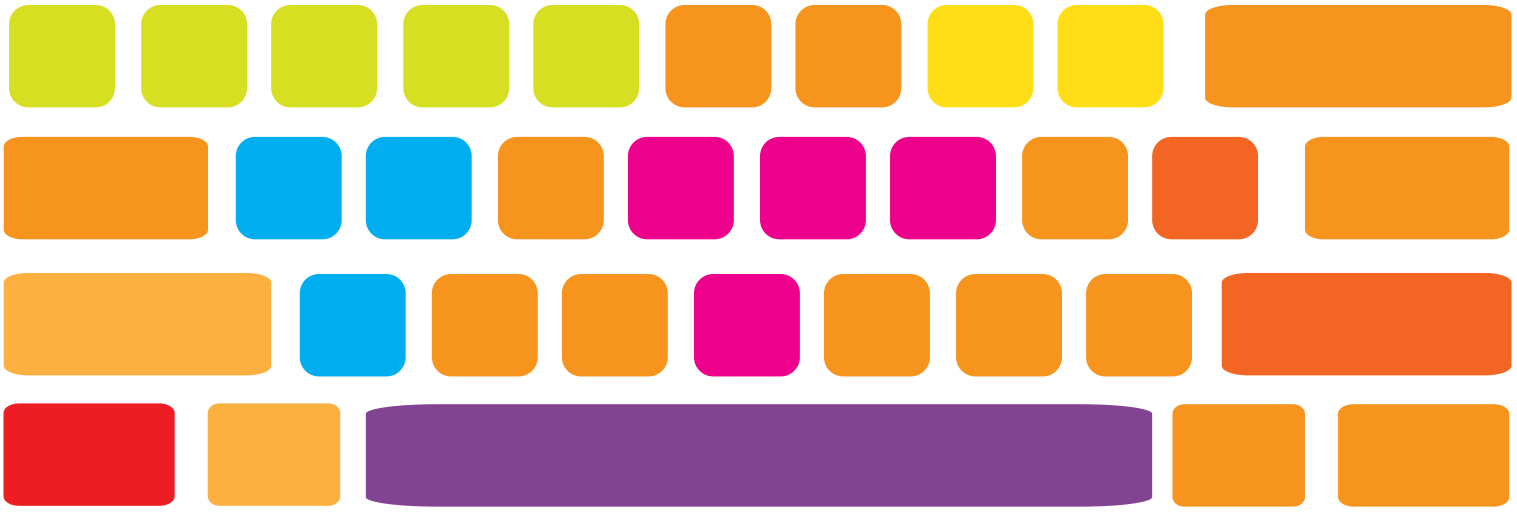
DIGITAL



journeys

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MY EXPERIENCE WITH CUSTOM PRINTED FABRICS ON SPOONFLOWER

Barb Whittlesey

I have used Spoonflower, www.spoonflower.com for four different projects now and have generally been pleased with the results once I understood the limitations of printing on fabric. I have printed dish towels on the linen-cotton canvas, bandanas on the Pima cotton, scarves on silk, and fabric for special projects on plain and sateen cotton. I found the website directions to be clear and the service to be good. This is a story of my most recent project.

When I found a nature-print notebook that my mother had created when she was a child at a summer camp I wanted to share the images and to incorporate them into new works. I scanned the book which included sunprints, smoke-prints, spatter-prints, and prints where the leaf had been inked as a printing block. Once I had all the prints scanned, I selected those I felt were most graphically compelling and chose groupings of four plants in different styles which I left in their original hues, including the const ruction paper base: the sun-prints were either brown or blue, the spatter prints were mostly done with black paint, and all three produced images with a light-colored leaf on a dark ground.

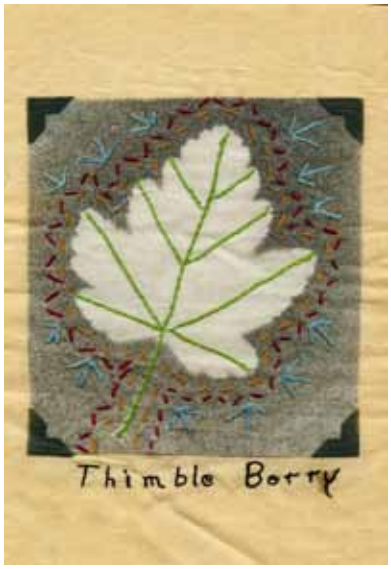
I did some basic processing on the images before compiling them into a single collage to upload for printing. Primarily I increased the contrast and the saturation. When I was finished I had a file that would have looked too intense if I printed it on paper but produced the effect that I wanted when printed on fabric––I think of it as the fabric soaking up the ink to a greater degree than paper does. I tiled the images to fit one yard of fabric so that I could later cut them apart into fabric "pages." Before you create and upload your final file you must decide what fabric width you wish to print on, unless you have an endless/borderless repeat.

All of my projects were quite large files as I chose to create an entire yard with no repeats in the image. If you want to create a repeating image, there are many tutorials available.

Pictured are examples of two pages from the notebook which I have embellished with hand embroidery.

Whether you want personalized fabric for a special project, custom garment fabric, or make something to incorporate as part of a mixed-media piece I recommend that you consider trying digital fabric printing.

Things to remember when printing on fabric:



Thimbleberry

Buttercup, 2017, embroidery on digital fabric print, 6 1/2" x 9 1/2"

–Order the swatch sample set to assist with fabric choices.
–If color-matching is important, plan to order a test swatch before purchasing your yardage. Read the information in the help center carefully as it is full of good advice. Some colors in nature simply can't be reproduced exactly in standard ink/pigment colors—it's no different than buying colored art supplies, or printing on paper.
–The rougher/fuzzier the surface of the fabric the lighter the colors may appear to you, especially if you will be washing the fabric. Plan around this. For example, printing on the surface of the fabric will not achieve the same intensity of black as fabric woven from black threads; as a result you may not be pleased with images that contain large solid black areas. I followed the washing instructions and I felt that the printing held up as well as commercial fabric—just remember that the image rests on the surface of the fabric and will appear lighter after washing if the surface is abraded.

–If you are planning to print motifs and cut them apart do not skimp on borders/margins between the motifs.

–If words like "pixels per inch" make your head hurt, ask for help!

–Have fun!

ONLINE PHOTO PRINTING

Carolyn Congrove

The list of online photo printing and photo book sites is unlimited. Some, such as Blurb, are outstanding, and some are not very good at all. Next to Blurb, I prefer Picaboo www.picaboo.com for photo books and related photo products. In addition to photo books, Picaboo offers photo calendars, greeting cards, canvas photo prints, photo prints on aluminum, smart phone photo cases and scrapbook pages. Recently I used Nationsphotolab www.nationsphotolab.com to have a photo printed on aluminum and I was very happy with the finished product. Aluminum prints offer a very detailed and glowing finished product that will flatter your photos. Nationsphotolab also offers photos on canvas, gallery blocks, wood wraps, photo prints and very large photo prints. You can also find online sites that print photos on glass. I have not tried this, but I have seen some lovely examples. When I don't want to print regular 4x6, 5x7, 8x10 or square photos at home on my printer, I use an App called PostalPix and order the prints online. The print quality is excellent and the service is very fast and inexpensive.

I hope these hints will inspire you to get some of your photos off your computer or phone screen and onto your walls where you can enjoy your creativity.

MY EXPERIENCES PRINTING ON SPOONFLOWER

Miriam Otte

I used Spoonflower to make the background of this art quilt titled *Come Back*. It started with copyright-free images of monarch butterflies which I brought into Photoshop Elements. After manipulating the placement, size, colors, and transparency of each image, I sent the file to Spoonflower.com and had swatches printed on cotton. Despite calibrating my computer monitor and test-printing the manipulated image on my home printer, the colors were different on cloth. Several swatches later, I was finally satisfied with the colors, so I ordered the file printed on a full yard. From there I cut, fused, and stitched the cloth to create the quilt.I have also used Spoonflower to print some of my manipulated photos on both knit and woven fabrics in order to create wearable art. Buying a sample pack of all the fabrics that they offer was helpful in determining the weight and texture of the fabric that I wanted to use. Although I enjoyed the challenge, it took quite a while to learn what I needed to do in Photoshop Elements and then the requirements for Spoonflower. But ordering swatches is a great and inexpensive way to test out ideas. Perhaps someday I'll make something out of all my swatches!
www.spoonflower.com

Come Back, art quilt.

OUR PUBLISHING EXPERIENCES ON BLURB.COM

Sue Agnew

Last year, my sister proposed that we collaborate on publishing our mother's memoirs ("the Momoir"). In the 1980s, our mother wrote down the stories she had told us as children about her adventures on and around the shore of Lake Superior and the cottage Grandpa had built in the 1920s. My sister's dream was to make the stories available in a more reader-friendly form to a wider audience.

We used the platform Blurb (www.blurb.com, or www.blurb.ca in Canada). They have several layout options: you can download a free layout program called BookWright, you can work online, they have a mobile app, or you can upload a PDF. Since I know InDesign, I downloaded their InDesign plug-in, which worked with the program on my computer.

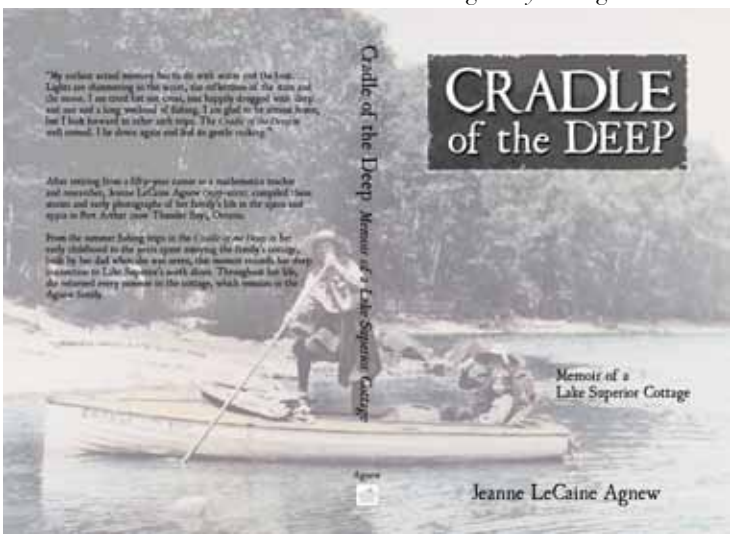
This was a trade paperback book (6 x 9"), with about 150 pages of text and a spread of photos every few chapters, so nothing particularly "arty." Even so, I highly recommend using an actual layout program (such as InDesign) because you have so much more control over placement of elements on a page and their appearance. (I have made photo books using Shutterfly and find it frustrating that the program tries to anticipate sizes and placement of elements which I then have to override.) The InDesign Blurb plug-in was in general very user-friendly, and they have extensive FAQ pages on their web site to provide guidance.

Chapter 1 – Beginnings

Sample book page

Really the only problem was exporting the final document as a PDF. On the file export menu I chose "Press Quality" without noticing there was a separate "Blurb PDF Export" choice; thus the program exported the pages in their laid out page size of 6 x 9", whereas Blurb wants the final file size to extend 1/8" larger in each direction (even though our book contained no bleeds). When my sister uploaded the first PDF, they notified her of the size discrepancy; they were responsive to questions and we were able to solve the dilemma so that when I exported a second PDF using the "Blurb PDF Export" choice, the second proof was true to size.

Book cover—designed by H. Leighton Dickson



We were satisfied with the quality. My sister ordered paper samples to check, and we found the economy color printing to be adequate.

Partly because we had multiple photo spreads, many of them in color, the book was more expensive than would be ideal—$21.99 Canadian. My sister did the uploading and creation of the selling page on blurb.ca. Blurb apparently charges some sort of currency conversion fee, because $21.99 Canadian should be just under $17 US, but when you order from the US Blurb site the price is listed as $19.45. Therefore I would recommend, in a similar situation, uploading the book on the US Blurb site.

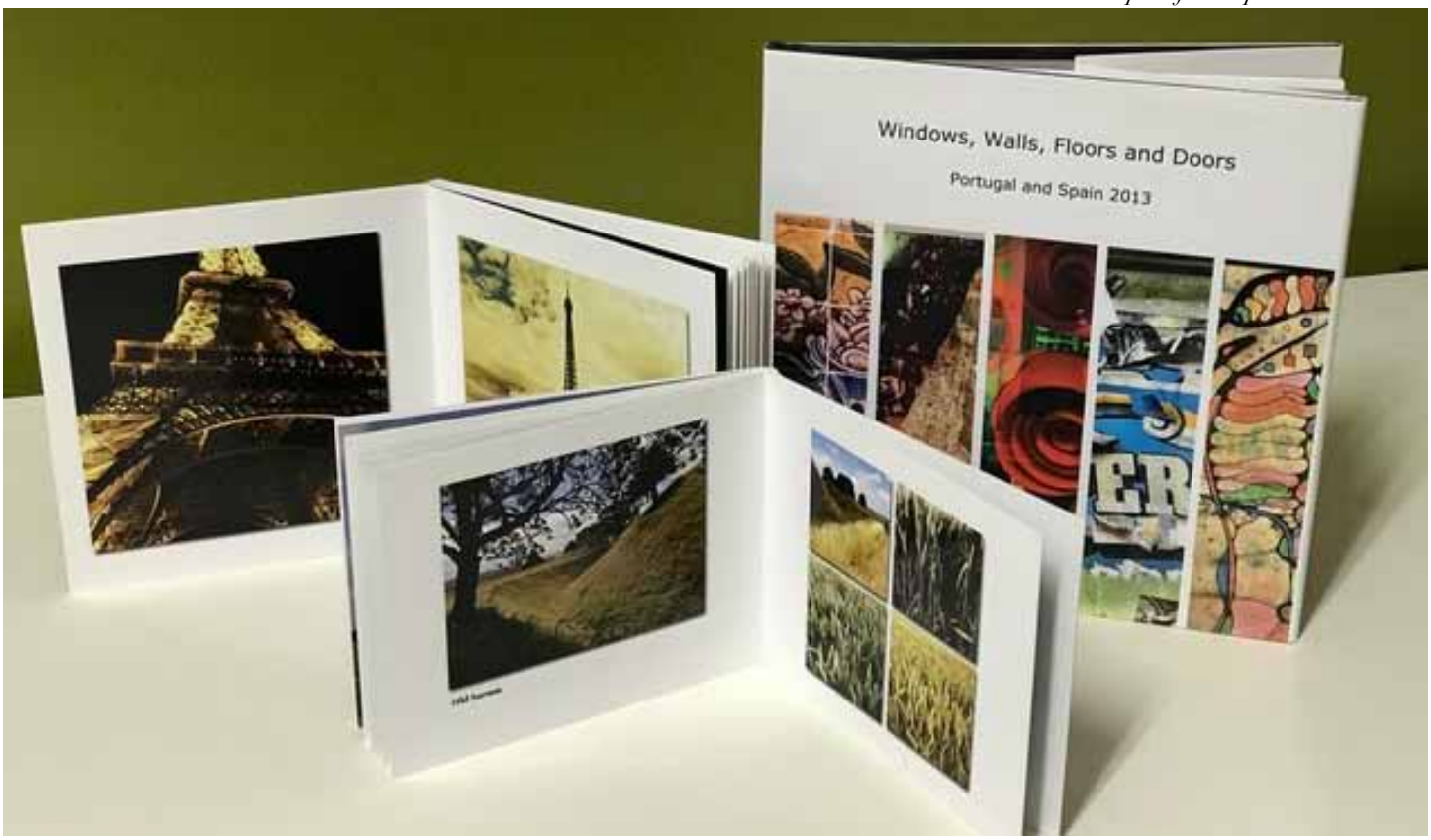
We didn't market it through Amazon, which probably would get it more exposure. The book is easy to find on the Blurb site by searching either the author, Jeanne LeCaine Agnew, or the title *Cradle of the Deep*, but many people are intimidated to go to an unfamiliar site.

Subsequently, my sister published her husband's novel using CreateSpace, which is a platform of Amazon. She would probably choose that route for future non-image-based books, although she likes the photo books she has published on Blurb; this corroborates what a graphic designer friend told me, that Blurb is one of the better platforms for photo books. Regardless of the platform used, self-publishing is a viable, and enjoyable, experience.

DIGITAL BOOKS

Carolyn Congrove

Samples of books printed at blurb.com.



Because I enjoy making digital books, I have tried several different online sources. My absolute favorite is Blurb www.blurb.com. I have found Blurb easy to use and the quality of the finished product is exceptional. I enjoy taking travel photos so most of my books are photo books. Blurb offers six sizes of photo books, six types of paper, and three cover types. Photo books can be as easy as an instant book where the photos are selected by the program and inserted in the book, books designed using templates, or custom designed books. Photo books have infinite possibilities including memoir books and children's picture books.

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I encourage you to go online to blurb.com and explore the creative possibilities of online books.

Sample page from family history book, 2017.

Map of original Trumbull County, Ohio, 1826 via Wikipedia.

LAYOUT: ONE EASY SOLUTION

Barb Whittlesey

Creating a ready to print file combining text and images can be a challenge—I don't think I'm the only person who has ranted at my computer while learning a new piece of software.There are many options when laying out and creating a book-style document for printing or to share electronically. Everyone will have their favorites, however I want to point out a less familiar program that I find very approachable for short, less formal, layouts that provides many options with what I think is an easy learning curve: Comic Life. Available from www.plasq.com, Comic Life is an image-oriented layout program that works for both Mac and Windows.

Comic Life comes with templates that make it easy to create clever photo books or simply lay out a pamphlet, certificate, or greeting card. The combination of fancy headlines, drag and drop captions, text frames, and photo frames together with the option of layering a background allows for many choices which would be more difficult to produce in a word processing program. For me the main limit of the program is that each text frame (or box) is independent of the next –for example, you cannot (as far as I know) flow text from one page to the next so that a magazine or text-heavy book would be easier in a different application.

I have used Comic Life to create photo travel journals with captions, diagrams to illustrate who is who in a big family portrait, maps with captions for blog posts, and similar large and small projects. From Comic Life you can create a pdf to share as is or to export to a book-printing service like blurb.com, or you can export a single page as a photograph to share or print. In addition to the ease of story-telling, I can imagine using it for step-by-step illustrated instructions, photo collages, or creating a catalog.

if it's Thursday, turn left:

up Soğukçeşme Sokağı to İlhami Atalay Gallery.

Turn left from the palace forecourt, through Gülhane Park & left at the sebil,

Turn right for lunch & ebru lessons at Caferağa Medresesi

Back at Kybele, take off your shoes & rest a bit!

Turn left after Hagia Sofia & make a beeline for Hagia Eirene & the Topkapı Palace.

Sample page from comic book style travel notebook, 2015.

Blue Horse Roundup Herd, Lee Kannally.

Logo artwork for a digital banner.

DIGITAL PRINTING RECOMMENDATIONS

Anne Lucic

As a resident of Oracle, I have been a long time volunteer at Oracle State Park and the Friends of Oracle State Park. If you've never been there, the park has 4000 acres of undeveloped land, great hiking trails, events, demonstrations, night sky watching, music, bird watching, etc. It's about a half an hour drive beyond Catalina State Park. I manage the Friends of Oracle State Park Facebook page. Take a look.

VISTAPRINT

There is an historic ranch house on the property. You can take a tour. One of the former inhabitants, rancher Lee Kannally, painted as therapy after his exposure to mustard gas in WWI. Many of his paintings are displayed in the large living room. Friends OSP sells greeting card reproductions of his paintings in the Park gift shop. Proceeds stay at Oracle State Park to help pay for events, speakers, maintenance, etc. When the cards started to run low, I had to find a place that made good reproductions and had reasonable pricing.

Vistaprint, a Dutch owned company, easily accessible on line and on the phone, filled the bill. With a little bit of technical savvy, anyone can order off their site. It's easy to preview and change the finished product. My husband was pleased with business cards from them. The greeting cards came quickly and were of high quality. After you order, they send lots of email coupons. The first order is discounted. The technical support is friendly and useful.

This was the first and only time I've had cards made. I would definitely use them again.
https://www.vistaprint.com/

GLOO FACTORY

I needed a six foot banner to hang from a table when Friends OSP attends events to promote who we are and give away cookies. A single cookie can generate a significant donation.

From their website: The Gloo Factory started printing for the Tucson community around 2000. We have grown to a full service union print shop, specializing in screen printing, digital printing, publishing, and cut vinyl graphics. Today, about a dozen workers are employed at the Gloo Factory.

I took in the digital file of the banner my husband designed and about a week later, had my banner. The banner was on quality material and the color matching was excellent. The staff was friendly, knowledgeable and fast. They do a lot more than banners.

There are great reviews on Facebook. Plus, it's a cool name for a business.
https://thegloofactory.com/
238 E 26th St, South Tucson, Arizona 85713

WILDSAGEART.COM: THE BACK-STORY

Mabel Dean

In the spring of 2012 I decided to take the plunge and create a website to document my art and share my process. My niece, Emily Crawford, at that time was a website designer for www.imediaconsult.com in Saratoga Springs, New York so she agreed to take on the project.

We began with me taking a critical look at art websites to see how they were set up, what it was like to move through their menus and how the graphics were used to support the purpose of the site. I mostly explored artists' sites. This helped me to clarify what I wanted for my site.

Emily suggested we use WordPress so I could easily update information and blog without needing a lot of tech support. I decided that I would not sell my art on the site. This feature would require a fulfillment process and security and payment apps which sounded ominous. I'm very glad I made this decision as I have learned from others who have had challenging issues with their sales. If someone wants to make a purchase they contact me.

My next step was to create a map of the various menus & components. After discussion with Emily I developed the content/text for each one.

In the meantime I sent photos of some of my work and close-ups of textures and artwork details that could be useful as graphic elements. I was clear that I wanted the design to set a mood that would reflect the feel of my work. She in turn came back with options of how the site might be organized and what it might look like. It was helpful for me to give her specific feedback what I liked and disliked as we went through the design process. For example, I just don't like pink - so that color was eliminated. I find it hard to read serifed text on a dark background - so that option was out! As a result of this careful planning and dialogue, we came to consensus about what worked and didn't work and why.

From that point on it was a fairly smooth ride to the finish line. FaceTime was our "friend" as we worked through each menu on the site. It took about six months from start to finish, but I ended up with a site design that still works. I have no urge to change anything.

I use imediaconsult.com as host for my site and pay them an annual fee for doing this. They take care of everything including my site registration, WordPress updates and trouble-shooting related problems. If I have a meltdown over something their support staff is a phone call away.

When my husband Ed, died, I asked if it was possible to transfer his photos from zenfolio.com to wildsageart.com. Within one hour a new menu item appeared on my site indicating that the transfer had happened.

Having a website and blog has been a great way to share my work with others. I'm very glad I took the time, expense and trouble to create it. And I look forward to continuing to add to it. I've recently been in a dormant creative state, but there's always tomorrow and my site stands ready and waiting for my next post whenever I am .