



Creating personalized adventure books with your child as the star – the story of Bang On Books



CUSTOMER STORIES WRITTEN BY GARETH

Reading has the power to spark children's imaginations, transporting them to magical places where anything is possible.

Taking this idea a step further, [Bang On Books](#) personalized adventure books fully immerse kids in stories where they become the main character – the hero.

“Bang on” is a colloquial British term describing an item as being perfect or “spot on.”

Founders Simon and Hannah are aware of the impact that hand-crafted artwork and magical storytelling can still have on young minds in this digital, screen-based world.

Coming together to pen original stories for kids aged 2-10, their beautifully illustrated publications are full of fun and good morals, helping little ones fall in love with story time and grow into well-rounded people.



The process is pretty straightforward: Customers choose from several different stories online before customizing them in a three-step process:

- Upload a photo of their child to the “Magic Mirror”
- Pick a lead character, and enter the child's name
- Write a special dedication, making the story a gift that each child can treasure forever



Simon, Hannah, and the rest of the team don't only write and illustrate each story, they print, bind, and ship each soft-touch laminated book from the United Kingdom themselves.

With such a unique, customizable, and hands-on product, it's no surprise that the open-source freedom of WooCommerce was a natural fit for this band of creators.

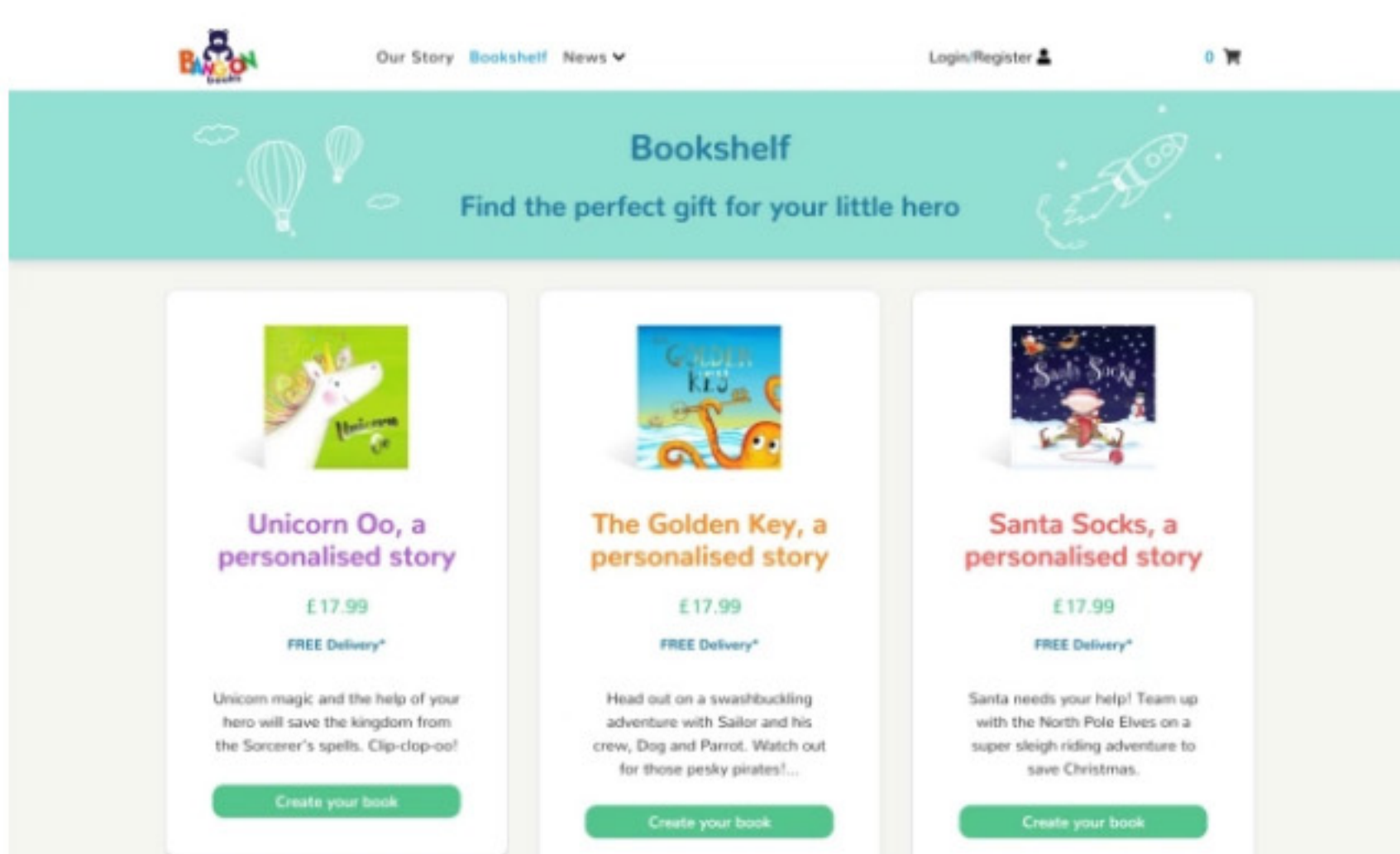
Read on for our Q&A with Jonathan Young, in-house web developer at Bang On Books.

How did Bang On Books come to be?

Hannah approached Simon while in her last year of university, with a book she was publishing for her finals.

Simon liked the idea, and they worked together to make a personalized version. BangOnBooks.co.uk launched in late 2018 with two original books written and illustrated by Simon and Hannah: [The Golden Key](#), and [Unicorn Oo](#).

December saw the release of a third book, [Santa Socks](#), just in time for the Christmas period.



You maintain and oversee the online store. What is your background, and what were you up to before joining the world of personalized adventure books?

I worked for several companies in an IT consultancy role. I started working with a friend in the printing industry and ended up developing a website for a print company.

When the time came for a new venture involving personalized books, I initially stepped up with help and guidance. I took over the web and stack development when there was an issue that the previously contracted developers had failed to complete.

What challenges or issues did you encounter when taking over bangonbooks.co.uk?

[The Bang On Books site] was built by an agency initially. I have been personally heading design and development of the site since January 2019, which is when my colleague, Connor, and I overhauled it.

Site speed and the quality of previous development work was poor. There were also general UX/UI issues that needed fixing and/or replacing.

What do you like about WooCommerce?

WooCommerce can be quite daunting initially. Having never used it prior to this site, however, I am very impressed with the templating system built into WordPress and how well it extends that functionality.

It is well organized. The code is easy to follow (I don't consider myself a coder) and is well commented and documented.

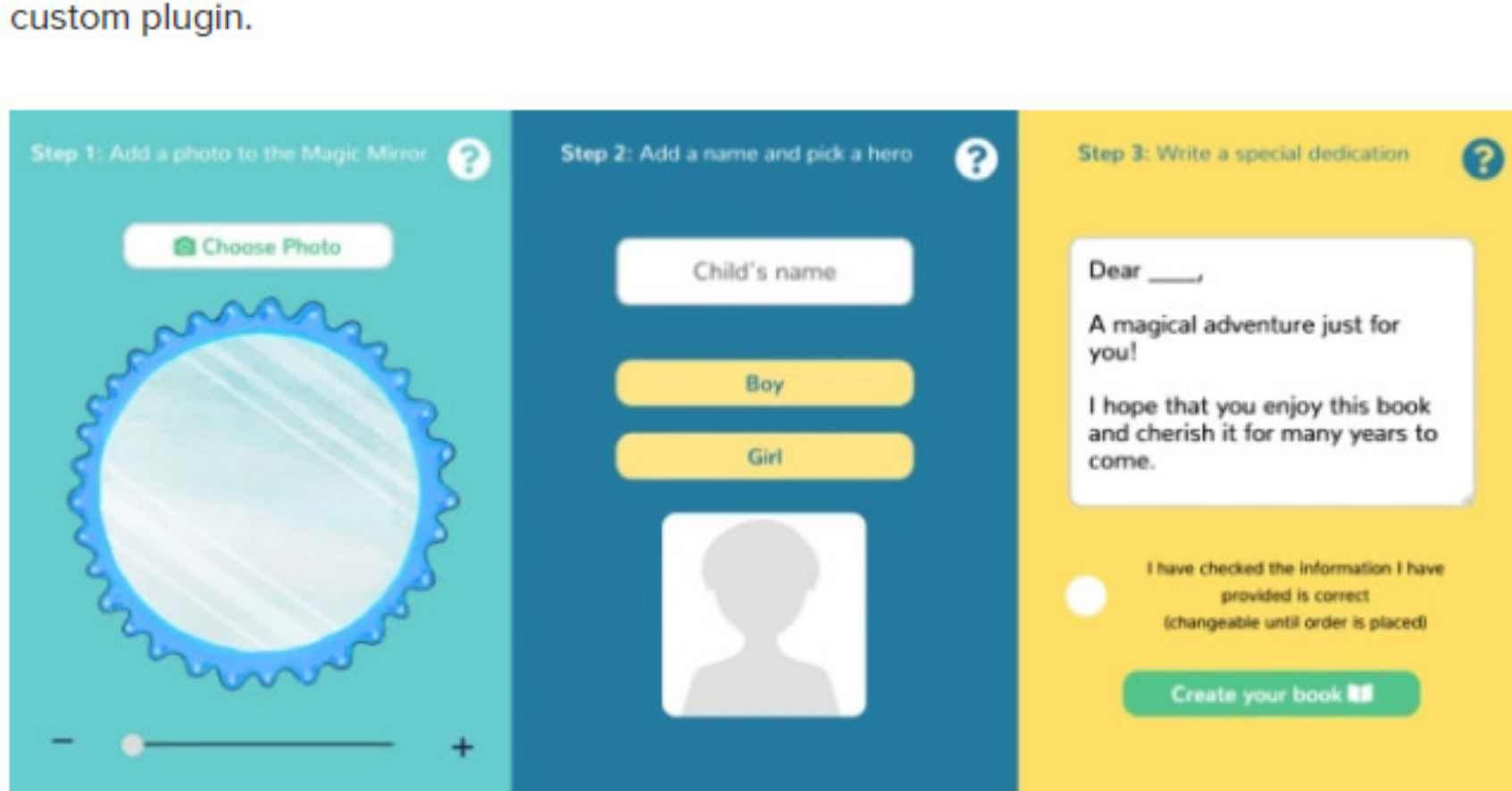
Books make their way to happy customers all over the world, judging by the many positive reviews on the site. How did you approach the challenge of payments and shipping?

The books have sold globally from Australia to the UK. Payments go through [Stripe](#), and shipping is handled by both [Royal Mail](#) and DHL Europe.

What's your favorite feature or customization of the store?

The site runs on a fully customized theme using various [WooCommerce hooks](#) and templates. The book generator is a custom API – also hooked into WooCommerce – keeping the ordering process as secure and simple as possible for users.

We near-seamlessly integrate the API form and output into the purchase path using a custom plugin.



Marketing is key when it comes to such personalized products. Tell us a bit more about how you find and rally new customers to the store.

We utilize multiple different marketing routes. Our main focus is Facebook and Instagram. We also send [discount] codes to bloggers so they can experience the full order-to-delivery process of a Bang On Book.

We are currently setting up an affiliate campaign that enables bloggers to earn commissions by linking visitors to our store.

There is nothing better for us than seeing both children and adults enjoying our books. It's an excellent way for parents/guardians/caregivers to engage and bond with the hero of their very own story.

Lastly, what advice would you give to folks looking to set up an online store for their organization or business?

Find a good developer who can support you. Many just want to do the work for you. However, I think it's very important that a company reliant on a website handles as much as they can themselves. There is nothing worse than depending on an unreliable or ad hoc development strategy.

There you have it – thanks to Jonathan for chatting with us and sharing the Bang On Books story. Be sure to keep an eye on [their bookshelf](#) for new, swashbuckling adventure stories.