

The Ohio Novel #1 Is Done! (Or what it's like to disappear into a black box)

[By Holly Lisle](#)

I wrapped up my final draft yesterday.

In spite of best efforts, I came in over my 90,000K wordcount by about 12,000 words.

I don't have a title for the novel yet (Matt comes up with my best titles, and I'm really hoping he can pull out something amazing, both for the first book and for the entire series).

I do have my pseudonym. I can't give either until – BARE MINIMUM – the first five books are out and starting to find their audience.

And then I'll only be giving it to the folks on my mailing list who are genuinely interested in the genre.

Since I'm publishing the Ohio series independently, since I'm bringing the series and world (with possible subsequent series) out under a pseudonym, and since I have to plot the next four novels, then have to complete the entire 5-book series – have all five written, revised, edited, bug-hunted, formatted, covered with pro-quality covers, and get them all up into Amazon-exclusive KDP and print formats, and then launch them at the speed of one book a month for five months, I have a long, long way to go.

But... THIS TIME, I'm trying to work with Amazon's algorithms, and see what I can learn from doing that.

It's an investment in manpower. A BIG one – primarily but not exclusively mine. We're talking the time, effort, focus,

dedication, that goes into thinking and then writing 400,000+ MORE connected, related, compelling words of fiction that must be outlined, first-drafted, finished, revised, edited, bug-hunted, typeset, put into Kindle, print, and other formats (the Ohio novels will start Amazon-exclusive, but probably won't stay that way past the completion of the initial five-book launch) have cover copy written and tested and re-written, have title testing – so I'm talking about an all-in commitment of a big chunk of my life, with no feedback (except from Matt, Becky, and my bug hunters) until this whole thing goes live.

It's also an investment in money: All mine. Just the cash outlay for five great, professional covers, is significant. But much, much more expensive than that is [opportunity cost](#) – the things I don't get paid for because of the time and effort I'm putting into this project that I *hope* I might get paid for... that isn't a new writing class or a couple of classes I KNOW I could get paid for.

If it goes big for me, THEN my writing students will get my numbers and how I did it, along with this really cool story development process I've come up with and am using for these. Maybe some workshops.

If it doesn't go big for me, they'll get the really cool story development process... but that's not a cool new workshop that might be able to give writers willing to do the work (as outlined above, so we're talking BRAVE writers) a path to building a live-on fiction income. The story development thing is just a few lessons. Probably added into an existing class or two.

And here's the thing that's making me a little nuts.

The entire process has to be done completely in the dark. I have to build EVERYTHING, pay for EVERYTHING, set up EVERYTHING, write EVERYTHING, and publish EVERYTHING... with

nobody but Matt, Becky, and myself seeing what I'm doing. (Well, at the point where I'm ready for bug-hunters, I already have a couple lined up, and will bring in a few more, and this handful of readers will go through all five novels back to back to back. And sign an NDA beforehand that they can't tell anyone who I am, or what my pseudonym is, or where the website is, or anything. Not until the books are doing so well that I can bring in my other genre-related fiction to the new writer under a "written as Holly Lisle" label with the pseudonym as the author name.

I can't share snippets of any of the Ohio stuff – not snippets or scenes or teaser stuff or worldbuilding – on my blog, on the podcast, in the writing community forum. Nothing.

I can't put links to the books when they come out here or in the writing community or on the podcast page.

I can't link my old novels to this new set.

I have to become invisible.

Not my strong suit.

But for this test to mean anything, for this process to mean anything, this is where I am.

At some point in the future, I hope to be able to share some crazy great news. Or at least, "Hey, I'm making enough to pay off the house." That would be really cool.

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