

Creating Book Covers using PStricks

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Abstract The cover of a book presents the first impression for any potential readers or book buyers. Therefore it is of vital importance this impression is a good one. This paper offers general notes on cover design, and specific notes on implementing such designs using PStricks.

1 Introduction

It is said one shouldn't judge a book by its cover, however, book buyers are certainly influenced by it. As a writer, you naturally want your book to be as attractive to the buyer as possible. When people step into a book shop with the intention of buying a book, they usually look around, see what is on display and browse the shelves. Some books will jump out at them, some will not. It is usually the cover (including the spine), title, or a specific author, that attracts a buyer to pick up certain books. Even when browsing online bookshops, it is the cover that first draws the shopper's attention.

This paper provides step by step information for the writer who wants to create his or her own book cover using PStricks¹ (Voß, 2007). In the first section, I will discuss some very general aspects of cover design. In the second section, I will explain how to implement these ideas and I will be providing examples of everything I do as we go along.

2 Deciding to design your cover

You have written your book, edited it, settled on the title, made it perfect, and now comes the final icing on the cake. The cover. Larger publishing houses provide cover design in their in-house art and graphics department, and it is

1. <http://www.pstricks.de>

decided well in advance often without the writer's input at all. But for the do it yourself freelance writer and print on demand self-publisher, the cover is often the last thing to be tackled, and can suddenly present quite a quandary. Some authors may prefer to find a reasonably priced freelance graphics service, or a template download, and there are plenty available online. For instance, a good place to start is the Lulu website². This website also has some excellent articles on the subject.

But for those writers who are keen to try it for themselves, it can be very satisfying to design and create one's own cover. Designing an attractive cover that is going to sell its book is definitely a knack, and graphic arts students take years learning about complicated issues such as 'balance of form' and the use of colour, and still do not always get it right. One reason for this however, could be a lack of connection to the book itself, and it could be argued that the writer knows the book intimately and therefore who better to present it?

3 Where to start

A good general principle to keep in mind is clarity. Does the cover send a clear message? Is the title easily readable? Does the image instantly suggest what the book is about?

Before you begin a design project of any sort, it is always recommended to undertake a little background research. Go to a bookstore and browse the shelves. Familiarize yourself with the different genres, especially the one your book would be in, and how they are presented. Take a note of which books stand out from the rest and why you think they do. Are they books you would want to buy? Another general principle of good design is, that if you, as the designer, are happy with it, others will like it too. Any background research would not be complete without also browsing the websites of established book cover designers. For instance, well known designer Will Harris explains online his own approach to some of his excellent cover designs³.

As a basic design start point, three rules to keep in mind are:

2. <http://www.lulu.com>

3. http://www.will-harris.com/covers_0.html

1. keep it simple;
2. illustrate the title;
3. define the essence of the book.

3.1 On keeping it simple

Clarity is vital, and with a book cover, less really is more. Your cover and its message should be easily seen and understood from across a crowded bookstore. The title should be easy to read on both cover and spine. Minimize the use of colour to say, three or maybe four shades. Decide at the outset whether you want to use garish contrasts to make your point, or to harmonise, blending colours that are gentle and stunningly attractive.

Do resist the temptation to enhance your cover with a generous display of symbols. Just one or possibly two floating grails, framed portraits or blood soaked daggers are quite enough for any browsing book buyer to take in at a glance. Clutter is off-putting and extremely detrimental to the successful book cover design.

3.2 On illustrating the title

For a truly cohesive, clear message, it helps if the title and the cover are shouting the same thing. During your background research, you may have found — even subliminally — that the most successful covers are the ones in which the image backed up the title. Deeply abstract and bizarre expressions of life's tangled webs in tumultuous colour and profusion beneath the estranged letters 'Red sails in the Sunset' will puzzle the reader at best, or at worst send them straight on past to the cover with the indigo ocean, wide golden sky and a single red sail on the horizon.

It just makes more sense. Readers generally do not like to work too hard. They want to feel safe that they will be entertained or informed well and easily by your book. A strong link between image and title instantly gives them the idea they will be able to understand all of your work.

3.3 On defining essence

Take some time to sum up the theme and mood of your book in one short sentence — just two or three words. What emotions, colours and symbols do the words evoke? Can you also sum up this imagery into a main colour, a central image or symbol, a single defining object or character? You are seeking the essence of your text, in a visual expression. The exercise you underwent in deciding the title of your book should help you in deciding the essential images for your cover.

A further guide to defining your theme is to decide what is appropriate for the genre of your book, and to choose images within that framework.

4 A survey of genres and style

I will now give some more specific guidelines, all based on research in bookstores both physical and online, and — most importantly — conversations with the staff of the local bookshops. Of course I cannot give a fail safe recipe for creative design, but I can give some general guidelines that will hopefully help you avoid the more common pitfalls, and maybe even inspire you.

4.1 Scientific works

There are several basic options when covering scientific books. There is a simple way, which one would not really get away with any other type of book: using a plain cover with just one colour and some text in a different colour. One sees this often, especially in so-called “student editions” of text books. The main reason for choosing this option is that it is much cheaper to print. To enhance this simple layout one could opt to include a graph from the book or a graph that pertains to the book. This gives a proper “scientific” look to your book that will attract most scientists and scare away most laypeople. Then there is the option of choosing a photograph or artwork, either relevant to the contents of the book or just pretty. The more abstract the topic of the book, the more difficult it is to come up with relevant photographs. Such images, whether they are photographs or objects d’art can fill the entire page or sit artistically within a frame. In the latter case text may run entirely outside, entirely inside or across the picture. Two examples (Kortmulder, 1998; Kortmulder & Robbers, 2005) are shown in figure 1. *Play and*

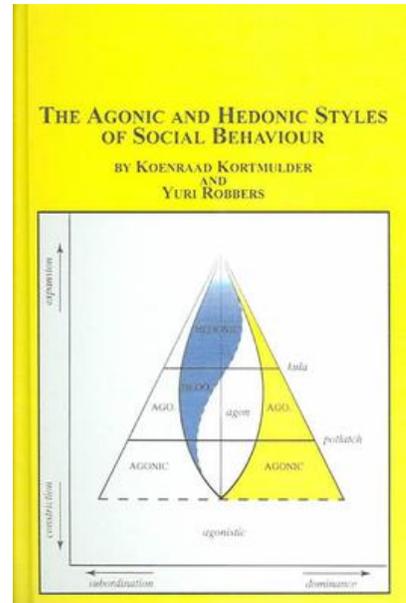
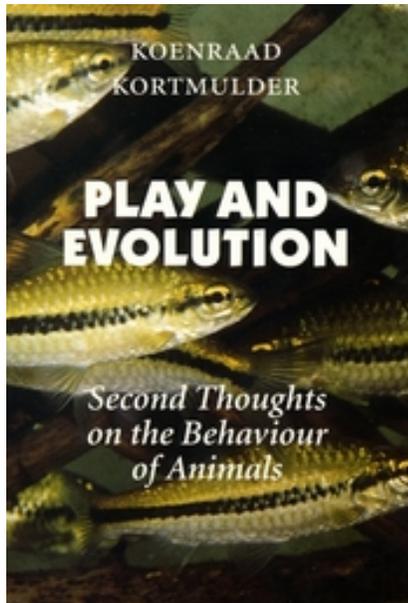


Figure 1: The front covers of two scientific books. The one on the left is far more attractive to the average layperson or an undergraduate student than the one on the right. The one on the right, however, is far more in line with the general look of scientific books, and the cover does seem to match the overly complicated title.

Evolution (Kortmulder, 1998) has an attractive photograph that matches the title, yet manages to intrigue. Scientists as well as lay readers may be tempted to read this book. The cover for *Agonic and Hedonic Styles of Social Behaviour* (Kortmulder & Robbers, 2005), on the other hand, is far more complicated. The graph is a complete summary of the book, but not many people will understand it without reading the book. The complex cover matches the complex title, but a lay reader is unlikely to look at any further than the front cover of this book. Scientists, however may well be tempted to explore this book a bit further though.

4.2 Popular non-fiction

Popular non-fiction really does need a more elaborate cover with good graphics or, at the very least, interesting font effects, or a stylish colour effect in the background. A regular photograph or some artwork might do nicely, but to re-

ally stand out may require some advanced-looking image manipulation. On the bright side, as long as it *looks* advanced, it does not really have to actually *be* advanced. This is an area where one might well want to use dedicated image manipulation software in addition to PSTricks.

4.3 Novels

There are many sub-genres to the Novel: traditional and serious fiction; romances; sci-fi; chick-lit and pulp fiction all have styles of their own. From the William Morris wallpaper with New Gothic font, to garish pink with curly turquoise type, or high-tech space scenes with busty avengers and fierce dragons, you will find the modern paperbacks do follow fashion conventions of their own.

As I mentioned earlier, an important part of defining the essence of your book is to decide the best genre framework for your design. Figure 2 and 3 are two cover designs for the same novel (Skjold, 2006a). Figure 2 suggests serious fiction, and a rather complicated book. Figure 3 gives the impression of a more upbeat and flamboyant paperback, possibly a thriller or good who-dunnit to take on holiday.

Although the image used in figure 2 illustrates the main character's predicament well, the cover design in figure 3 illustrates the title perfectly. It is simple in both colour and composition, and the strange, hybrid passion-magnolia personifies an essential theme of the story, so it scores on all three of my basic design starting points. The vibrant colour makes the book subliminally more inviting, and the image is so closely linked to the title that anyone picking it up can immediately understand it and this creates a positive expectation from the book. This is therefore, the cover that the author chose to use when publishing her mystery-thriller novel.

A good cover should *fit* its book. Creating a cover that does not live up to its promises is guaranteed to leave customers disappointed and have them steer clear of any other books you might want to sell them.

4.4 Poetry

Poetry books often have a very plain and simple cover: usually just the title, author and publisher in an easily palatable font. The reason is that in general

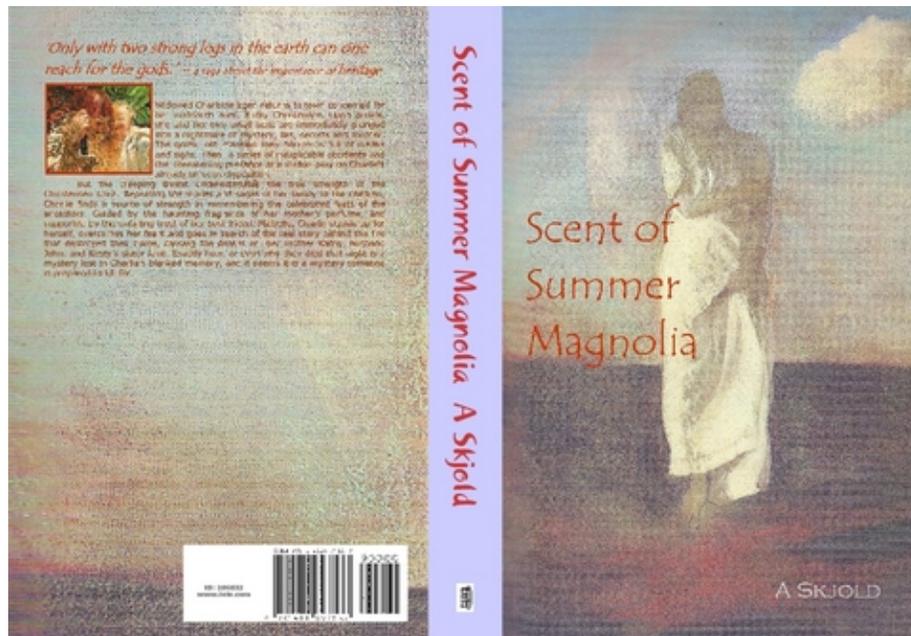


Figure 2: The complex version of the cover for “Scent of Summer Magnolia”.

buyers of poetry are more text-oriented; they are looking for poems that will evoke strong images, and not for strong images that are given to the brain in bite-sized chunks. An understated cover is often best when it comes to poetry.

4.5 Children’s books

Although people often assume it is a myth, research has shown that children really do like bright primary colours when they are young. One could use this on book covers. And all kids, young, older, teenagers and kids of other ages do generally like books with nice drawings on the cover. A children’s book with just text will appeal a lot less — if at all — to the kids as well as to the grandparents who, by far, are the ones who purchase the most children’s books. In addition to attractive illustrations, a book aimed at children should have a font that is easy to read.

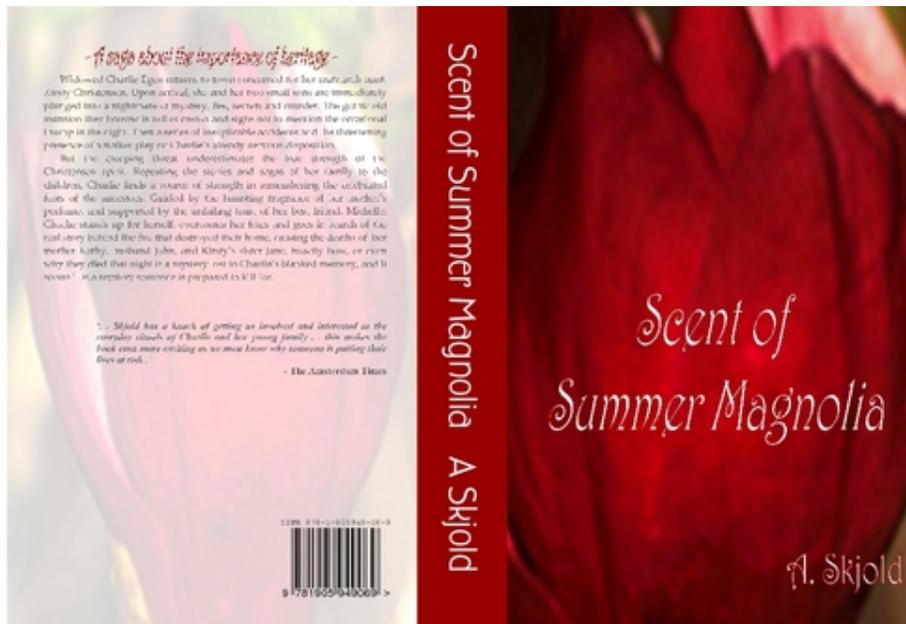


Figure 3: The more upbeat version of the cover for “Scent of Summer Magnolia”.

4.6 Fantasy, Science Fiction and Horror

This is a genre with a highly developed sense of fashion. High quality computer graphics, strong colours, body-beautiful heroes and heroines and strange and wonderful beasts denote the section you are now browsing. Just occasionally an example of abstract art, or coolly classic design can be found covering the more serious league sci-fi writer.

The choice of font here, is extremely important. Fonts generally considered to be less easily readable, such as Gothic scripts, half uncials, or futuristic letter forms often convey exactly the right atmosphere for a book in this genre. Choose your font well.

5 The back of the book

You may think that once you have settled on a design and have legible text on the spine that the matter is finished with, but that is not the case. Once attracted

to your cover, the first thing a buyer does is turn the book over to see what it is about. This is the second line of attraction to reel your reader in. Once again, simplicity and clarity is the goal.

Your secondary header should be concise and provocative, the blurb short and to the point. If you want to put a symbol or photo on the back cover, a small square at top left or right of the blurb is the generally acceptable spot. Unless of course you are a celebrity and your face sells your book, then the back cover is dedicated to you and the blurb goes on the cover flap.

But however you treat the back cover, remember to keep a space at the bottom, usually the bottom right, of the area free for the bar code and publisher's logo.

The back of the book is informative rather than pictorial, so keep the colours and objects to a minimum. If you wish to wrap the front cover illustration around to the back, a good method is to finish it at one third into the back and pick up a soft background colour for the rest. A similar idea using a picture juxtaposed to the one on the front cover is demonstrated in figure 4, a revised edition of [Skjold \(2003\)](#) to be published later this year.

If there have already been reviews from good papers or comments by well known authors, place two or three excerpts on your back cover in a good legible font. I will address this in more detail in the technical section of the paper.

6 Conventional bookstores versus online bookstores

According to many, the advice given above is only important when books are sold in conventional bookshops. People walk in, browse, pick up the occasional book and are either seduced by its cover, title and possibly author to take a closer look, or they are not. The cover needs to be sufficiently alluring to warrant that closer look. Online bookstores are a different beast altogether though: people tend to search by keyword or browse by category. Either way, the first impression they will get of any book will be the title, the author (often in a smaller font already) and a diminutive icon of its cover ([Shepard, 2007](#)). This is all one has at one's disposal to make a book stand out from a whole web page full of similar information about all the other books that match the search criteria or fall into the same category.

Some say the design of the cover is less important as a first impression for online sales of books. What attracts people at first is usually limited to how

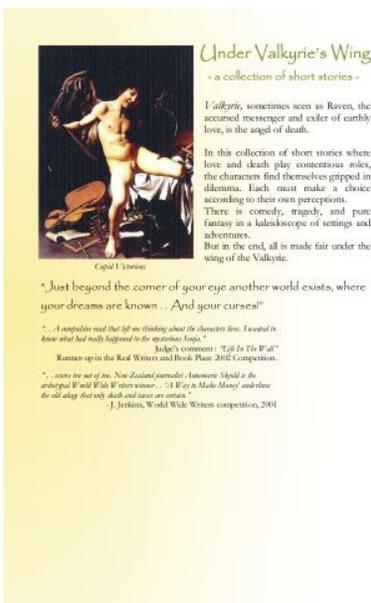


Figure 4: The back cover of *Under Valkyrie's Wing* showing an illustration in juxtaposition to the front cover illustration on the back. Also note the excerpts from favourable reviews and the space at the bottom for the ISBN bar code and the publisher's address.

high up on the page a book appears, its title and author, and perhaps the overall impression of colour the cover conveys. Authors who do not intend to sell books in regular bookstores but focus their attention solely on online stores sometimes even choose a plain monochrome or colour gradient background for their cover with either a very simple caricaturesque drawing or diagram, or — more often — even just the title of the book in as large a font as will fit the cover, and the name of the author squeezed into the remaining empty space, again using a font as large as the title allows. Sans serif fonts seem to be the norm in such cases. One such author is Aaron Shepard, who talks more about designing covers for online sales in his book *Aiming at Amazon* (Shepard, 2007).

Of course when people are attracted by your book in the search result page, they will click on it and get a page with details about the book, including an enlarged picture of the cover. Although many authors, including the aforemen-

tioned Aaron Shepard, just focus on first impressions and design their cover for first impressions only, I am of the opinion that this second impression — with a more detailed cover — is just as important, and this is where a design that is too simple will fail you. Of course I am basing this solely on my own online book buying habits and the impressions of a few friends, so do not take this as gospel. Yet, my own subconscious guideline when browsing books seems to be that a good book deserves a good cover, and when authors obviously do not care enough about their book to create a good cover, chances are they did not care enough to create a good book either.

In some cases it might even be possible or desirable to have different editions for selling books online and selling them in the old fashioned bookstores.

7 Legal matters

Lastly, but certainly not of least importance, there are rights and copyrights to be considered when using artwork on your book cover. When choosing a picture or work of art for use on a book cover, be sure to check that either it is free of rights or that one obtains permission to use it from those who hold the rights. Generally these rights expire 50 years after the death of the artist, but one should always check each and every individual case.

8 T_EXnical Matters: P_STricks

Implementing a good cover requires first of all the use of a style or package that allows the paper size to be adjusted easily, such as — among many others — Memoir ([Wilson, 2004](#)) or geometry ([Umeki, 2000](#)). For a paperback book the page height needs to be equal to the page height as used in the book, while the page width should be twice the page width as used in the book, plus twice the binding correction (*i.e.* the amount of paper lost in the spine of the book in the binding process) plus the width of the spine.

In almost all cases the printer will require extra space around the cover that will be cut away within a certain margin of error. This is called *bleed*. When designing your cover, make sure you allow for an extra 1cm around all edges. It should be coloured in similarly to the rest of your cover, so that if it is not

completely cut away, the final result will still look good. Otherwise, white lines may show up along the trimmed edges of your book. One should, of course, make sure that no crucial parts of the design, such as bits of text or logos, extend into the bleed or even come too close to it, because they may well be cut off. In general, the bleed is exactly 1cm (0.375"), but it is always best to ask your printer for specifics.

Often printers or binders cannot be completely accurate when folding the cover around the book, which will lead to part of the spine showing on the front cover, and part of the back cover on the spine, or the other way round. Even though this is never really more than one eighth of an inch or 3mm, and often less than that, it is still best to make sure the colours do not contrast too much.

In this section I will be considering the example of a popular scientific book on the evolution of sexual reproduction in plants. The book is called *Secrets of the Stamen* and is aimed at a very large audience including laymen, students as well as scientists. This book will be published as a thick, large paperback, 5.5 inches wide, 8 inches high and 1.24 inches thick. My printer has, upon request, informed me that bleed sizes for his equipment are half an inch in each direction. This gives me a cover width of bleed + back + spine + front + bleed, which equals 13.24 inches, and a cover height of bleed + cover + bleed, which equals 9 inches.

Please be aware that by using PSTricks one needs to use the $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X} \rightarrow \text{DVI} \rightarrow \text{POSTSCRIPT} (\rightarrow \text{PDF})$ way. One cannot use PDF $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ directly, unless using the $\text{V}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ distribution.

When converting DVI files into POSTSCRIPT files, please be aware that many programs do not automatically detect that a non-standard page size has been used. For the often-used DVIPS by [Rokicki \(2005\)](#), which comes standard with most $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ distributions, one needs to use the `-T` parameter followed by the width and height of the page. So in case of our example book, one would need to use

```
dvips -T 13.24in,9in -o cover.ps cover.dvi
```

in order to generate the correct POSTSCRIPT file named `cover.ps` from the DVI file `cover.dvi`.

PSTricks can be used with plain $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$, $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ ($\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}2_{\epsilon}$) as well as $\text{C}\text{o}\text{nT}_{\text{E}}\text{Xt}$, but to avoid confusion by trying to cater for all, I will base my examples on $\text{L}^{\text{A}}\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}2_{\epsilon}$, since that is what I use most often myself. The adaptations needed for plain $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ and $\text{C}\text{o}\text{nT}_{\text{E}}\text{Xt}$ are minimal, and are explained in the documentation ([Voß, 2007](#)) as

well as on the PSTricks website⁴.

8.1 Setting the Sizes

There are various ways of setting the size of your output. I will demonstrate how to do this using the geometry package (Umeki, 2000). We first set up a file, just with the front cover. Since our book is 5.5×8 inches, we want the width and height of the cover to be set to 5.5 and 8 inches respectively. We use the command

```
\usepackage[paperheight=8in,paperwidth=5.5in,margin=0in]{geometry}
```

to set up the size. We set the margins to zero, so that we have the whole page to play with, and not just part of the page.

Of course what we really need is a complete cover. In order to set that up we will need to simply add twice the bleed to our paper height, and calculate our paper width by doubling the paper width including bleed (once for the front and once for the back, and adding the spine width. The spine width can only be calculated only when you know the number of pages as well as the type of paper your printer uses. In our case that would be $2 \times (5.5 + 0.5) + 1.24 = 13.24$ inches, so

```
\usepackage[paperheight=9in,paperwidth=13.24in,margin=0in]{geometry}
```

will do the trick quite nicely.

8.2 Use of Background Graphics

Before we can use any PSTricks commands, we shall of course need to load the PSTricks package⁵. For including graphics, we will need to load the graphicx package. We also need to suppress page numbers on our cover, which we do with the `\thispagestyle{empty}` command. Our document preamble will now look something like this:

```
\documentclass[12pt]{article}
\usepackage[paperheight=9in,paperwidth=13.24in,margin=0in]{geometry}
```

4. <http://www.pstricks.de>

5. Presumably with some of its add-on packages, but we will get to that in the following paragraphs.

```
\usepackage{pstricks}
\usepackage{graphicx}
\begin{document}
\thispagestyle{empty}

\end{document}
```

In order to easily manipulate our cover, we will now create a single `pspicture` environment covering the entire page:

```
\psset{unit=1in}
\begin{pspicture}(13.24in,9in)

\end{pspicture}
```

This allows us to put anything we want anywhere we want it, using the `PSTricks` `\rput` command

```
\rput{<reference point>}{<angle of rotation>}(x,y){<Object>}
\rput*{<reference point>}{<angle of rotation>}(x,y){<Object>}
```

where the reference point and angle of rotation are optional parameters. The reference point, if specified, allows setting a particular corner of the box we are placing to be put at the coordinates specified. To set the bottom left corner of this box at point $(1,1)$, use `bl` as the reference point, etc. The angle of rotation allows one to rotate the object. The coordinate pair (x,y) determines the position, x to the right and y to the top of the origin, at which the Object will be set. Using the starred version rather than the non-starred version makes the whole box containing the object cover what is underneath.

Please note that even though regular $\text{T}_{\text{E}}\text{X}$ and derivatives use the top left hand corner as the origin, counting positive offsets down and to the right of that origin, `PSTricks` follows the tradition of `POSTSCRIPT` and mathematicians of taking the lower left hand corner to be the origin. Positive coordinates go up and to the right from the origin. This system is officially known as *Cartesian coordinates*⁶.

6. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cartesian_coordinates. It is possible to change the coordinate system to, for example, polar coordinates (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polar_coordinates). This is beyond the scope of this paper, and we refer you to the `PSTricks` documentation (Voß, 2007)

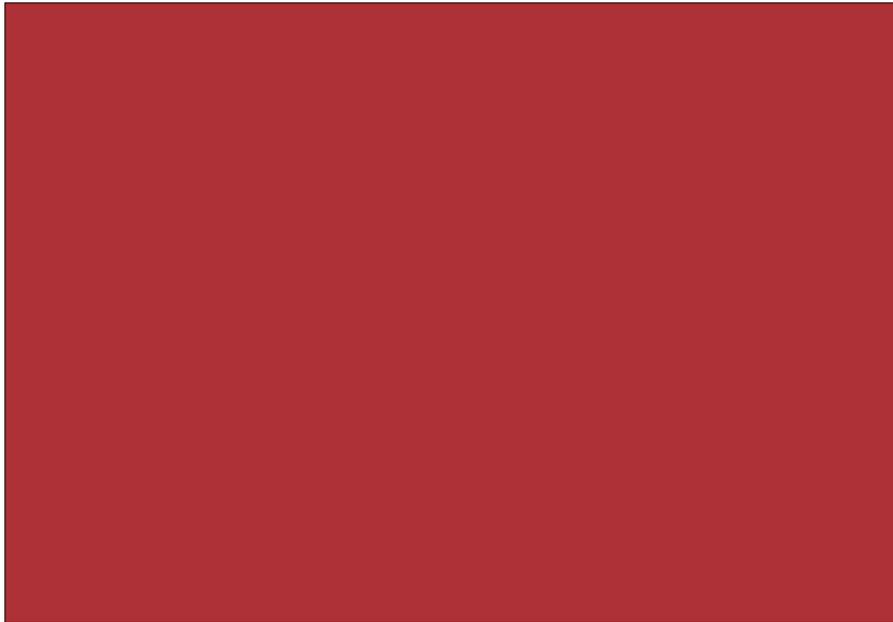


Figure 5: Our cover, at the correct size and entirely maroon.

Often one will want a different background colour than white for the book cover. This can easily be done by creating a rectangle the size of the page in the desired colour. For this we use the `\psframe` command

```
\psframe[<Optional parameters>](x1,y1)(x2,y2)
```

where (x_1, y_1) denotes the bottom left corner, in our example $(0, 0)$, and (x_2, y_2) the upper right corner, in our example $(13.24, 9)$. We use the optional parameters to set a solid fill style, and a fill color of our choice. We could, for example give the command

```
\psframe[fillstyle=solid,fillcolor=Maroon](0,0)(13.24,9)
```

to give the entire background a maroon colour. See figure 5.

It also possible to use a gradient rather than just one colour. We can achieve this with the add-on packages `pst-grad`, `pst-ghsb` and `pst-slpe`, which should be included in the document preamble as follows:

```
\usepackage{pst-grad}
```

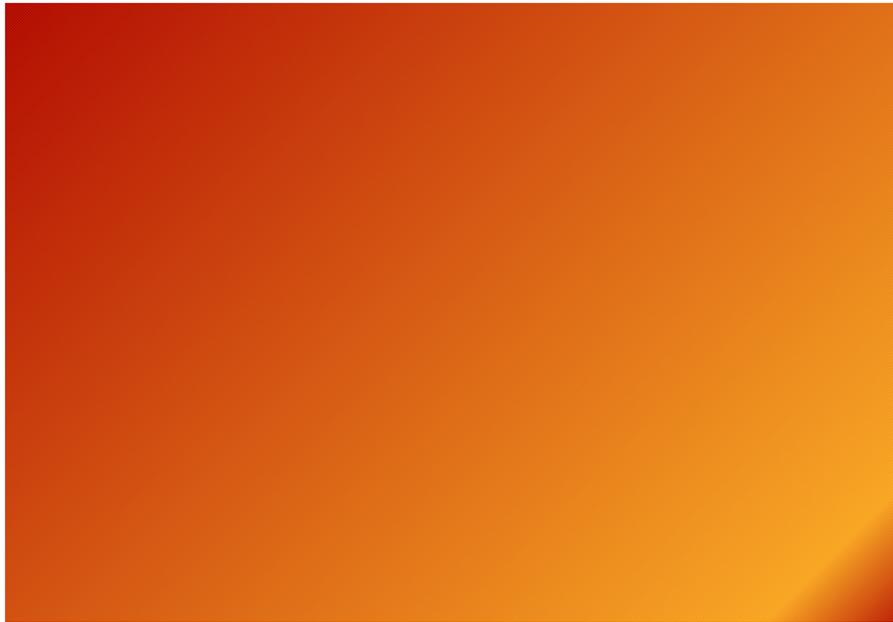


Figure 6: Our cover, at the correct size and coloured with a gradient.

```
\usepackage{pst-ghsb}  
\usepackage{pst-slpe}
```

These packages need to be included *after* the PSTricks package is included. To have more than the eight basic colours available, please include the pstricks package with the dvipsnames prologue and table options enabled. This is done by replacing the `\usepackage` command mentioned above by

```
\usepackage[dvipsnames,prologue,table]{pstricks}
```

A simple example of gradients (using these extra colours) should suffice. Consult the PSTricks-documentation (Voß, 2007) for more details.

```
\psset{fillstyle=gradient,linestyle=none,gradbegin=Maroon,  
gradend=Dandelion,gradangle=45,gradlines=2048}  
\psframe(0,0)(13.24,9)
```

See figure 6.

Now we will include a picture, using the `\includegraphics` command, properly packaged in an `\rput` command in order to get a picture at the correct po-

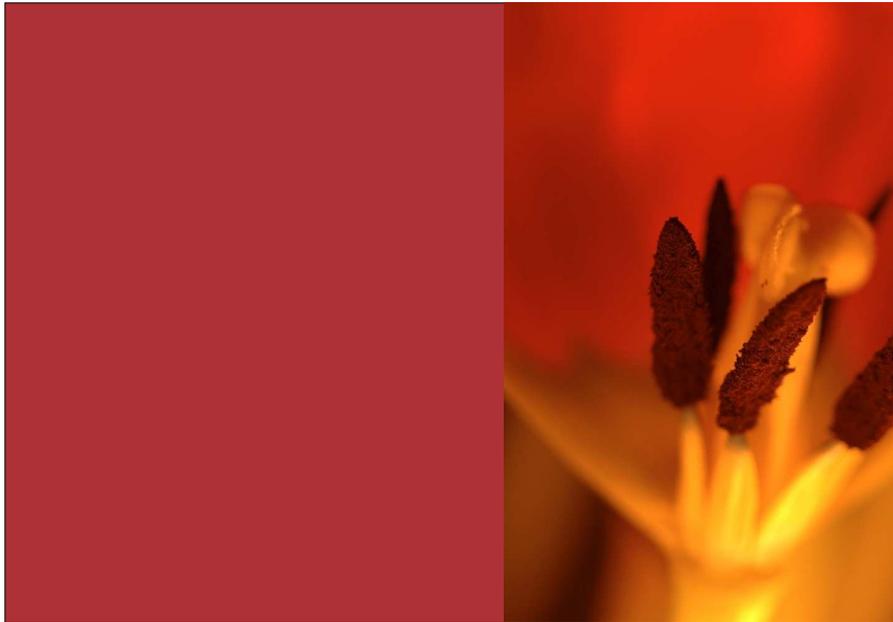


Figure 7: Our cover, with the cover picture included.

sition. Our picture is in the file `flower.eps` and we want to stretch it to cover the entire front cover. The front cover is the right half of our cover, so we need to set our picture 7.24 inches to the right, at the bottom of the page. We need to stretch or shrink the relevant part of our picture to fill the entire front cover including bleed on three sides. This adds up to 6 inches wide and 9 inches high. Unfortunately we need to create a special box that holds our picture for things to work out properly. We can do this before we even give our `\pspicture` command

```
\newsavebox\IBox  
\sbox\IBox{\includegraphics[height=9in]{flower.eps}}
```

Now we can `\rput` our picture where we want it with a command like

```
\rput [1b] (7.24,0){\usebox\IBox}
```

See figure 7.

Please note that stretching or shrinking an image this way can lead to distortions when height and width are not stretched equally. These distortions may or may not be desirable. It is often best to play around a bit with the stretching and

clipping options that either the `graphicx` package or your photo editing software provide to see what works best.

8.3 Text Effects

Almost every book cover has text on it⁷. We can easily put text on our cover wherever we like using the `\rput` command, which has been introduced before. The command

```
\rput(8.24,7){\sffamily\bfseries\Huge  
  \color{white}{Secrets of the Stamen}}
```

would put the title of this hypothetical book, “Secrets of the Stamen” with huge white boldfaced sans serif letters on the front cover, 7 inches from the bottom and 1 inch off of the left hand side. See figure 8.

This is nice of course, but often one wants something a bit more than this. A different font... a different size... text along a curved line... In other words, one wants text effects. PSTricks offers two add-on packages called `pst-text` and `pst-char` that allow one to easily create such effects.

First of all the font needs to be set. It is possible to use the standard $\text{\LaTeX}2_{\epsilon}$ PSNFSS commands (Schmidt, 2004) to select fonts, but PSTricks offers easier manipulation of sizes when using its own `\DeclareFixedFont` command. This command does still use the PSNFSS names of fonts. To create, for example, a title font with the name `\PT` that makes available the italic Palatino font, boldfaced, scaled to 0.5 inch, we use:

```
\DeclareFixedFont{\PT}{T1}{ppl}{b}{it}{0.5in}
```

where `\PT` is the font command we create, `T1` is the encoding, `ppl` the PSNFSS font name for Palatino, `b` the code for the bold weight, `it` the code for the italics series, and `0.5in` the height of the font. We can apply this newly declared font command by changing the code for our title to:

```
\rput(8.24,7){\PT \color{white}{Secrets of the Stamen}}
```

See figure 9.

7. The only one I know that does not is a 19th century volume of poetry by Aleister Crowley called “White Stains”. On the front of its black cover it has nothing more than a few white stains, and the back as well as the spine of the cover are completely blank. Even with this book, however, the dust jacket that folds around the cover does have text on it.



Figure 8: Our cover, with the title in place.

It is possible to have the text follow a set path rather than the normal straight line. This is done with the `\pstextpath` command. To use text and character paths please include the relevant packages.

```
\usepackage{pst-text}  
\usepackage{pst-char}
```

Basically any shape can be used as the path to set text along. I will give a simple example here, setting our title along a circle

```
\psset{linestyle=none}  
\rput[c](10.24,7){\pstextpath[r](0,0){\pscircle{2}}%  
  {\PT \color{white}{Secrets of the Stamen}}}
```

The command `\psset{linestyle=none}` makes sure that the circle we use as a text path is not actually drawn. The `\rput` command sets the text path on the page where we want it to be. The `\pstextpath` command creates the actual text path, where the optional command `[r]` sets the text flush left (l), centered (c) or flush right (r) on the path, the coordinate pair `(0,0)` determine the offset of



Figure 9: Our cover, with Palatino bold italic as the title font.

characters off of the defined path, the `\pscircle{2}` creates the text path itself, in our example a circle with a 2 inch radius, and in the final pair of braces we find the actual text that is set, our title set in the predefined Palatino font, in white. See figure 10.

Fancy effects can also be achieved by outlining the letters with a very thin yellow line and filling them with a gradient, for example. Again, a simple example should suffice.

```
\psset{linecolor=yellow,fillstyle=gradient,%
      gradbegin=white,gradend=Dandelion}
\rput[1b](7.74,7){\pscharpath{\Chancery Secrets}}
\rput[1b](8.24,5){\pscharpath{\Chancery of the}}
\rput[1b](7.74,4){\pscharpath{\Chancery Stamen}}
```

See figure 11.

Of course, when everything has been decided and properly placed, it is time to put the name of the author in. Then, of course, on most books one would want

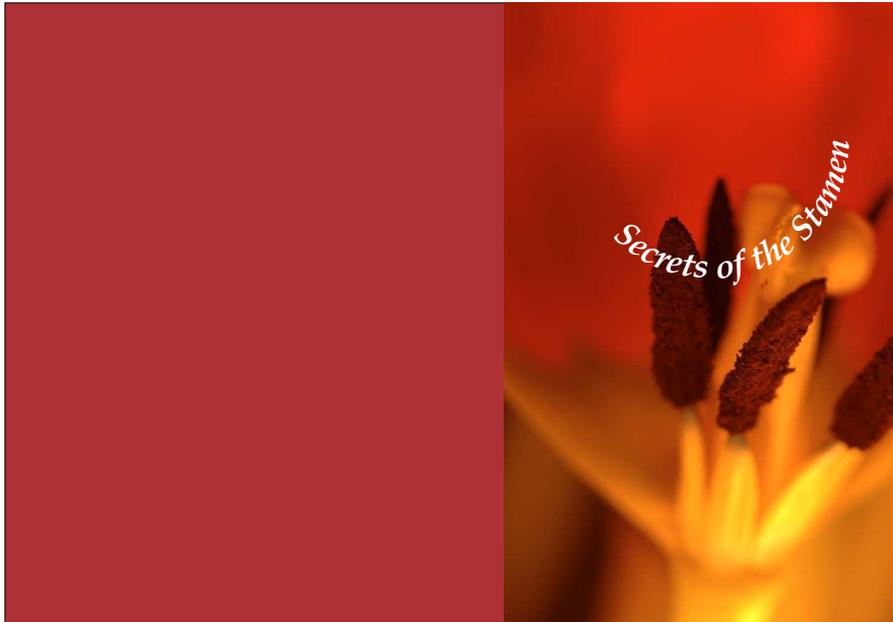


Figure 10: Our cover, with the text typeset along a circular path. Personally I do not think it works for this particular cover, but with a different design something like this can work wonders.

to include the name and/or the logo of the publisher somewhere on the front cover.

When that is done, we shift our attention to the spine. Usually it is best to just put the name of the author and the title down the spine, with the logo of the publisher. Interestingly, most spines are printed so that they can be properly read when the book is lying down, with the front cover facing up. German books, however, tend to be printed the other way round. Their spine can be properly read when the book is lying down with the back cover facing up. I have no idea why this is, but I have only come across very few exceptions in my life as a bibliophile.

Then of course text, called the blurb, can be added onto the back of the book. This text could be a short summary of the book, a titillating excerpt or quotes from favourable reviews. There are other options of course, but these tend to be the main contenders. It is usually good to include at least a short summary



Figure 11: Our cover, with the title in 2 inch Zapf Chancery with a white to dandelion gradient, and a yellow hairline around it.

or excerpt of the book, and a few lines of biographical text about the author. A picture of the author is also a good idea. Of course the author biography and picture can also be inside the book.

An excerpt from a favourable review, or even a quote from an enthusiastic reader, can work wonders for sales. If prospective buyers see quotation marks, they tend to take a closer look. If the comments are from an independent observer and are favourable, this is a strong incentive to take a closer look inside the book.

We will add some text to our sample cover, which shall be nonsensical text, since there is no actual book. For generating this nonsensical text, I use the lipsum package (Happel, 2005). Since a lot of additions have been made by now, I will give the complete code, as it now stands:

```
\documentclass[12pt]{article}

% load the necessary packages
```

```

\usepackage[paperheight=9in,paperwidth=13.24in,margin=0in]{geometry}
\usepackage[dvipsnames,prologue,table]{pstricks}
\usepackage{pst-text}
\usepackage{pst-char}
\usepackage{pst-grad}
\usepackage{graphicx}
\usepackage{lipsum}

% begin the document and suppress page numbers

\begin{document}
\pagestyle{empty}

% create the box with the front cover picture

\newsavebox\IBox
\sbox\IBox{\includegraphics[height=9in]{flower.eps}}

% set up the picture environment

\psset{unit=1in}
\begin{pspicture}(13.24in,9in)

% set up the fonts we use

\DeclareFixedFont{\PT}{T1}{ppl}{b}{it}{0.5in}
\DeclareFixedFont{\PTsmall}{T1}{ppl}{b}{it}{0.4in}
\DeclareFixedFont{\PTsmallest}{T1}{ppl}{b}{it}{0.3in}
\DeclareFixedFont{\PTtext}{T1}{ppl}{b}{it}{11pt}
\DeclareFixedFont{\Logo}{T1}{pbk}{m}{n}{0.3in}

% create a maroon background

\psframe[fillstyle=solid,fillcolor=Maroon](0,0)(13.24,9)

```

```

% place the front cover picture

\rput[lb](7.24,0){\usebox\IBox}

% put the text on the front cover

\rput[lb](7.74,7){\PT \color{white}{Secrets of the Stamen}}
\rput[lb](8.94,6){\PTsmall \color{white}{Yuri Robbers}}
\rput[lb](9.04,0.8){\PTsmallest \color{white}{Lughdunum Press}}

% put the text on the spine (note the rotation over 270 degrees)

\rput[l]{270}(6.62,8.5){\PTsmall%
  \color{white}{Yuri Robbers --- Secrets of the Stamen}}

% put the publisher's logo on the spine

\rput[b](6.62,0.75){\color{white}{\fbox{\Logo L}}}

% Create a Box containing the text for the back cover

\newsavebox\Blurbbox
\sbbox\Blurbbox{\begin{minipage}{4.5in}
\textcolor{white}{\lipsum[1]}
\end{minipage}}

% And position the box

\rput[tl](1,8){\usebox\Blurbbox}

% Then we close all open environments

\end{pspicture}
\end{document}

```

And the result so far can be seen in [figure 12](#).

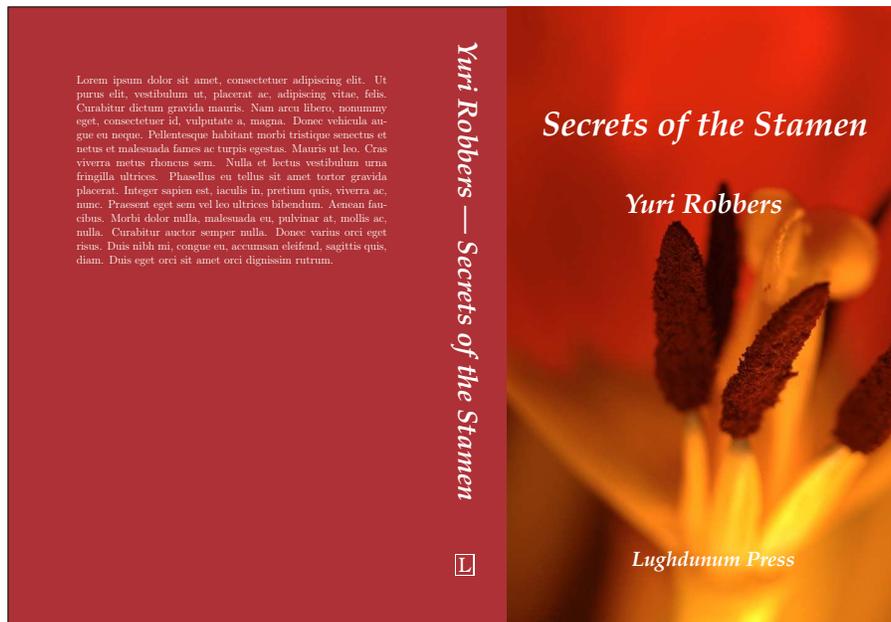


Figure 12: Our cover, with almost all text in place, including the spine and the blurb on the back cover.

8.4 Framing Graphics

It is of course also possible to use graphics without having them cover the entire page. In that case one can place them anywhere on the cover, or it might be nice to put a frame around them. The front cover of two books like that, [Skjold \(2003, 2006b\)](#), can be seen in figure 13. *Beneath Valkyrie's Wing* has an irregularly shaped figure, placed on a white cover so that it looks best. Part of the angelic figure, taken from Giovanni Baglioni's *Heavenly and Earthly Love*, cannot even be seen, but this just serves to improve the dramatic impact of the cover as a whole, exactly as it did in Baglioni's painting. *To Move a Mountain* has two included graphics. First of all there is a big one covering most of the page. The title (set in the *Trebuchet* typeface) stands across the image. Then there is the symbol of the horse: this is rotated, and has a thicker border. The cover would also work quite well without this badge: the whole design would be "cleaner" for those who would prefer that.

In order to show how to frame pictures, we will include a picture of the au-

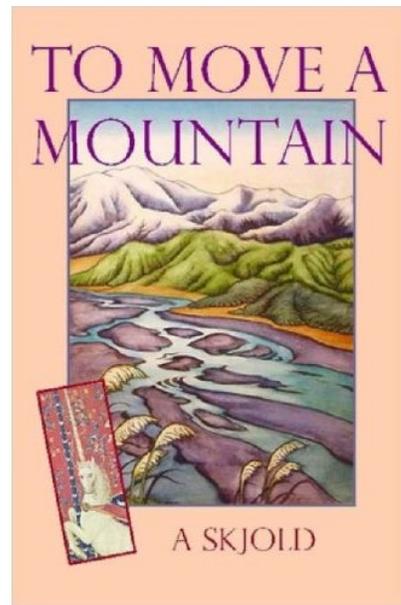
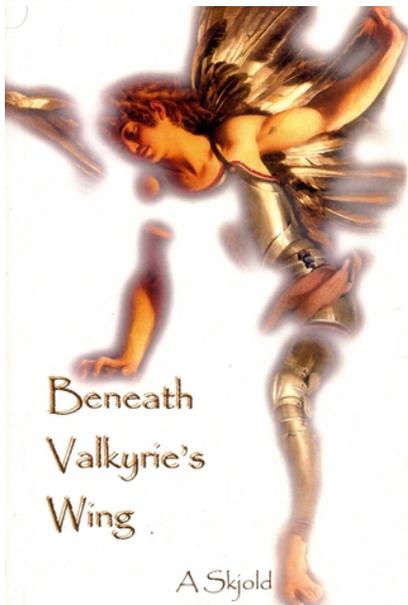


Figure 13: The front cover of Annemarie Skjold’s *Beneath Valkyrie’s Wing* and *To Move a Mountain*. On *Beneath Valkyrie’s Wing*, the picture is irregularly shaped, and a bit larger than the page. It is positioned where it looks best, and the remainder is cut off. The picture for *To Move a Mountain* does not cover the entire front page, and the text flows over it. The badge with the symbol is much smaller, rotated and has a thicker frame.

thor on our example book “Secrets of the Stamen”, along with a short biography (courtesy of the `PracTEX` website). We will frame this picture in a reasonably thick white frame, and a very thin black line.

```
% create a savebox for the picture

\sbox\Authorbox{\includegraphics[width=0.5in]{yuri}}

% create a solid white rectangle of the correct size at the correct
% spot by default this is framed with a thin black line. Use
% linestyle=None to avoid this
```

```

\psframe[fillstyle=solid,fillcolor=white](1,4)(1.7,4.95)

% now place the picture

\rput[lb](1.1,4.1){\usebox\Authorbox}

% create a savebx for the biography. The width has been adjusted so
% that the right margin matches with that of the book blurb

\newsavebox\Biobox
\sbox\Biobox{\begin{minipage}{3.6in}
\textcolor{white}{Yuri Robbers holds a degree in Animal Behaviour
and is a teacher, a researcher and a published author. He's always
had a keen interest in typography, possibly because his father is a
professional typographer. Ever since he discovered \LaTeX{} in 1995,
he has always done his best to avoid using word processors, and he
has embarked on a quest to learn as much as possible about \TeX{}
and its derivatives and to apply this knowledge whenever possible.
Contact him at yuri.robbers@gmail.com}
\end{minipage}}

% and put it where it belongs

\rput[tl](1.9,4.95){\usebox\Biobox}

```

And see the result in figure 14.

8.5 The Finishing Touches: the ISBN and the publisher's address

Now all that needs to be done is adding the publisher's address and the bar code with the ISBN number on the back of the book. Luckily, PSTricks also has a standard add-on package for creating bar codes, `pst-barcode`, which can also create bar codes for ISBN numbers. Include it with a `\usepackage` command.

If you have a publisher, only your publisher can take care of obtaining an ISBN number, Of course if you self-publish, you need to get your own ISBN number for your book. There are national authorities in charge of administering

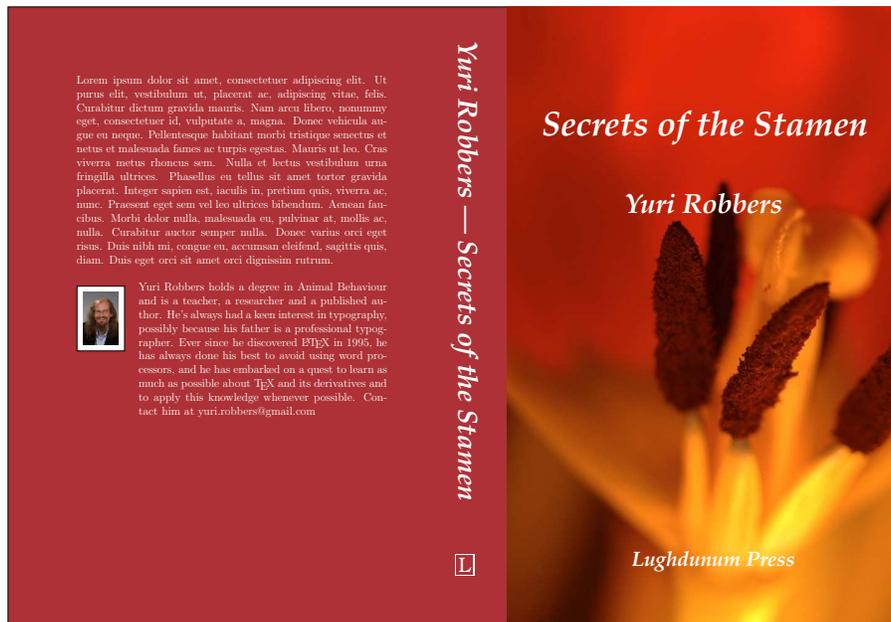


Figure 14: Our cover with the picture of the author and the author’s biography in place.

and purveying ISBN numbers, and generally one can find this authority easily by typing “ISBN” and one’s country name into the Google search engine⁸. Prices differ markedly from one country to another. An eighty-fold price difference is no exception! If you have co-authors residing in other countries, it may therefore be worthwhile to compare the prices for each author’s country of residence.

Since the ISBN bar code needs to be machine-readable, it is usually a good idea to use a solid white background. If the background colour is not too dark, and there are no strong contrasts, you may prefer to leave off the white background for aesthetic reasons, as has been done in *Scent of Summer Magnolia* (Skjold, 2006a), as can be seen in figure 3.

Since our example book has a maroon back cover, this will most certainly not be an option: we need to create a white rectangle for it. We do this the same way we did with the author picture.

Sometimes one also sees the price of the book printed next to the ISBN bar

8. <http://www.google.com>

code, sometimes even prices in various currencies for various countries. When you have a publisher, the publisher will usually have a standard solution for this. When self publishing, I advise against putting a price on, since it is usually a highly costly procedure to have your printer switch from using one PDF file for your cover to using your new updated PDF cover. This almost always requires paying a new setup fee for your entire book. It is a miracle to me why this should be necessary, but unfortunately it is how things usually work.

Back to the technical matters. All we need to do is include a nice white rectangle, and put the bar code on top. The bottom of the back cover is the customary location for the bar code, and the right hand corner or the centre seem to be more common than the left.

Here is the code for the bar code

```
\psframe[fillstyle=solid,fillcolor=white](3.9,0.8)(5.8,2.2)
\rput(4.2,1){\psbarcode{1-58880-149}{includetext guardwhitespace}%
  {isbn}}
```

and the code for the publisher's address

```
\rput[lb](1,1.2){\PTsmallest \color{white}{Lughdunum Press}}
\rput[lb](1,1){\PTtext \color{white}{Leiden --- The Netherlands}}
\rput[lb](1,0.8){\PTtext \color{white}{http://www.lughdunumpress.nl}}
```

And the final result can be seen in figure 15.

9 Concluding remarks

As you can see, creating a good book cover using PSTricks is not at all difficult. Almost everything one might want to do has been thought of already, and commands or packages exist. Doing something new may involve some browsing through the documentation, but both the published documentation (Voß, 2007) and the online documentation at <http://www.pstricks.de> are excellent.

Should one, for example, wish to create a graph as is used on the front cover of *Agonic and Hedonic Styles of Social Behaviour* (Kortmulder & Robbers, 2005), as is displayed on the right hand side in figure 1 then this can easily be done using PSTricks as well.

Experiment, play around, make mistakes and fix them, and soon you will be making excellent book covers (or other graphics) using PSTricks!

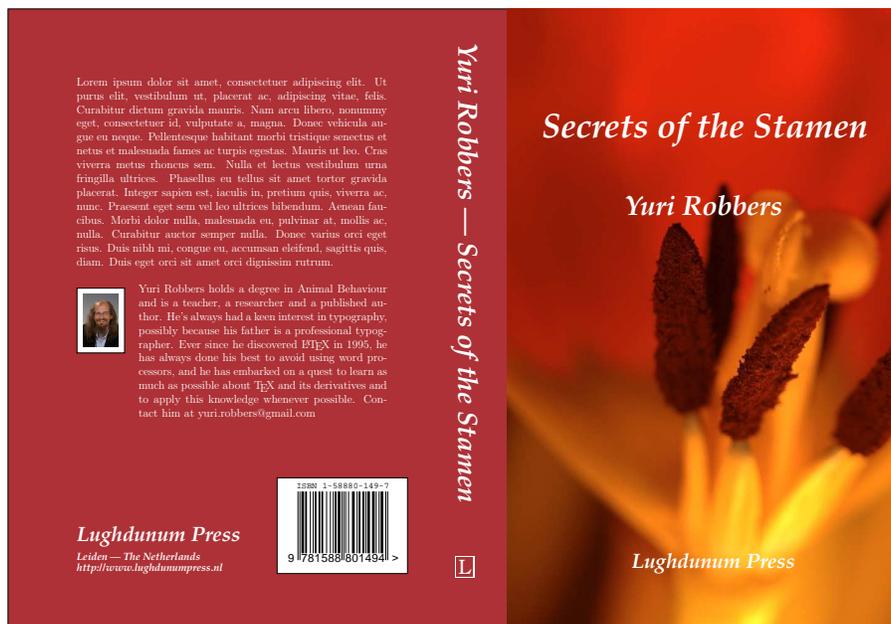


Figure 15: Our cover, the final version including the finishing touches.

10 Acknowledgments

We thank Paul Blaga and the anonymous referees for their helpful comments. Staff members of several local bookshops have freely shared their experiences regarding the role of book covers in sales. Paul Blaga’s and Lance Carnes’s suggestions have helped us reduce the size of this PDF from 64 to 1.1 Megabytes.

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