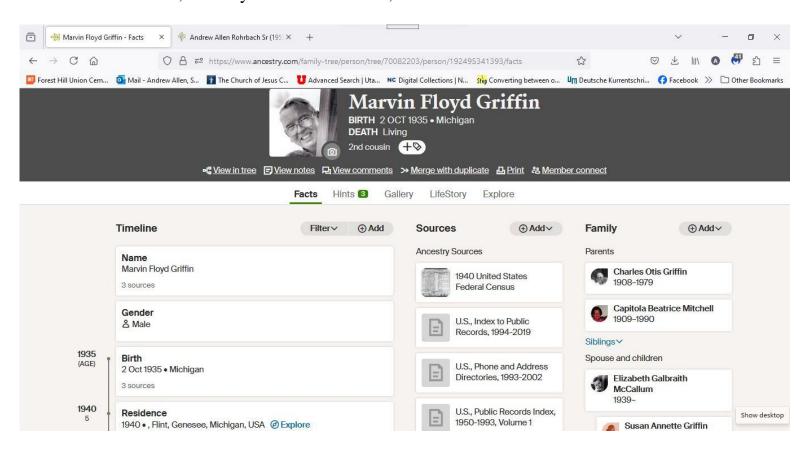


But she had also died.

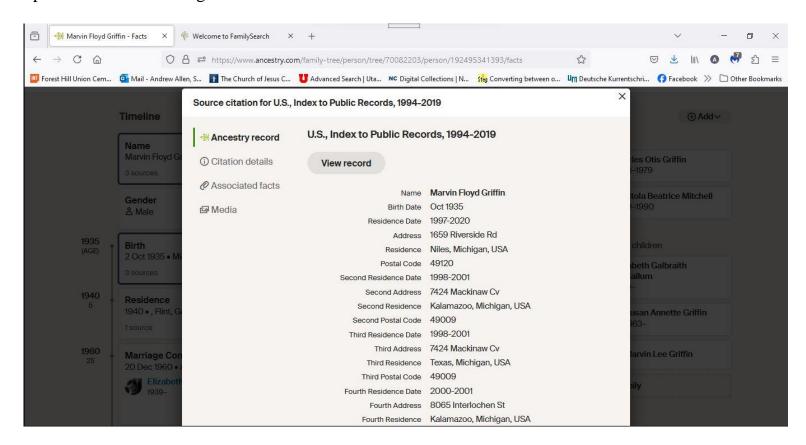
But! There is always a but.



She had five children, but only one was still alive, Marvin Griffin and he was born in 1935.



In the Ancestry sources I found the U.S. Index to Public Records, 1994-2019 on his page. Opening it up I found the following:



So, I knew that Marvin Griffin was living at 1659 Riverside Rd., Niles, Michigan in 2020, only 4 years ago. He was born in 1935, So, he's an older man. Older people usually don't move around too much. So, I wrote him a letter explaining who I am and what I was looking for. Turned out his daughter was also at that address. She answered my letter and her father had a photo album with all the photos I was looking for! She texted me many of the photos I needed.

Remember to check with your family, check obituaries, and the U.S., Index to Public Records. Search for what you need. Don't give up to quickly! Don't be afraid to write letters. They may not always be answered, but don't give up.

You might also want to search newspapers in the area of interest. I use Newspapers.com. They do not have every newspaper but they seem to have most of the ones I need.

However, you can't search forever. You probably won't find everything you want in a timely manner.

Once you have as much of the information and photos you feel you can find, it's time to start creating the file that will become your book.

I have been using Microsoft Publisher 2019 because it was already on my computer. The only problem I have with it is when the size of the file gets around 100 pages my computer gets so slow it's useless. (This may be more my computer's problem than the program). I'm sure there are other programs that will also work but you don't want to use Word. If you do, when you save your file as a

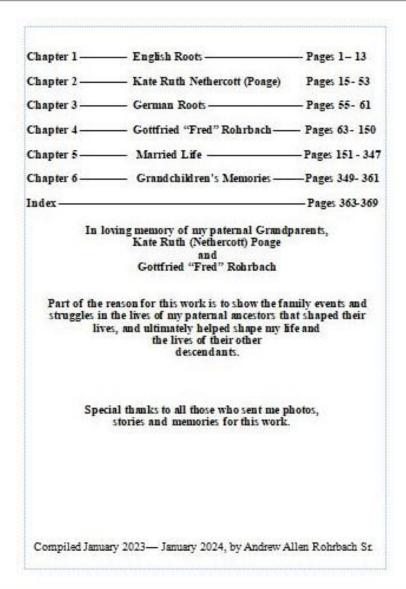
PDF, things will change. Photos will move on the page etc. Look around and decide which program you want to use and install it and play with it to learn how to use it.

I suggest for your first book you start small. My first book was just 53 pages and covered my parents wedding and honeymoon. So, it only covered Aug. and Sept. of 1949. I found lots of photos and postcards from their trip as well as the wedding photos.

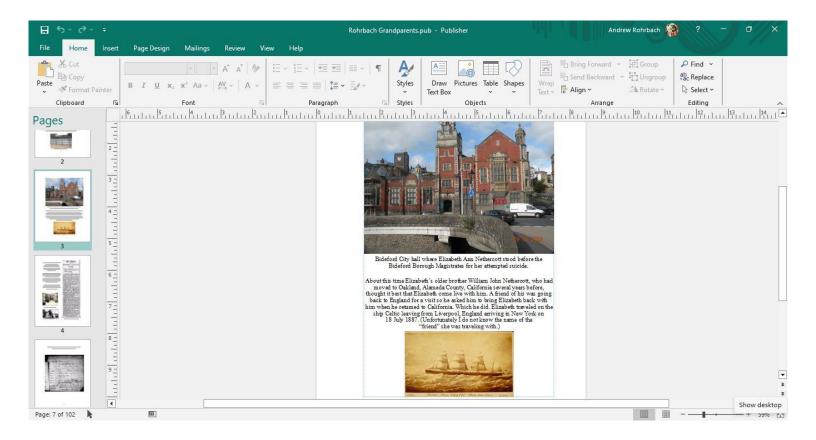
My first book was pretty simple. My second book was about 300 pages. Some of those who I gave a copy to critiqued my effort suggesting I add the normal items a book contains. The following are the items that they suggested I include: a cover page, a title page, a dedication page, a table of contents, a forward, and every name index at the end.

The forward was suggested after my most recent book, so I am still learning myself.

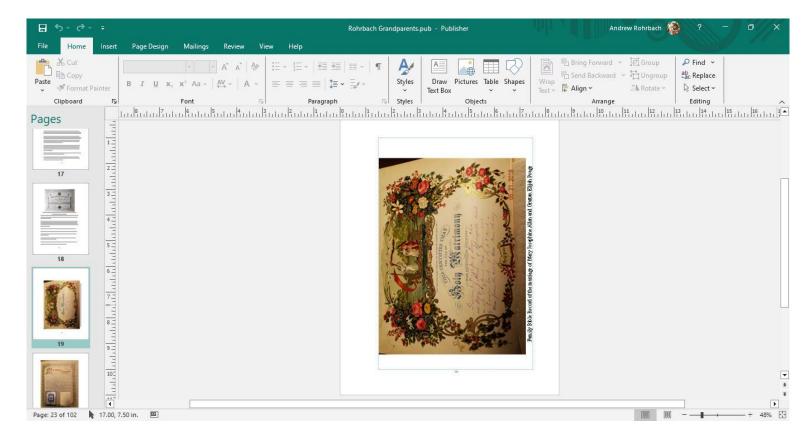
You may be able to combine several of the normal book pages into the same page.



Practice placing your photos and articles on the page in different ways to find the best "look" for the page. Check your spelling for any text you use. And do your best to use a pleasing font, and maintain the same font and font size throughout your book. Decide if you want to print on both sides of the page or just one side. Remember to give credit to the original creator of the photos or articles etc. that you use.

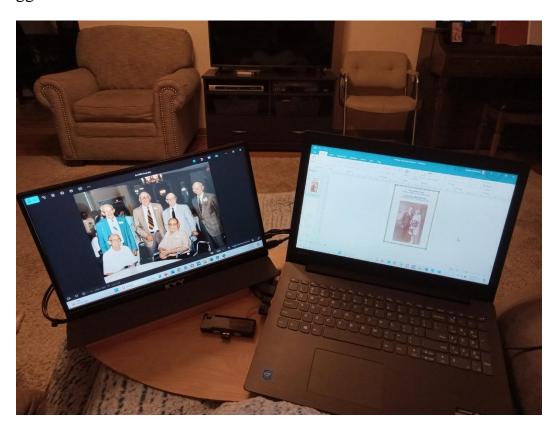


One of my book pages and how it looks in the program I use. Notice everything is offset to the right for room to bind the pages together. On the back side everything will be offset to the left for binding room.



You may also need to place photos on a page sideways so you can make it large enough to see. In that case I leave the binding room at the top of the photo so when the book is bound the picture faces to the outside of the book.

I find it easier to have an extra monitor so I can just drag my pictures to the computer screen where I am setting up my pages rather than flipping back and forth between my book and my photo files. This is just a suggestion.



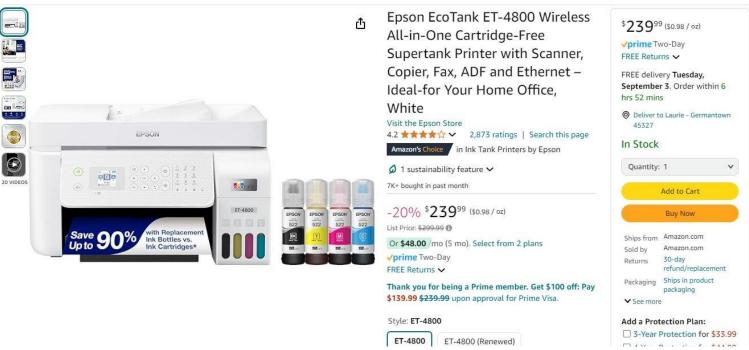
I also like to do my books in chronological order. The oldest information is in the front of the book and it gets more current towards the back of the book. I use page numbers and have a binding margin on the side to be bound.

As I mentioned earlier, on my computer with the program I am using my file can only be 100 pages. My last two books where over 300 pages each. So, when I get to 100 pages, I start a new file with the same name but with a sequential number at the end of the file name. For me at first the files are Publisher files. But once I finish editing them, I save them as PDF files. (Keep the sequential number on the end of the file name). Once I am all done and have them saved as PDF files, I use a program called "Merge PDF Plus" to combine all the files into one big PDF file. Once you have one big file you can check to make sure your page numbers are correct over the file merger points and that the binding margins are also correct over the file merger points. If they are not correct you will need to go back to your Publisher files and make the necessary corrections and then create new PDF files and remerge them to check again. I usually have to do this several times before I get it right.

Name	Date modified	Туре	Size
Rohrbach Grandparents book	1/31/2024 5:58 PM	Microsoft Edge P	237,106 KB
Rohrbach Grandparents	1/31/2024 5:50 PM	Microsoft Edge P	70,277 KB
Rohrbach Grandparents	1/31/2024 5:49 PM	Microsoft Publish	160,296 KB
Rohrbach Grandparents2	1/31/2024 5:53 PM	Microsoft Edge P	59,769 KB
Rohrbach Grandparents2	1/29/2024 4:51 PM	Microsoft Publish	144,249 KB
Rohrbach Grandparents3	1/31/2024 5:54 PM	Microsoft Edge P	98,473 KB
Rohrbach Grandparents3	1/30/2024 4:29 PM	Microsoft Publish	524,334 KB
Rohrbach Grandparents4	1/31/2024 5:51 PM	Microsoft Edge P	5,029 KB
Rohrbach Grandparents4	1/31/2024 5:51 PM	Microsoft Publish	69,586 KB

Example

Once you get everything the way you want it you are ready to start printing. You can take your file to a place like Staples, or you can do it yourself. With your home printer.



I prefer this Epson printer. It does a good job. It prints on both sides. And the ink isn't expensive.

I am sure a laser printer would do a nicer job, but I'm cheap. Always print from your PDF files. Nothing will change on a PDF file.



I use cardstock for my cover pages. 110 LB, 94 Bright for front and back. This card stock will go thru the printer I use.



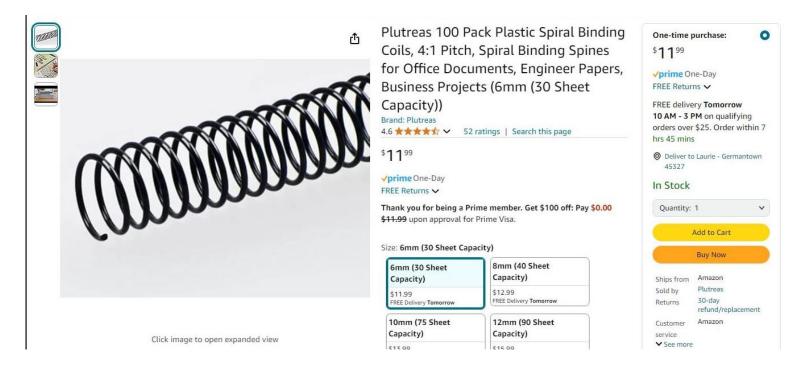
I also like to use a 24 LB. premium bright white paper for Inkjet and Laser printers to print the pages. If you print on both sides 1 sheet equals 2 pages of your file.

Any brand will work, Staples was just handy for me.



I like to use these PVC pages as my book covers front and back. They are clear and heavy enough to protect my books from some wear and tear.

You will also need to buy your binding supplies. I use spiral binding coils. Before you buy the coils you need to know how many pages your book will contain. The more pages the bigger the coils needed.



In this photo you can see that 6mm coils have a capacity of 30 sheets and so on. You also need to pay attention to the pitch of the coils you buy. In this photo the coils are 4:1 pitch. That's the pitch I use. Only because that pitch matches the pitch my binding machine works with.



Binding is a process. This binder can only punches about 10 pages at a time and is obviously manual. So, if you have a 300-page book it will take some time to punch the holes in all the pages. Be sure to keep them in the correct order.

Also, this machine has an electric roller on top to help with inserting the coils. It is a help but you have to start the coils by hand and it takes a little practice to use the roller. The pliers are to cut the coils for different lengths and to bend the ends of the coils so they don't come out of the book.

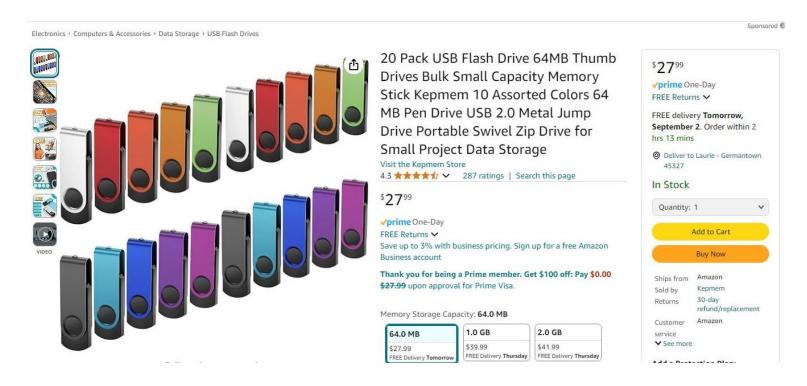
Or

You can use a three-ring binder to publish if you like. I prefer the more professional look of the coil bound books.



As you can see on the previous page there is a newspaper article. Sometimes it's not possible to make them large enough to really read. So, what I have done is buy inexpensive flash drives and put the big pdf file on them and give one with each book. That way those who look at the book and want to read the articles can bring them up on their computer and enlarge the page till its readable.

Another hint about newspaper articles. If you find an article on Newspapers.com don't just copy it to Ancestry or another program. When you find your article in Newspapers.com click on clip, title the clipping, (I use the name and date of the paper it came from) size the article then scroll to the bottom of the page and click on save. Next scroll back to the top and click on print/download as a jpg file or PDF. By doing this the article will not be fuzzy but readable. To put it in your Ancestry or other account you will have to manually add it. But it will be clear and readable.



These are the flash drives I use. You get 20 of them for \$27.99 and they are plenty large enough to hold a 400-page PDF file. Also, if you choose not to produce hard copies of your books you can always distribute it on the flash drives only.

Hopefully, when you finish your books, you will be pleased with the outcome and proudly share them with your family and friends.