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PUBLIC DOMAIN TREASURES



*How To Find, Use, and Profit From
Public Domain Content*

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The bottom line is this: the information herein represents our best efforts, but cannot and should not be construed as anything other than a suggested course of action that may or may not work for you.

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Welcome to “Public Domain Treasures”

PLEASE don't repeat this.

...not to anyone, anywhere, for any reason, since it's one of our best-kept and secret competitive advantages:

...”public domain content”.

There, we said it. Don't repeat it, and burn this report once you've read it.

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...ok, we jest. But we're completely serious about the significance and value of public domain content, and it's role in our company's success.

Unfortunately, when we hear the phrase “public domain”, most of us call to mind dusty old texts. Sure, there are plenty of those. But there are also BRAND NEW, HIGH-VALUE reports, articles, photos, music & audio, videos, graphics, and more.

And if it's in the public domain, you can use it – any way you choose, for any purpose, as-is or modified, stand-alone or as part of something else.

We could literally spend hours citing example after example of individuals who've literally ‘struck gold’, example after example of 6-, 7-, even 8-figure businesses built entirely atop public domain; people & company's who have turned this resource into real treasure.

And for each of those, there are hundreds or thousands more!

If the following doesn't fire up your imagination, keep you up nights considering the myriad possibilities, and fill you with energy in anticipation of all you can do with this information, then maybe it's time to call it quits.

Otherwise... stop waiting, wishing, dreaming...

...and GET BUSY!

Introduction to Using Public Domain for Online Business

In the course of your job, career, or online business, you've probably heard of public domain. If you aren't quite sure what it is and how you can use it for your business, this report should help. Simply put, public domain works are images, sounds, texts, videos or anything else that no longer have copyright protection.

Anyone is free to use them for literally any purpose, commercial or non-commercial. Public domain works can be used on their own, or freely altered and turned into its own derivative work with no need to attribute the original creator.



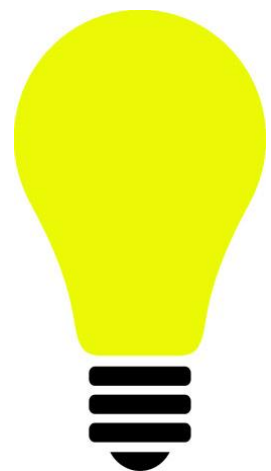
Public domain works can enter the public domain in a number of different ways:

- 1) They could be published with no copyright in the first place. For example, most governments, including the US government, publish their materials with no copyright to begin with. In other words, photos by the US Army or NASA are copyright free right out of the gate.
- 2) The copyright can expire. Different countries have different laws around when copyright expires. Generally, it's around 50 to 70 years from when the last creator passes away.
- 3) Some intellectual property can't be copyrighted at all and are considered public domain the moment they're created. For example, mathematical formulas can't be copyrighted. A list of ingredients in a recipe also can't be copyrighted, though the accompanying text and methods can be.

Using Public Domain in Your Online Business

Public domain materials can be used as a main source of content or as supplement to your content. For example, there are businesses built on republishing public domain works or derivatives of public domain works. Any re-write of a Shakespeare play, for instance, is a derivative of a public domain work.

Similarly, you can do the same for your online business. Let's say you run a website about origami. Why not go out and find a bunch of public domain origami photos and use them on your website, with your own explanations?



Public domain audios and music are great places to look for source materials for new music. For example, remixing Mozart's best works into your own musical pieces, or using it in background music.

Public domain works are frequently used as supporting or background items. For example, copyright free clipart or government images are often used to help illustrate talking points, or as background images.

One great thing about public domain works is that you can both sell them and give them away. So you can use them to create giveaway hooks for your newsletters, as well as use them to create entire digital products that you sell for money.

How Do You Find Public Domain Works?

Finding public domain works is a little bit of a treasure hunt. How you do your search depends in large part on how you plan on using the public domain work.

If you plan on using the public domain work as supporting material, you can find a lot of what you need through Google searches and through public domain database searches. Just head over to a public domain archive ([we have a list of 50 sources for you](#)) and perform a search.



You can also try using search parameters to find public domain works. For example:

- In Google Images, type in "Origami Public Domain"
- Use site:.gov to find government sites with what you're looking for. For example, "site:.gov rocket shuttle"

If you plan on using a public domain work as a primary piece of content that you're selling or giving away, you may want to dig a bit deeper. If you want to come up unique pieces of content that you can sell and impress visitors, it pays to go above and beyond.

Public domain hunters often try to find their own pieces of public domain content, instead of looking for them online. Go to old bookstores, both online and offline and buy physical copies of old books that are outside copyright. If you find one that really shines, have it transcribed. Believe it or not, you can get a whole book typed up for just a couple hundred dollars on Elance.

Alternatively, you can find a piece of public domain content online and really rework it to make it shine and give it your own style. If you're charging for content though, avoid just packaging easily accessible public domain works and selling it, as that can really come back to bite you.


There are many ways to find public domain works, both online and offline. The percentage of the public domain that's easily accessible online is tiny compared to all the copyright free works out there. Don't be afraid to do a bit of digging.

50 Ways to Use Public Domain Content in Your Business

Using public domain content in your business allows you to save time and money. Instead of having to produce new content yourself, you can just re-use already proven content. Here are fifty different ways you can use public domain content.

1. Turn it into a blog post.
2. Use it for article directories.
3. Use it as article spinner fodder to create new articles.
4. Use it to create a guest post.
5. Use it to publish a physical book. You can republish it in its entirety, or create a derivative work.
6. Use it to create Squidoo lenses or HubPages.





Step 1: What's your lens going to be about?

On Squidoo, you can write a page. A single, beautiful, personalized webpage focused on a single topic.

Then you can build another page. And another one. Each page on a different interest. Tell a story, recommend a product you love, teach someone something and so much more. We call these pages **lenses** because they snap your original point of view into focus.


Lenses like [how to build a food smoker](#). Or what you'd pay for vintage Beatles vinyl. Or baking [Cake Eyeballs for Halloween](#), or [teaching your dog to walk on a treadmill](#).

The more focused the better. **What's your lens going to be about?**

My page is about:

Continue →
3 steps remaining


7. Use it to create an eBook. Again, you can use it as-is or create your own version.
8. Use it as a giveaway to get people to opt into your list.
9. You can break up the content into digestible chunks and use that as your email content.
10. Use it to create a “step by step” guide to a difficult problem.
11. Add your own images. Take a popular guide and make it your own through images and design.
12. If you don't have your own images, use public domain images to bring something new together.





LIFE photo archive hosted by Google


Search millions of historic photos


Search millions of photographs from the LIFE photo archive, stretching from the 1750s to today. Most were never published and are now available for the first time through the joint work of LIFE and Google.



[1860s](#)



[1870s](#)



[1880s](#)



[1890s](#)



[1900s](#)



[1910s](#)



[1920s](#)


[1930s](#)



[1940s](#)


[1950s](#)


[1960s](#)


[1970s](#)

Search tip
Add "source:life" to any Google image search and search only the LIFE photo archive. For example: [computer source:life](#)



Search LIFE images

People

Franklin D. Roosevelt	Jacqueline Kennedy
Louis Armstrong	Marie Curie
Marilyn Monroe	Pablo Picasso

Places

Fort Peck	Himalayas
St. Peter's Square	Taj Mahal
Times Square	Yangtze River

Events

1930s oil boom	Academy Awards
March on Washington	Vietnam War
Winter Olympics	World's Fair

Sports

Baseball	Basketball
Diving	Football
Gymnastics	Surfing

Culture

Ballerinas	Cowboys
Country Doctor	Drive in

13. Turn it into a video. Create a slideshow with public domain images, or read out the text as a script.
14. Turn it into a flash presentation.

15. Turn it into an audio download.
16. Use it to spur content crowd sourcing. For example, publish a great tip from the public domain, then ask people for their own tips.
17. Analyze it. Why was this piece of content successful? Learn from past successes.
18. Turn it into a story, or use stories from public domain content.
19. Create your own mashup from public domain content. For example, 10 different ways to boost confidence from 10 different public domain sources.
20. Create an updated version. Update old content to the 21st century.
21. Translate it into another language.
22. Use it to create a game. For example, you might create a Hamlet game from Shakespeare's work.
23. Make it funny. Turn a dull text into a fun to read text.
24. Add ridiculous examples. Again, this makes it fun to read.
25. Use it as Twitter tweets.



What's happening? ×

"Where words fail, music speaks." — Hans Christian Andersen



81 [Tweet](#)

26. Use it as a base for Facebook content. Link to public domain content from your Facebook page.

27. Use it to demonstrate a point, with the public domain content as your key example.
28. Use content everyone recognizes to catch attention. For example, a famous military photo.
29. Create a creative commons image. It has to be a derivative work.
30. Turn it into a new script or play with your own twist.

31. Add audio to silent video. A lot of older videos don't have sounds.

32. Improve a video's quality or add color through postproduction techniques.

33. Use it to examine a culture. Public domain content can be a great way to glimpse into the past.

34. Use it as a springboard for other ideas.



35. Use it to publish content *quickly*. After all, most of the work is done.

36. Use it as content backup. If you run out of ideas or if something comes up in life, use it as backup.

37. Dramatize it. "Shakespeare In Love" is a great example of a movie that dramatized the life of Shakespeare.

38. Photoshop a photo into being much more emotionally striking.

39. Turn copyright music into something modern. For example, mix Beethoven with dubstep.

40. Use it as your website's background.



41. Use a photo to add design sense to your site. Many government photos, such as NASA's database, have many high quality photos.

42. Use it as a base for a book to be published on the Kindle. Note Kindle's requirement for public domain books at <https://kdp.amazon.com/self-publishing/help?topicId=A2OHLJURFVK57Q>

1. Enter Your Book Details

Book name

Frankenstein vs. Alice in Wonderland

Please enter the exact title only. Books submitted with extra words in this field will not be published. ([Why?](#))

☐ This book is part of a series ([What's this?](#))

Series title

Volume

43. Use it as a giveaway on eBook platforms. Note that often time's they only accept derivative works.
44. Use it as a basis for an iPhone or Android app.
45. Create an action guide and add it to the original content. For example, someone added a step-by-step guide to Napoleon Hill's "Think and Grow Rich" and very successfully republished the book.
46. Add examples to an abstract text.
47. Use images or video to create an animated GIF.
48. Use images or stills from videos to create banner ads.
49. Use images, videos or phrases to create offline brochures or pamphlets.
50. Use it for redistribution. For example, in the background of a website theme, or by creating an album in WordPress plugin form (E.g. "Space Graphics Plugin".)

There are many, many different ways you can use public domain content. Use your creativity and you'll easily be able to turn age-old material into brand new, engaging content.

How To Conduct A Copyright Search

ALWAYS conduct a Copyright search before to publish any work “as-is”, because you can get sued. Never rely solely on online websites regarding the date of the Copyright. Laws are constantly changing and now many people is being sued for using “Public Domain” movies that are copyrighted.

If a work was published prior to 1923 you can certainly use it... Just be sure that the publishing date is, IN FACT, prior to 1923.

This is especially important for using works published between 1923-1963.

If you found a work that was copyrighted in the United States, you may go to the Copyright Office website at <http://www.copyright.gov> and do a research on their database.

10 Common Public Domain Mistakes



Public domain is a fantastic way to generate content, but it's not without its potential perils. There are all kinds of mistakes you can make with public domain content that you might not be aware of. Some of these mistakes may result on a slap on the wrist, while others could end up costing you tens of thousands of dollars.

Here are the 10 most common public domain mistakes.

Mistake #1: Not Checking the Copyright

Just because something “should” be in the public domain theoretically doesn't mean it actually is. Perhaps the copyright was renewed. Perhaps you got the dates wrong. Perhaps the work you're using falls under a strange legal loophole that you weren't aware of.

Getting sued for copyright infringement isn't fun. Not only are you looking at huge settlements and fines; you're also looking at huge legal bills. Protect yourself by checking the copyright.

Mistake #2: Checking Yourself

Trying to check whether or not a book is in the public domain is quite a complex process. While it's possible to do it yourself, it's likely to take an enormous amount of time. You're also apt to make mistakes, since you're not actually trained in doing that research.

Hire an attorney to do it for you. In the unlikely event that they make a mistake and you get sued, you'll be able to counter-sue your attorney, who'll be able to pay you out of their malpractice or liability insurance. In short, you really protect yourself by hiring a lawyer.

Mistake #3: Publishing as a Sole Proprietor

If you publish your public domain work under your own name, as a sole proprietor or under a “Doing Business As,” you risk a personal lawsuit. A lawsuit could take you for every penny you own.

If you publish under an LLC, an S-Corp or a C-Corp, you’re protected. If you get sued, you’re protected by your corporate veil and can only be sued for the money you have in your corporation, rather than what’s in your personal bank accounts.

Mistake #4: Not Copyrighting Derivative Works

If you take a copyrighted work and make changes to it, that’s now *your* work. You own the copyrights! Put your name on it and put your own copyright on it. Don’t let other people think it’s public domain anymore.

What makes a derivative work? Adding explanations. Changing the texts. Taking old English and turning it into modern day English. Anything that changes the old text is considered derivative works.

Mistake #5: Thinking No © Means No Copyright

Just because a website doesn’t have the copyright symbol there doesn’t mean it’s not copyrighted. In fact, works are copyrighted *by default* unless otherwise specified. If a work is published in the last 50 years, which absolutely means any content published for the web, it’s safe to assume it’s copyrighted.

Mistake #6: Using Copyrighted Images

Bloggers and website owners have historically been a little lax around their copyright policies. People would often use other people’s copyrighted images, thinking that the likelihood of them getting caught using a copyrighted image was slim.

That’s changed now.

Image searching tools have gotten more and more sophisticated. Google Images makes a free image search tool that allows copyright holders to find anyone using their photo. More complex



photo recognition algorithms can allow people to search specific industries for derivative works of their images.

In short, use public domain photos or paid stock photos. It doesn't pay to use copyrighted images without permission.

Mistake #7: Confusing Creative Commons With Public Domain

While creative commons licensing can be very similar to public domain, it has some key differences. Some CC works can be used freely with no attribution, just like public domain works. Others require attribution, or are meant only for non-profit or educational use. Make sure you check the exact license before using these images.

Mistake #8: Low Perceived Value

One thing you have to manage with publishing public domain works is perceived value. Will people see your content as valuable, since they can just get it themselves for free?

If you're bringing your own public domain works to market by sourcing your own content (E.g. finding old books and having them transcribed) rather than finding it online, you don't have to worry about this. But if you're republishing something that a lot of people have seen already, it can be a real concern.

Make sure you add value to whatever you're doing, so people can see you really created something worthwhile.

Mistake #9: Saying "Not My Copyright"

One of the most common mistakes people make is the assumption that they can use something just by saying it's not their copyright. For example, if you hop on YouTube you'll quickly find thousands of videos from people saying "I don't claim any copyright on this."

The truth is, if you use someone's copyrighted work, you're breaking the law, whether or not you claim to own the copyright. Using just a small portion or putting a disclaimer doesn't change this fact.

Mistake #10: Only Looking on the Internet

It's true that the internet has a lot of public domain resources. However, much of the real gold you'll find is actually offline. Online public domain works have been used by thousands. If you look offline however, you may just find the only copy to a rare book that people would gladly pay for.



50 Sources of Public Domain (or nearly Public Domain) Content

If you're looking for public domain content, here are some direct sources and techniques that you can use.

1. Do a search with "site:.gov" in your query. Most U.S. .gov resources are public domain, but do read through the rules that apply here: <http://www.usa.gov/copyright.shtml>
2. Search on Google for your keyword, plus the word "public domain," but do your homework before using anything.
3. Search for on Google for your keyword, plus the word "not copyrighted" or "copyleft"...and note the same disclaimer above. Note that "copyleft" means that you are free to adapt and reproduce a work, but the work that you produce must also be freely available.
4. Search with "site:.edu" in your query. Sometimes .edu sites publish non-copyrighted material, but make sure you always check.
5. Use Public Domain Flicks to find public domain movies.
<http://www.publicdomainflicks.com/>
6. Use Infodigi to find *most likely in public domain* films. You should talk to a lawyer before using these. Fortunately, because it's more work to use these films, it's less likely that others will be using the same footage.
http://http://www.infodigi.com/Public_Domain/films.html
7. WikiCommons has many public domain images, as well as "free use" license images.
http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
8. Flickr also has a no copyright section. Many of these are public domain images that have never been copyrighted, though some images require attribution. Always read the copyright details before using any image.
<http://flickr.com/commons>
9. Search for public domain works on the Library of Congress.
<http://www.loc.gov/index.html>
10. AskSam has a database of some of the top public domain books <http://www.asksam.com/ebooks/>



Copyleft Symbol



11. Use <http://Gutenberg.org>, a volunteer-run public domain project with over 5,000 works, including some volunteer read audiobooks.

Free eBooks by Project Gutenberg

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12. Follow BibliOdyssey. This blog commonly talks about books that might be in the public domain; though you'll have to hire your own legal counsel to verify this. <http://bibliodyssey.blogspot.com/>
13. Res Obscura is another blog that commonly features public domain works. Again, you need to verify this for yourself. <http://resobscura.blogspot.com/>
14. The Public Domain Discussion Mailing List is a fantastic place to talk about, find and compare notes on public domain works. <http://lists.okfn.org/mailman/listinfo/pd-discuss>
15. Public Domain Photos has over 5,000 public domain photos, plus thousands more in copyright-free images. <http://www.public-domain-photos.com/>

The image is a screenshot of the Public-Domain-Photos.com website banner. At the top left, the text "PUBLIC-DOMAIN-PHOTOS.com" is displayed in a bold, sans-serif font, with the tagline "Large collection of public domain photos and cliparts" underneath it. To the right of the text are five social media icons: Facebook, Twitter, Email, Google+, and a generic plus sign. Below the header is a navigation bar with two tabs: "Photos" and "Cliparts". The main body of the banner features a background image of a dragonfly on a ruler. Overlaid on this image is the text "5,000 free photos" and "8,000 free cliparts" in a large, white, serif font. At the bottom right of the banner, the text "FREE FOR PERSONAL AND COMMERCIAL USE" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

16. PD Photo has a huge selection of public domain photos. It's especially good for travel photos, as the creator is a frequent traveler. <http://pdphoto.org/>

17. Life magazine's black and white collection of photos from the 1860s to 1970s is freely available online at <http://images.google.com/hosted/life>.
18. MorgueFile has thousands of images that require no attribution <http://www.morguefile.com/>, but they are **NOT** in the public domain specifically.
19. For non-commercial uses, WorldImages's database is a godsend, with over 80,000 images. No attribution is required for educational or non-profit uses. <http://worldart.sjsu.edu/>
20. NASA is often a great source for high quality, impressive images at www.nasa.gov. You can read more on the specifics NASA image copyright here: http://www.nasa.gov/audience/formedia/features/MP_Photo_Guidelines.html



21. Tourism and Wildlife Bureau websites by the US government often have high quality wildlife photos with no copyright.
22. Historical commissions of all sorts that are funded by the US government have many copyright free images.

23. Europeana is a great resource for finding open source images from Europe. Again, consult an attorney as the site does *not* guarantee their listings to be public domain.

<http://europeana.eu/portal/>



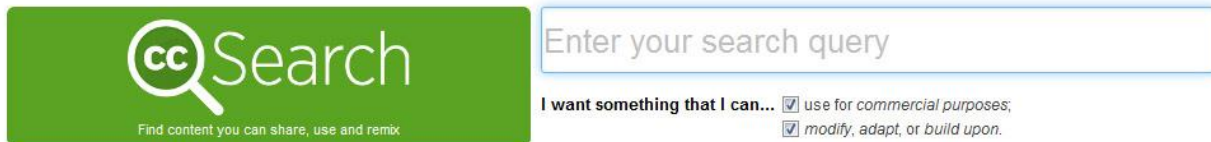
24. Use the Internet Archive to find old works. Again, check the copyright status yourself.

<http://www.archive.org/>

25. Over 270,000 plain texts are available on WikiSource.

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Main_Page

26. A quick search across many public domain and creative commons sites can be performed at <http://search.creativecommons.org/>.



27. The Digital-Librarian is another great resource for finding images <http://www.digital-librarian.com/images.html>

28. Microsoft's own clipart database is a great place to find copyright free clipart images.

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/images/>

29. Pictures from Old Books is exactly what it sounds like: A consortium of pictures from old books, almost all of which are in the public domain. <http://www.fromoldbooks.org/>



30. FirstGov links to many the government's pages, many of which have public domain works. <http://www.firstgov.gov/Topics/Graphics.shtml>

31. You can search many of the government's sites through USA.gov
<http://www.firstgov.gov/Topics/Graphics.shtml>

Home > Reference Center > U.S. Government Photos and Images

U.S. Government Photos and Images

Some of these photos and images are [U.S. Government Works](#) or in the [public domain](#) and may be used and reproduced without permission or fee. However, some images may be protected by license or copyright. You should read the disclaimers on each site before using these images.

If you have questions about the copyright status of an image, please contact the government agency that produced the image.

32. Some artists release their art under the public domain on <http://www.deviantart.com/>. It can take some digging to find; but what you find is often gold because they're original works.

33. Use Public Domain Day to find new authors that just entered the public domain. For example, to see authors who enter the public domain in 2012, go to:
<http://www.publicdomainday.org/node/44/>

34. Classic public domain books, including illustrations, are available at
<http://www.authorama.com/>



AUTHORAMA

Public Domain Books

Welcome to Authorama.com, featuring completely free books from a variety of different authors, collected here for you to read online or offline. The books may have been published before, but not in [this form](#), which I hope you find enjoyable to read and print. Feedback is welcome – enjoy the reading.

“The site was something I would never have thought to look for but as I’ve seen it now it has been a wee surprise. I work offshore on a pipe-laying vessel and spend six weeks at a time at sea, now I have a little library of works to read that I print off and use in my off shift. The other guys on-board are using it too and it’s thanks to yourself we’ve got some interesting reading.”

– Brian McGuire

35. Use the Yahoo! Directory's specialty libraries to find public domain works:
<http://dir.yahoo.com/Reference/Libraries/>

36. Use Google's Book Search to find public domain books: <http://books.google.com/>

37. An enormous library of public domain works related to biology and the study of living beings is available at the Biodiversity Heritage Library

<http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/Default.aspx>



38. Bibliomania's another great source of popular public domain works:

<http://www.bibliomania.com/bibliomania-static/index.html>

39. For Christian-related public domain texts, go to <http://www.ccel.org/>

40. The Digital Book Index is a great place to go for free and public domain eBooks. Not all books are public domain, so always double-check.

<http://www.digitalbookindex.org/about.htm>

Digital Book Index



SEARCH BY: SIMPLE & ADVANCED | AUTHOR / TITLE | SUBJECTS | PUBLISHERS | MAIN MENU | HELP | CLASSIC AUTHORS | CONTACT | ABOUT | SITE REVIEWS | MOBILE (BETA)

41. Many less common texts can be found on <http://eldritchpress.org/>. Unfortunately, there's no search function, so you'll have to do a lot of clicking.

42. GPO Access gives you access to the US Government Printing Office. A great resource for both text and images. <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/>

43. The University of Montana keeps a fairly large list of public domain works and links:

<http://libguides.lib.umt.edu/content.php?pid=119432&sid=1042278>

44. An easily searchable database of public domain works is available at The Online Books

Page <http://www.digital.library.upenn.edu/books/>.

45. Use PDInfo to find public domain music: <http://www.pdinfo.com/Public-Domain-Music-List.php>



46. The state of Florida has a section dedicated to public domain works for children: <http://palmm.fcla.edu/juv/>

47. To find public domain music, hop on over to <http://FreePD.com>.

48. For a verified list of public domain films, take a look at this crowd-sourced list: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_films_in_the_public_domain_in_the_United_States



49. For biographical works, visit the Timeless Truth Free Online Library at <http://library.timelesstruths.org/>

50. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association is another great place to look for sealife photos, tornado photos, sky shots and other interesting scenic photos: <http://www.photolib.noaa.gov/index.html>

Just remember, no matter what you do, always do your research first and **don't forget to consult our top 10 list of public domain mistakes to avoid before you get started.**

Where To Outsource Printing

If you are going to produce public domain pieces for sale, such as prints, you don't necessarily have to do the printing yourself.

Here is a list of several companies that can do the printing for you – and even handle fulfillment and in some cases billing!

Listed in no particular order:

- <http://www.zazzle.com/> allows you to set up a store of your very own products. When you sell an item, they produce it and ship it and credit your account your profit. More details are here <http://www.zazzle.com/mk/earn/earnmoney>
- <http://www.cafepress.com/> works very much like zazzle. Get all the details at <http://www.cafepress.com/cp/info/sell/>
- <http://www.printfection.com/> is another example but they specialize mainly in printed clothing items.
- <http://www.uprinting.com/Posters.html> allows you to order posters on a variety of papers and canvases in quantities as low as one at a time

Here's an example of a company selling public domain prints, and using Zazzle for fulfillment:

http://www.zazzle.com/atlanta_ga_panoramic_map_1892_print-228199869661917404

More examples of companies selling public domain prints:

- Prints of NASA images - <http://www.mcmahanphoto.com/prco-space.html>
- Antique maps - <http://store.pastpresent.com/>
- More antique maps - <http://www.barewalls.com/index/maps.html>
- Another example offering prints and posters of WPA era posters - <http://www.rainfall.com/posters/WPA/catalog1.htm>